INTRODUCTION

Ethical Foundations and Perspectives

The true story out of Liverpool, England, was beyond belief. Two ten-year-old boys skipped school on February 12, went to a shopping mall, and spent the day stealing candy and soft drinks. They hung around a video store and shoplifted cans of modeling paint. In the autumn term, Robert Thompson had missed forty-nine days of school and Jon Venables forty days. February 12 was routine for them, until they carved out their diabolical plan. They lured a two-year-old child away from his mother, dragged and kicked him for two and one-half miles, stoned him with bricks, and smashed his head with a twenty-two-pound iron bar. Police found James Bulger's half-naked body two days later. Thompson and Venables had tied the battered corpse to a railroad track, and a passing train had cut it in two. Forty-two injuries were identified; one of the accused's shoes had left a sole print on James's cheek.

At age ten, children can face criminal charges in Britain. But under British law, reporting on the family background and revealing the children's names are prohibited until their trial is completed. Jon and Robert were eleven as their trial began before a twelve-member jury in Preston.[1]

Imagine a British television station honoring British law and reporting on the court proceedings only by reference to Child A and Child B. In contrast, imagine a U.S. newspaper revealing the defendants' names and providing detailed information on their personal histories. As the trial progressed, the question of motive was most troubling. What could drive ten-year-old boys to commit a vicious murder? Are there telltale signs other parents might recognize in their children? As it turned out, both boys were from broken homes, lived in poverty, and were prone to stealing and outbursts of anger. Jon Venables was easily led. A neighbor testified that if anyone told Jon to throw stones at someone, he would do it. When Robert was six, his father ran off with another woman, leaving his twenty-nine-year-old mother to raise seven sons on her own.

Both the British and the U.S. news teams had a rationale for their reporting decisions—the British broadcaster feeling constrained by the law and a U.S. newspaper responding to intense reader interest. Is the legal standard the only possible one here? If so, is Britain's domestic standard compelling on the international scene? What if the news directors wanted to act in a morally appropriate manner?

In June 2001, as both juveniles turned eighteen, a parole board granted their release from prison, and the same issue emerged once again. To protect the killers against vengeance, both were given new names and passports. The British government forbade the media from disclosing their new names and residences or publishing their photographs. But there were widespread doubts that their anonymity could be preserved. Publishers outside Britain have no legal restrictions against publishing offenders' photographs and new names.

And the case does not die. In April 2010 Jon Venables, now a twenty-seven-year-old man, was placed in police custody after violating the conditions of his release. The first reaction from James Bulger's mother, Denise Fergus, to Venables's detention was posted in a Twitter message that read: "Would like to let everyone know jon venables is where he belongs tonight behind bars in my son's justice." The British government declined to reveal why Venables had been recalled into custody. The fury of public opinion resurfaced immediately. "Sound Off" on CNN International and BBC World's online commentary were filled with revenge, continuing bewilderment over the killer's early release, debates over whether "once a killer always a killer," and a few comments that only forgiveness makes sense. The trial judge had called the crime "unparalleled evil and barbarity." No one disagreed regarding the actions of the two boys, but many struggled to understand what the crime said, if anything, about British society as a whole, its educational system, religious institutions, neighborhoods, and popular culture.[2]

When a case such as this is presented to a media ethics seminar for discussion, students usually argue passionately without making much headway. Analysis degenerates into inchoate pleas that ten-year-old boys deserve mercy or into grandiose appeals to the privilege of the press. Judgments are made on what Henry Aiken calls the evocative, expressive level—that is, with no justifying reasons.[3]

Too often communication ethics follows such a pattern, retreating finally to the law as the only reliable guide. Students and practitioners argue about individual sensational incidents, make case-by-case decisions, and never stop to examine their method of moral reasoning. Instead, a pattern of ethical deliberation should be explicitly outlined in which the relevant considerations can be isolated and given appropriate weight. Those who care about ethics in the media can learn to analyze the stages of decision making, focus on the real levels of conflict, and make defensible ethical decisions. This test case can illustrate how competent moral justification takes place. Moral thinking is a systematic process: A judgment is made and action taken. The British television station concludes that the juvenile defendants ought to be protected and it withholds names. What steps are used to reach this decision? How does a newspaper decide that an action should be taken because it is right or should be avoided because it is wrong? The newspaper in the United States considers it inappropriate to withhold news from its readers and prints the names.

Any single decision involves a host of values that must be sorted out. These values reflect presuppositions about social life and human nature. To value something means to consider it desirable. Expressions such as "her value system" and "American values" refer to what a woman and a majority of Americans, respectively, estimate or evaluate as worthwhile. We may judge something according to aesthetic values (such as harmonious, pleasing), professional values (innovative, prompt), logical values (consistent, competent), sociocultural values (thrifty, hardworking), and moral values (honest, nonviolent). Often we find both positive and negative values underlying our choices, pervading all areas of our behavior, and motivating us to react in certain directions.[4]

Newspeople hold several values regarding professional reporting; for example, they prize immediacy, skepticism, and their own independence. In the case of the Liverpool murder, television viewers, family members, and reporters value juvenile rights in varying ways. These values, in combination with ethical principles, yield a guideline for the television news desk: to protect the privacy of the juveniles at all costs. The good end, in this instance, is deemed to be guarding a person's right to a fair trial. The means for accomplishing this end is withholding information about the defendants.

Likewise, the U.S. newspaper came to a conclusion rooted in values and based an action on that conclusion. The public has a right to know public news, the newspaper decided; we will print the names and background details. What values prompted this decision? This paper strongly values the professional rule that important information should be distributed without hesitation, that everyone ought to be told the truth. But professional values may be stated in positive or negative terms. In fact, in debates about values, an ethical principle often must be invoked to determine which values are preferable. In the newspaper's case, the moral rule "tell the truth under all conditions" is particularly relevant.

If we do this kind of analysis, we begin to see how moral reasoning works. We understand better why there can be disagreement over whether to publicize personal details in this case. Is it more important to tell the truth, we ask ourselves, or to preserve privacy? Is there some universal principle that we can all appreciate, such as truthtelling, or do we choose to protect some persons, suppressing the truth in the process? We do ethical analysis by looking for guidelines, and we quickly learn to create an interconnected model: We size up the circumstances, we ask what values motivated the decision, we appeal to a principle, and we choose loyalty to one social group instead of to another. Through this analysis, we can engage in conflicts over the crucial junctures of the moral reasoning process rather than argue personal differences over the merits of actual decisions. One disagreement that appears to be at stake here is a conflict between the norm of truthtelling and the norm of protecting the privacy of juvenile defendants. But differing values and loyalties can be identified, too.

THE POTTER BOX MODEL OF REASONING

Creative ethical analysis involves several explicit steps. Ralph B. Potter of the Harvard Divinity School formulated the model of moral reasoning introduced in our analysis of the Liverpool murder. By using a diagram adapted from Professor Potter (the "Potter Box"), we can dissect this case further (see Figure I.1). The Potter Box introduces four dimensions of moral analysis to aid us in locating those places where most misunderstandings occur.[5] Along these lines, we can construct action guides.

Note how the Potter Box has been used in our analysis: (1) We gave a *definition* of the situation, citing legal constraints, details of the abduction and murder, and events from the trial. One news outlet (the television station) printed the names and biographical material only after the court case was completed. In contrast, the newspaper waited until the trial began, but then decided it was free to make news available to its readers that was already available to it. In this case, two news outlets chose differently. (2) We then asked: Why? We described the *values* that might have been the most important. The British broadcaster valued legal orderliness. For the U.S. newspaper, the operating professional value was not to suppress news. Its London correspondent had
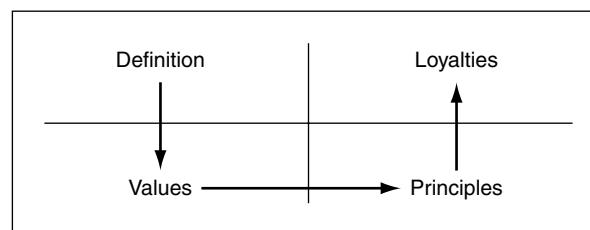

Figure I.1

received anonymous information about the assailants shortly after James Bulger was killed. Presumably, the victim's family and supporters wanted it known that Thompson and Venables were conniving, mean-spirited, and ruthless—not mentally deranged. The newspaper completed its investigation by the time the trial began and followed the newsroom value of publishing without delay. But these overriding professional values may not exhaust all the possibilities. For example, public persons—in this case, the juvenile defendants—must be reported on consistently in news dissemination; if not, readers and viewers will not trust the media's integrity in other situations. U.S. newspaper readers may not consider fair trials a supreme value or see any relevance in the fact the murderers were ten years old. A professional value regarding the news flow may be interpreted as less than humane. Each value influences discourse and reasoning on moral questions. (3) We named at least two ethical *principles*, and we could have listed more. The television station concluded that the principle of other-regarding care meant protecting the victim's right to privacy. The newspaper invoked truthtelling as an ethical imperative. But other principles could have been summoned: Do the greatest good for the greatest number, even if innocent people such as the murderers' families might be harmed. The television station did not broadcast the names, even at the risk of losing some credibility. The news-hungry may conclude that the station is not competent enough to obtain these details. (4) From the outset, a conflict of *loyalties* is evident. The station claimed to act sympathetically toward the juvenile offenders; the newspaper insisted it was acting out of sympathy to its readership in general.

Moving from one quadrant to the next, we finally construct our action guides. But the problems can be examined in more depth: Think of the box in Figure I.1 as a circle and go one step further. This time, concentrate on the ethical principles. Next time in the cycle, focus on the definition of loyalties. If the major source of disagreement is over professional values, for example, concentrate on that area the second time around. Often we value certain things without thinking about them; debating them with those who are not easily convinced will make us more critical of ourselves in the positive sense. The newspaper valued release of information, and properly so. But was that an absolute, overriding all other considerations? Our professional values are often honestly held, but having them challenged periodically leads to maturity. In such a process of clarification and redefinition, each element can be addressed in greater detail; then the deeper insight can be connected to the other quadrants.

The matter of choosing loyalties usually needs the closest scrutiny. The Potter Box is a model for social ethics and consequently forces us to articulate precisely where our loyalties lie as we make a final judgment or adopt a particular policy. And in this domain, we tend to beguile ourselves very quickly.

Examine the television station's decision once again: Protect juveniles in court; publish no names or background data. Who was the staff thinking about when they made that decision? Perhaps they were considering only themselves. They claim they did not wish to increase the suffering of the accused and the grief of their families. They say they did not want to inflict pain. They contend they did not want to lead people to label the defendants or to become overly involved in the motivations for their behavior. They seem to be communicating that they could not live with their conscience if they were to broadcast the news. But, on additional reflection, their loyalties actually may be different. Is the news team really protecting the juveniles or protecting themselves? Certainly, not reporting names is a means to an end, but the end could be the private comfort of the news team. The staff members appear to be interested in a gain for society. They appear to protect the trial process, maximizing the defendants' privacy and minimizing scandalous gossip. The crucial question, however, must be faced once more: For whom did they do all this? If we do not return to the top right-hand quadrant of the diagram and inquire more deeply where their allegiances lie—for whom they did it—we have not used the Potter Box adequately.

Consider the newspaper's decision in the same manner: Tell the truth; print the names. If the paper does not withhold juvenile names in a domestic trial, why should it make an exception for

one in another country? Will exceptions be necessary again and again until the paper's credibility is ended? The newspaper's readers have certain expectations; the staff seems to be asking if such expectations should be met. But, in responding to a short-term expectation, could the newspaper's decision undermine the paper's overall credibility? Has the newspaper's long-range ability to contribute to society been damaged? What is more important: the welfare of the readers or the welfare of those involved in the crime?

In the initial analysis, the newspaper did not seem to be concerned for the juvenile offenders. Its imperative was to tell the truth or lose the trust of advertisers, readers, and employees. But maybe this newspaper's loyalties to its readers actually can benefit both the victim's and criminals' families. If the newspaper presents accurate details, the people directly involved in the tragedy could become more than objects of curiosity. The truth of this devastating event finally may outweigh idle speculation about Venables and Thompson and cool the gossip about a mother not watching her two-year-old closely enough or mall security guards being inattentive to detail. Important issues such as these are encountered and clarified when the loyalty quadrant is considered thoroughly, either in the first round of decision making or later in more intensive analysis.

Choosing loyalties is an extremely significant step in the process of making moral decisions. As the preceding paragraphs indicate, taking this quadrant seriously does not in itself eliminate disagreements. Honest disputes may occur over who should benefit from a decision. Media personnel who are sincere about serving society must choose among various segments of that society: subscribers and viewers, sources of information, politicians, ethnic minorities, children, law enforcement personnel, judges and lawyers, and so forth. Their calculations need to consider that flesh-and-blood people, known by name, ought not be sacrificed for euphemisms and abstractions such as the public, clients, audience, or market. In any case, the Potter Box is an exercise in social ethics that does not permit the luxury of merely playing mental games. Conclusions must be worked out in the rough and tumble of social realities. Ethical principles are crucial, of course, in the overall process of reaching a justified conclusion. However, in the pursuit of socially responsible media, clarity regarding ultimate loyalties is of paramount importance.

In addition to considering each step of the Potter Box carefully, we must see the box as a circle, an organic whole (see Figure I.2). It is not merely a random set of isolated questions, but a linked system. Now we have moved from first impressions to explaining various aspects of what happened in this case. Each news outlet declared its loyalties. The Potter Box gives us a mechanism to further assess the values and principles in this case. But the Potter Box also can be used to adopt policy guidelines that will govern future behavior in similar circumstances. On the basis of
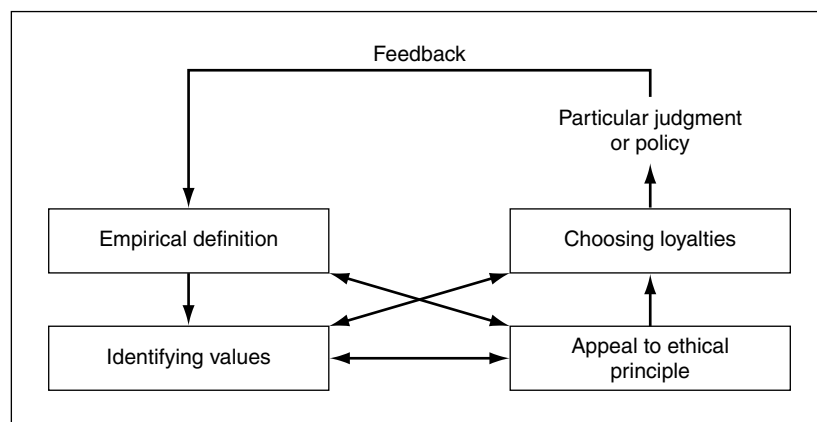

Figure I.2

this case, the station or the newspaper might decide to alter its policy regarding names and background data. At least the editorial staffs could be made aware that there is a system for reaching a comprehensive policy regarding similar events. Through the four steps of the Potter Box, media institutions can establish or strengthen their policy regarding anonymous sources, suicide coverage, confidentiality, trial coverage, deception in advertising, and so forth.

But we are still left with the initial question: Which news team made the right decision? And this leads to a central inquiry raised by this exercise: Is there a universal ground for making ethical decisions, an overarching theory from which we can choose among competing alternatives? Or is ethical decision making a process of adjusting to the mores and commitments of a given community? Potter's circular model, with its potential for continual expansion, takes both aspects seriously (see Figure I.3). Community mores are accounted for when we elaborate on the values people hold and when we identify our loyalties before making a final choice. But these sociological matters are tempered in the Potter Box by an appeal to an explicit ethical principle. Without such an appeal, a conclusion is not considered morally justified. Unfortunately, under the press of circumstances, the media tend to move directly into action from quadrant two (values), ignoring quadrants three and four (principles and loyalties).
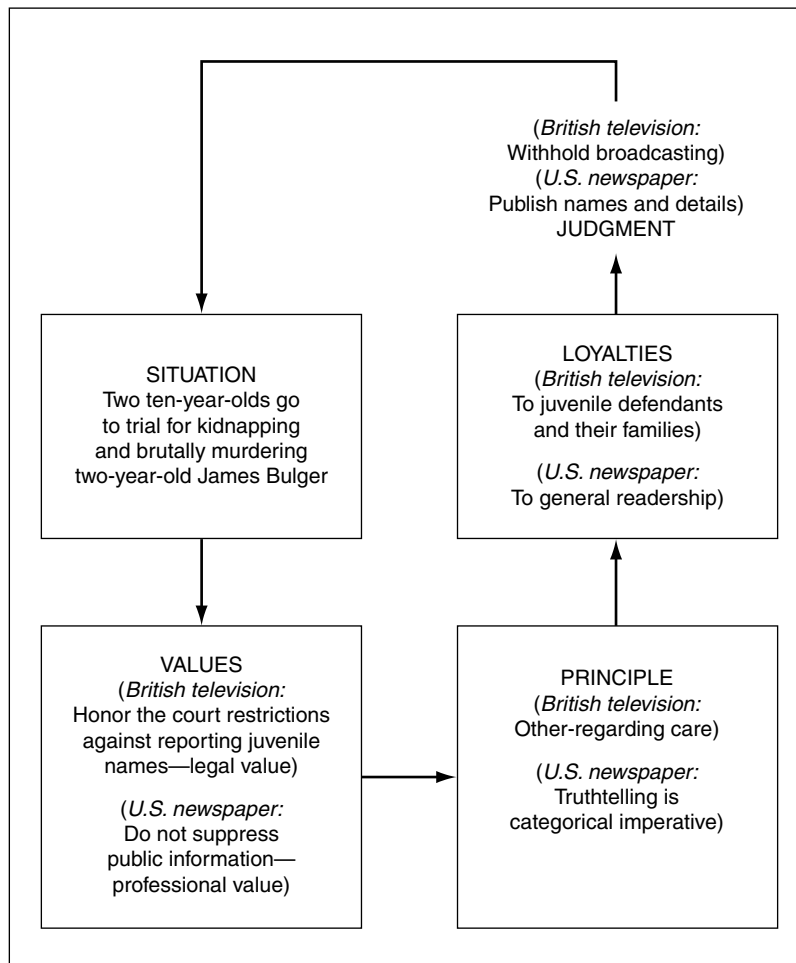
(*British television:*
Withhold broadcasting)
(*U.S. newspaper:*
Publish names and details)
JUDGMENT

SITUATION
Two ten-year-olds go
to trial for kidnapping
and brutally murdering
two-year-old James Bulger

LOYALTIES
(*British television:*
To juvenile defendants
and their families)

(*U.S. newspaper:*
To general readership)

VALUES
(*British television:*
Honor the court restrictions
against reporting juvenile
names—legal value)

(*U.S. newspaper:*
Do not suppress
public information—
professional value)

PRINCIPLE
(*British television:*
Other-regarding care)

(*U.S. newspaper:*
Truthtelling is
categorical imperative)

Figure I.3

In this case, both the television station and the newspaper make a defensible decision in terms of their newsroom values. Both values can be defended; neither is outrageous. Both news staffs aim toward a social value that is widely held in Western society. Often one media company will adopt a morally enlightened option and another will choose to break promises, cheat, and deceive. Immoral behavior cannot be justified through the Potter Box cycle. Fortunately, there are situations in which different values are themselves credible. In such instances, one professional value can compete legitimately with another using the Potter Box process.

When competing values all seem appropriate in quadrant two, resolution usually occurs in step three while working on ethical theory. Typically, one news operation appeals to an explicit ethical principle, and another makes a decision based on a professional value in step two. But in this case, two different ethical theories are relevant. The agape principle of other-regarding care insists on protecting the juvenile offenders by withholding personal information until the offenders are convicted by a jury. Telling the truth is a categorical imperative for the philosopher Kant. Following this principle, the newspaper has made every reasonable effort to verify the facts. When two different ethical theories both appear to be relevant, as in this situation, conflicts can be addressed in terms of the adequacy of the theories themselves and through metaphysics or theology.[6]

In resolving this case, the appropriate ethical choice does not appear until quadrant four. A news bureau seeking an ethically sound conclusion cannot merely appeal to a professional value and argue for an ethical theory that corresponds to that value. Although most cases come to a head over ethical principles in quadrant three, the loyalty issue is the deciding factor here. Loyalty to the innocent victims of tragedy is paramount in this instance. How can the news bureaus demonstrate their total commitment to the Bulger family? The newspaper appears to be taking advantage of this family's tragic circumstances for its own gain—it busily publishes all the gory details. Should one be loyal to oneself—that is, to a newspaper's credibility or competence or inquisitive readership—at the expense of the suffering few? Since we are innocent until proved guilty in democratic societies, should not the suffering family be able to control information about itself through publicly certified legal procedures rather than surrender those prerogatives to others ruled by their own agendas?

For our purposes, the process by which choices are made is of the greatest importance. Media professions are demanding, filled with ambiguous situations and conflicting loyalties. The practitioner must make decisions quickly and without much time for reflection. Knowing the elements in moral analysis sharpens our vocabulary, thereby enhancing our debates in media ethics. By understanding the logic of social ethics, we improve the quality of our conceptual work and thereby the validity of the choices actually made in media practice over the long term. The four dimensions introduced with the Potter Box instruct media practitioners and students in developing normative ethics instead of leaving situations trapped in a crisis or confusion.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN USE

The Potter Box can help guide us through the various cases presented in this book. In the Liverpool murder case, the relevant empirical matters are complicated but not impossible to sort out. There may be some dispute over the circumstances in the mall and which of the two ten-year-olds was the most vicious, but not over the essential details: The body was found in two days and the suspects were arrested twenty-four hours later. Thus the Potter Box insists that we always treat the specifics very carefully.

Disagreements often result from seeing the actual events differently. Here are some examples: When a newspaper purchases a building secretly, sets up a bar, and records city officials on camera, a host of details must be clear before a conclusion can be reached, before we can decide

whether the paper is guilty of entrapment, invasion of privacy, or deception. When debating a television station's responsibility to children, much of the disagreement involves the station's profits and how much free programming of high quality it can contribute without going broke. Discussions of controlling advertising are usually divided over the question of the effect advertising has on buyer behavior. Often we debate whether we must overthrow the present media system or work within it. These quarrels are usually not genuine moral disagreements. For example, should we destroy the system or work within it? Both sides may appeal to a utilitarian principle that institutions must promote the greatest amount of good possible. The debate might simply be over facts and details, over conflicting assessments of which strategy is more effective, and so forth.[7]

Also, our values need to be isolated and accounted for. Several values usually enter and shape the decision-making process. Development of an exhaustive list of the values held by participants is never possible. Nevertheless, paying attention to values helps to prevent us from basing our decisions on personal biases or unexamined prejudices.

Our values constitute the frame of reference in which theories, decisions, and situations make sense to us. Sometimes our moral values correspond favorably to carefully articulated ethical theories. We may value gentleness and compassion so highly, for example, that our attitudes and language mesh with a stringently systematic ethics of pacifism. It is more likely, however, that stepping into quadrant three to examine principles will critique the values that may cloud our judgment. For example, journalists sometimes defend the "smoking out" process—making public an accusation about a politician under the assumption that guilt or innocence will emerge once the story gets played out fully in public. This professional value is usually contradicted by ethical principles regarding truth and protecting privacy.

Patrick Plaisance is helpful in connecting values to the media professions. He sees the code of ethics adopted by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) as more practical than most because it includes a statement of professional values. The PRSA defines values this way: "Fundamental beliefs that guide our behaviors and decision-making process." These are the key professional values that the PRSA code considers vital for public relations practice: advocacy, honesty, expertise, independence, loyalty and fairness.[8]

Values motivate human action. Values are a distinctive mark of the human species. But our values are never pure. We tend to become defensive about them and typically rationalize our behavior when we violate them. Professional values are inscribed in power.[9] Professions such as journalism or law or engineering are very influential; generally, they operate in their own interests. Often professional values are high-minded. Film producers may be strongly committed to aesthetic values and advertisers to hard work, for example. But no values are innocent. In institutions, values are a complicated mixture of ideas that often need to be checked, questioned, or corrected. Steps three and four in the Potter Box (naming the principles and loyalties) help us to think critically about the conflicting or inappropriate signals we receive from step two (identifying the values).

The format in this book of first describing cases and then giving commentaries attempts to clarify the first two quadrants in the Potter Box. Case studies, by design, give the relevant details and suggest the alternatives that were considered in each situation. The cases themselves, and the commentaries particularly, explicate the values held by the principal figures in the decision-making process. Usually in conversations, speeches, memos, and animated defenses of one's behavior, a person's important values become clear. Ethicists examine rhetoric carefully to determine what material is relevant for quadrant two. The manager of a public relations agency, for example, may value innovation so highly that other dimensions of the creative process are ignored; efficiency may be so prized in a film company that only subordinate values survive; and a reporter's commitment to the adversary relationship may distort her interpretation of a politician's behavior.

Occasionally, the commentaries extend even further and offer ethical principles by which the decision can be defended—yet, on the whole, these norms, or principles, must be introduced by readers themselves. To aid this process, the following pages (see Five Ethical Guidelines) summarize

five major options. As the Potter Box demonstrates, appealing to ethical principles that illuminate the issues is a significant phase of the moral reasoning process. Often one observes newspapers and broadcasters short-circuiting the Potter Box procedures. They typically act on the basis of professional values, in effect deciding in quadrant two what their action will be. For example, in the Pentagon Papers dispute, *The New York Times* decided to publish the story because it valued First Amendment privileges so strongly that no other considerations seemed important. In this classic case, secret documents containing the Pentagon's review of Vietnam policy were stolen by Daniel Ellsberg in early 1971 and leaked to *The New York Times*. Though the documents were under national security protection, the *Times* saw duplicity and abuse of the Constitution by the U.S. government and concluded the American people had a right to know. However, on the basis of the Potter Box, we insist that no conclusion can be morally justified without a clear demonstration that an ethical principle shaped the final decision. The two quadrants on the left side, including values, explicate what actually happens. The two on the right side, including ethical principles, concern what ought to happen. The left half of the box is descriptive and the right half is normative.

We will follow the standard definitions that locate the act of valuing deep within the human will and emotions; in contrast, ethics involves critical reasoning about moral questions. As Sigmund Freud argued in *Totem and Taboo*, all societies, as far as we know, raise up certain ideals to emulate—but they also separate themselves from other cultures by establishing boundaries or taboos. A totem pole may indicate that a tribe supremely values the strength of a lion or the craftiness of a weasel. Similarly, rituals are maintained to pronounce a curse on behaviors considered totally unacceptable. In other words, valuing occurs as an aspect of our human condition as moral beings; it automatically comes to expression in everyday circumstances.[10] Values pervade all dimensions of human experience; even scientific experiments are saturated with value components. On the other hand, ethics involves an understanding of theology and philosophy as well as debates in the history of ideas over justice, virtue, the good, and so forth. Ethics also emphasizes reasoning ability and adequate justification.

Sometimes a working journalist will ask: "Why worry about principles? We know what we should do!" Such a comment often reflects a professional impatience with the idea of a moral dilemma, but it sounds a note that many moral philosophers are also making: "Why principles? What principles? Whose principles?" The philosophical mind and social critics today tend to challenge the practice of searching for moral norms.[11] Yet norms rightly understood are foundational for moral commitment. Along those lines, Charles Taylor writes: "A framework is that in which we make sense of our lives spiritually. Not to have a framework is to fall into a life which is spiritually senseless."[12]

However, while morally appropriate options can be outlined, the imposition of ethical principles by teachers and authors is normally counterproductive in that it undercuts the analytical process. The purpose of sound ethical reasoning is to draw responsible conclusions that yield justifiable actions. For this purpose, several ethical norms are introduced in the next section. In analyzing the cases in this book, these principles can be incorporated wherever appropriate and beneficial to given situations. Theories arise in specific historical circumstances and address specific issues. Therefore, no one theory can satisfactorily resolve all the questions and dilemmas in media ethics. One of the important tasks for instructors and students is learning which theory is the most powerful under what conditions. Other texts may focus on one approach across the board—utilitarianism or virtue ethics, for instance—but identifying the right theory is a significant step in the decision-making process with the Potter Box. In coming to grips with privacy, for example, agape and caring are more penetrating than utility.

Historically, ethicists have established many ethical principles.[13] However, ethicist Louis Hodges is correct in organizing all the various options into five categories—ethical theories based on virtue, duty, utility, rights, and love. For four of them, we provide the most influential, time-tested representative of each of these traditions. For example, within the contractarian tradition of

John Locke emphasizing rights, John Rawls has been selected as the dominant contemporary theorist. Judeo-Christian agape is included as the historic and pervasive ethical theory based on love; "ethics of care" (Nel Noddings) is included as a contemporary example of this approach. By working with these theories, students learn how they apply in situations close to their own experience. Readers acquainted with other theories from across the globe and with moral issues in other cultures are encouraged to substitute them instead. Confucian and Islamic ethics are included to stimulate work in other traditions and to illustrate how such theories enrich the Potter Box model for teaching ethics.

These master theories are not canonical; that is, they are not a body of self-evident truths without contradiction. Such a celebration is too glib and ignores the cultural power that dominant theories represent. The Greek *kanon* means measuring stick, a taxation table, or blueprint. Canons do grant privilege to certain texts on the grounds that without boundaries, there is only chaos, dissipated energies, "a babble of . . . complaints rather than a settled critique." Diversity arises out of unity; without a buffer zone, struggle is impossible. The canon "depends on who is teaching it how; . . . living in the same place does not mean living with the same history." The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty once wrote: "What is original about Machiavelli is that having laid down the source of struggle, he goes beyond it without ever forgetting it." Socrates makes the same point in the *Crito*—recognizing that the fact that he criticizes, what he criticizes, and how he criticizes is made possible by the very city he is criticizing. Throughout this text, theorists provide a common language not as abstract authority, but in order that we can think on our own—rebelliously or amiably, as circumstances demand.[14]

FIVE ETHICAL GUIDELINES

1A. 1. *Aristotle's Mean: "Moral virtue is a middle state determined by practical wisdom."*[15]

From Aristotle's predecessor, Plato, the Greeks inherited the four cardinal virtues: temperance, justice, courage, and wisdom. Of these virtues, temperance was the capstone, the virtue through which the others flowed. When writing his ethics, Aristotle emphasized moderation, or temperance, and sharpened it. Just as intellectual life is reasoning well, moderation is living well. In Aristotle's philosophy, justice is a mean lying between indifference and the selfish indulgence of insisting on personal interests. Courage is a mean between cowardice and temerity. Wisdom is a middle state between stultifying caution and unreflective spontaneity.

Propriety is stressed rather than sheer duty or love. As a biologist, Aristotle notes that both too much food and too little spoil health. Whereas many ethical theories focus on behavior, Aristotle emphasizes character rather than conduct per se. Outer behavior, in his view, reflects inner disposition. Virtuous persons have developed habits in terms of temperance; in order for them to flourish as human beings, the path they walk is that of equilibrium and harmony.[16]

In Aristotle's own words, the principle is this: "Moral virtue is a fixed quality of the will, consisting essentially in a middle state, as determined by the standard that a person of practical wisdom would apply."[17] Practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is moral discernment, a knowledge of the proper ends of conduct and the means of attaining them. Practical wisdom is distinguished in Aristotle's teaching from both theoretical knowledge and technical skill. Humans who are not fanatics or eccentrics, but of harmonious character, develop their proportion and balance through everyday habit, guided by reason. "Over a career of moral growth. . . . [we develop] acuity in our perceptions and a disposition to reason wisely. . . . [We acquire] states of emotional maturity and character traits that dispose us toward the virtuous mark in our choices. . . . The wise person within whom there are well-integrated traits of character is the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong."[18]

Aristotle challenges those of practical wisdom to apply this discernment "to individual facts" by locating "the mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect."[19] And the basic principle of the middle state applies to several diverse areas. In journalism, the sensational is derided, and the virtues of balance, fairness, and equal time are recognized. When faced with a decision of whether to prohibit all raising of tobacco or to allow unregulated promotion, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) operated in a middle state; that is, the FTC—banned cigarette ads from television and placed warning labels on cigarette packages. Recommendations about liquor advertising fall between the extremes of not advertising at all and no restrictions on it whatsoever. A classic political example is nuclear arms reduction, back on the table with the Obama administration. Those who favor an arms buildup without restrictions, on the one hand, and those who favor total dismantling of nuclear weapons, on the other, both stymie international negotiations. The legitimate claims of two legally appropriate entities must be negotiated, Aristotle would contend. The middle state mean is the most fair and reasonable option for honorably resolving disputes between labor and management, between school board and striking teachers, and between Palestinian and Israeli politicians. Generally speaking, in extremely complicated situations with layers of ambiguity and uncertainty, Aristotle's principle has the most intelligent appeal. This is the path recommended, for example, in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* bankruptcy case (Case 3).

Some issues, however, are not amenable to a center. A balanced diet positioned between famine and gluttony is undoubtedly wise, but occasionally a health issue requires drastic surgery. There were slaves in Greece; Aristotle opted for treating them well and fairly but not for the radical change of releasing them altogether. In considering action regarding a hostile editor, a reporter cannot say, "The two extremes are to murder him or burn down his house, so I will take the middle state and merely pummel him senseless in a back alley." In the same way, bank robbers cannot justify themselves by operating at night so that customers will not be hurt and by taking only $10,000 instead of $100,000.

Not every action or every emotion admits of a middle state. The very names of some of them suggest wickedness, for instance, spite, shamelessness, envy, and, among actions, adultery, theft, and murder. All these and similar emotions and actions are blamed as being intrinsically wicked and not merely when practiced to excess or insufficiently. Consequently, it is not possible ever to feel or commit them rightly; they are always wrong.[20] Extreme oppression demands extreme resistance. Fascism needs opposition. Suicide bombing requires protest.

Remember, Aristotle was not advocating a bland, weak-minded consensus or the proverbial middle-of-the-road compromise. The mean is not isolated action reduced to political wheeling-and-dealing or bureaucratic fixing. We say of an artistic masterpiece, "Nothing can be added or subtracted without spoiling it." This is Aristotle's intent with the middle state as well. Although the word *mean* has a mathematical flavor and a sense of average, a precise equal distance from two extremes is not intended. Aristotle speaks of the "mean relative to us," that is, to the individual's status, particular situation, and strong and weak points.[21] Thus, if we are generally prone to one extreme, we ought to lean toward another this time. Affirmative action programs can be justified as appropriate in that they help correct a prior imbalance in hiring. The mean is not only the right quantity, but as Aristotle puts it, "the middle course occurs at the right time, toward the right people, for the right motives, and in the right manner."[22] This is the best course and is the mark of goodness. The distance depends on the nature of the agents as determined by the weight of the moral case before them. Consider the Greek love of aesthetic proportion in sculpture. The mean in throwing a javelin is four-fifths of the distance to the end, and in hammering a nail, nine-tenths from the end.

1B. Confucius's Golden Mean: "Moral virtue is the appropriate location between two extremes."

Virtue ethics rooted in temperance emerged at the earliest beginnings of Western philosophy in fourth-century B.C.E. Greece. But the theory of the mean—more exactly rendered as "equilibrium

and harmony"—was developed before Aristotle by the grandson of Confucius in fifth-century B.C.E. China.[23]

Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.) worked as a professional teacher in the states of Qi and Chou. In his fifties, he became a magistrate, then minister of justice in Chou. At age fifty-six, however, he fell out of favor and spent the next thirteen years traveling and teaching. Finding the rulers of other states uninterested in his ideas, he returned to Lu (the small state where he was born) at sixty-eight and taught there until his death eight years later. He is reported to have had more than 3,000 students.[24]

A century and a half before Aristotle, Confucius rooted his ethical theory in virtue. Confucius turned on its head the traditional idea of a superior person as born into an aristocratic family. Human excellence is seen as depending on character rather than on social position. "The virtuous person, according to Confucius . . . is benevolent, kind, generous, and above all balanced, observing the mean in all things. . . . Confucius thinks of virtue as a mean between extremes."[25]

From one of his four major books, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, representative sayings describe his teaching on virtue:

> Equilibrium (*chung*) is the great root from which grow all human actings in the world. And . . . harmony (*yung*) is the universal path all should pursue. Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish. [*Four Books,* vol. I, I.4, I.5]
>
> The superior man embodies the course of the mean; the mean man acts contrary to the course of the mean. . . . The superior man's embodying the course of the mean is because he is a superior man, and so always maintains the mean. [*Four Books,* vol. I, II.1, II.2]
>
> The master said, "Perfect is the virtue which is according to the mean." [*Four Books,* vol. I, III]
>
> The superior man cultivates friendly harmony without being weak. . . . He stands erect in the middle, without inclining to either side. How firm is he in his energy. [*Four Books,* vol. I, X.5]

One begins operating with this principle by identifying extremes—doing nothing versus exposing everything, for example, in a question of how to report some event. In cases where there are two competing obligations, they often can be resolved through the golden mean. Should newspaper staffs be actively involved in community affairs, for example? The journalist's role as practitioner may at times contradict the journalist's role as citizen. In terms of Confucius's mean, the newspaper rejects both extremes: the defect of excluding all outside involvements and the excess of paying no attention to external affiliations. In this situation, the application of Confucius's principle would recommend that the newspaper publish a financial disclosure of the publisher's holdings, withdraw from potential conflicts of interest such as local industry boards, report all staff connections, and so forth but allow other civic involvements.[26]

2A. Kant's Categorical Imperative: "Act on that maxim which you will to become a universal law."

Immanuel Kant, born in 1724 in Königsberg, Germany, influenced eighteenth-century philosophy more than any other Western thinker. His writings established a permanent contribution to epistemology and ethics. Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785) and *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) are important books for every serious student of ethics.[27]

Kant gave intellectual substance to the golden rule by his categorical imperative, which implies that what is right for one is right for all. As a guide for measuring the morality of our action, Kant declared: "Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."[28] In other words, check the underlying principle of your decision, and see whether you want it applied universally. The test of a genuine moral obligation is that it can be universalized. The decision to perform an act must be based on a moral law no less binding than such laws of nature as gravity. *Categorical* here means unconditional, without any question of

extenuating circumstances, without any exceptions. Right is right and must be done even under the most extreme conditions. What is morally right we ought to do even if the sky should fall, that is, despite whatever consequences may follow.

Kant believed there were higher truths (which he called *noumena*) superior to our limited reason and transcending the physical universe. Conscience is inborn in every person, and it must be obeyed. The categorical imperatives, inherent in human beings, are apprehended not by reason but through conscience. By the conscience one comes under moral obligation; it informs us when we ought to choose right and shun evil. To violate one's conscience—no matter how feeble and uninformed—brings about feelings of guilt. Through the conscience, moral law is embedded in the texture of human nature.

The moral law is unconditionally binding on all rational beings. Someone breaks a promise, for example, because it seems to be in his or her own interest; but if all people broke their promises when it suited them, promises would cease to have meaning, and societies would deteriorate into terror. Certain actions, therefore, are always wrong: cheating, stealing, and dishonesty, for example. Benevolence and truthtelling are always and universally right.[29] These moral duties are not abrogated by the passage of time nor superseded by such achievements as the Bill of Rights. Even if one could save another's life by telling a lie, lying would still be wrong. Deception by the press to get a good story or by advertisers to sell products cannot be excused or overlooked in the Kantian view. Dishonesty in public relations is unacceptable. Violent pornography in entertainment is not just one variable among many; it is too fundamental an issue to be explained away by an appeal to the First Amendment.

Kant's contribution is called *deontological ethics* (*deon* from the Greek word for duty). The good will "shines like a jewel," he wrote, and the obligation of the good conscience is to do its duty for the sake of duty.[30] Ethics for Kant was largely reducible to reverence for duty, which is visible in his work as a hymn on its behalf. If the good will is exercised as an end in itself, the will–duty relationship can be elaborated this way. We have a duty "to interact with others in ways that maximize their ability to exercise free will, or reason. To fail to do so is to fail to recognize our existence as rational beings who, by the presence of our will to reason, are obligated to act morally toward others."[31] For Kant, categorical imperatives must be obeyed even to the sacrifice of all natural inclinations and socially accepted standards. Kant's ethics has an austere quality, but the principles are generally regarded as having greater motivating power than subjective approaches that are easily rationalized on the basis of temporary moods. His categorical imperative encourages obedience and faithful practice.

Sir David Ross, a twentieth-century Oxford philosopher, developed a different version of duty ethics in his books *The Right and the Good* (1930) and *The Foundation of Ethics* (1939). Moral duties such as keeping your promises were compelling to him as they were for Kant. But rather than constructing such principles rationally, he argued that "objective moral truths are intuitively known, self-evident facts about the world."[32] Obligations not to lie and duties of justice, gratitude, and noninjury have inherent value, and Ross called them "prima-facie duties"—*prima facie* meaning upon first view or self-evident. Since it is immediately obvious to human beings that they should not kill, Kant's universalizability construction was unnecessary, and accepting a universe of formal laws was not required. Telling the truth is a self-evident obligation to media professionals and attempting to justify it further, in Ross's view, only divides and deters potential adherents. While *Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning* emphasizes the classic deontological ethics of Kant, Ross's prima facie duties will be helpful at various points as an alternative.

2B. Islam's Divine Commands: "Justice, human dignity and truth are unconditional duties."

Islamic morality is known through the original sources of Islam, that is, the *Qur'an* and the revelations to successive prophets and messengers, the last of whom was Muhammad of Arabia (572–632 A.D.)

In Islamic ethics, justice, human dignity, and truth are divine commands. This is a duty ethics based on unconditional imperatives. Rather than a system of formal laws as in Kant, ethical principles are commanded by Allah. Islam is based on the oneness (*Tawhid*) of God. Whatever denies a belief in God is unacceptable: "Do not make another an object of worship" (*Qur'an* 51:51).[33] No God exists but Allah. All Islamic virtues specifically and human responsibility generally are grounded in monotheism (the belief in one God).

From *Tawhid* is the overarching duty to command the right and prohibit the wrong. All Muslims have the responsibility to follow Islamic principles and to encourage others to adopt them. "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting all that is good, and forbidding what is wrong" (*Qur'an* 3:104). "Commanding to the right and prohibiting from the wrong" is one of Islam's best known precepts.

This system of ethics, commanded by Allah and revealed in the *Qur'an*, is comprehensive for all of life. The teachings of Islam cover all fields of human existence. As Muhammad Ayish and Haydar Badawi Sadig observe, "This ethical system is broad enough to tackle general issues confronting the Islamic community and specific enough to take care of the slightest manifestations of human behavior."[34] Muhammad the prophet is described in the *Qur'an* as "a perfect model" (33:21) and "the exemplar of virtues" (68:4). Patience, moderation, trust, and love are all included in Islamic morality, and prudence is a core virtue among all the others. It is well known that moral decadence portrayed in the media is unacceptable, regardless of political guarantees of free expression. But three principles are basic and of special importance to communication: justice, human dignity, and truth.[35]

Islam emphasizes justice (*'adl*), considering justice, in fact, the essence of Islam itself. The goal of the Prophet Muhammad and the purpose of the *Qur'an* was "to establish justice among the people" (*Qur'an* 57:25). "Justice is God's supreme attribute; its denial constitutes a denial of God Himself."[36] The injunctions are clear: "O believers. Stand firmly for justice as witnesses of God, even if it be against yourself, your parents and relatives, and whether it be against the rich or poor" (*Qur'an* 4:135). "When you judge among people, judge with justice" (*Qur'an* 4:58). As Ali Mohamed observes, this umbrella concept "balances between rights and obligations without discrimination, without an emphasis on one at the expense of the other." Islam gives priority to justice as "the supreme value that underpins other values such as freedom and equality."[37]

Respecting human dignity is the second major principle revealed in the *Qur'an* as commanded by Allah. God honors humans above all His creatures, and therefore, the human species is to honor its members to the maximum. Allah "created man in the best of molds" (*Qur'an* 95:4). In secular ethics, the concept of dignity is individualistic and horizontal, but in Islamic ethics, it is rooted in the sacredness of human nature: "Humans are not just one element in the vast expense of God's creation but are the *raison d'etrê* for all that exists."[38]

To safeguard the individual's dignity, the *Qur'an* warns against defamation, backbiting, and derision. Respecting others as human beings is a wide-ranging theme, including the smallest details: "Let not some men among you laugh at others. It may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let some women laugh at others. It may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by offensive nicknames" (*Qur'an* 49:11). Many of the virtues on Islam's extensive list are rooted in the honor owed to the human species. As Malaysian scholar Zulkiple Abdullah Ghani puts it: "Islam provides universal values and ethics in designating communication functions and verifying its end products, with the main objective of enhancing the dignity of mankind."[39] Kant uses different language, but for him, human dignity is an unconditional imperative also. In his language: "Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end and never merely as means."[40]

And truth is a pillar of Islamic ethics also. The Prophet speaks the truth, and Allah's word in the *Qur'an* is true. Therefore, truthfulness is likewise at the center of human affairs and fundamental to Islamic communication. "Telling lies is as evil as worshipping idols, which is the worst offence

Muslims can commit."[41] As it says in the *Qur'an*, "Shun the abomination of idols, and shun the word that is false" (22:30). There is no other pathway to Paradise than telling the truth, as the Prophet said: "Truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise."[42] Muslims are able to uphold the truth when they follow the Islamic way of life: "They are steadfast, truthful, obedient, charitable, and they pray for forgiveness at dawn" (*Qur'an* 3:17).

> Muhammad emphasized the propagation of truth and the common good for the people as a whole. He insisted on verification of information before spreading it among people. As such, he disliked rumors, and slanderous characterization of individuals or groups. His most famous saying is "Actions are based on intentions." He asked people to have open and sincere dialogue.[43]

In Islam, the three principles provided by the *Qur'an* and the prophetic examples—justice, human dignity, and truth—are the framework for believers. The First International Conference of Muslim Journalists held in Jakarta in 1981 recommended that all Muslims in the media should follow the Islamic rules of conduct, and the Association of Muslim Journalists has lived this way ever since. But Islamic ethics also testifies to the human race as a whole that following these principles brings fulfillment and well-being to societies everywhere. These three principles are directly relevant to media ethics. In those situations where unconditional imperatives are the most appropriate, justice, human dignity, and truth recommend themselves as enduring standards.

3. Mill's Principle of Utility: "Seek the greatest happiness for the aggregate whole."[44]

Utilitarianism is an ethical view widespread in North American society and a notion well developed in philosophy. There are many different varieties, but they all hold in one way or another that we are to determine what is right or wrong by considering what will yield the best consequences for the welfare of human beings. The morally right alternative produces the greatest balance of good over evil. All that matters ultimately in determining the right and wrong choice is the amount of good promoted and evil restrained.

Modern utilitarianism originated with the British philosophers Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). Their traditional version was hedonistic, holding that the good end is happiness or pleasure. The quantity of pleasure depends on each situation; it can be equal, Bentham would say, for a child's game of kickball and for writing poetry.[45] Mill contended that happiness was the sole end of human action and the test by which all conduct ought to be judged.[46] Preventing pain and promoting pleasure were for Bentham and Mill the only desirable ends.

Later utilitarians, however, expanded on the notion of happiness. They have noted that if pleasure is upheld as the one object of desire (in the sense of "wine, women, and song"), then all people do not desire it (Puritans did not); therefore, it cannot be the only desired goal. Thus, these utilitarians argue that other values besides pure happiness possess intrinsic worth—values such as friendship, knowledge, health, and symmetry. For these pluralistic utilitarians, rightness or wrongness is to be assessed in terms of the total amount of value ultimately produced. For example, after burglars broke into the Democratic Party's National Committee offices in the Watergate Hotel in 1972, the press's aggressive coverage did not yield a high amount of pleasure for anyone except enemies of Richard Nixon. Yet, as described in Case 13, for utilitarians, the overall consequences were valuable enough so that most people considered the actions of the press proper, even though pain was inflicted on a few.

Worked out along these lines, utilitarianism provides a definite guideline for aiding our ethical choices. It suggests that we first calculate in the most conscientious manner possible the consequences of the various options open to us. We would ask how much benefit and how much harm would result in the lives of everyone affected, including ourselves. Once we have completed these computations for all relevant courses of action, we are morally obligated to choose the alternative

that maximizes value or minimizes loss. The norm of utility instructs us to produce the greatest possible balance of good over evil. Actors should focus on "the greatest amount of happiness altogether."[47] To perform any other action knowingly would result in our taking an unethical course.

Two kinds of utility are typically distinguished: act and rule utilitarianism. For act utilitarians, the basic question always involves the greatest good in a specific case. One must ask whether a particular action in a particular situation will result in a balance of good over evil. Rule utilitarians, who also attribute their view to Mill, construct moral rules on the basis of promoting the greatest general welfare. The question is not which action yields the greatest utility, but which general rule does. The principle of utility is still the standard, but at the level of rules rather than specific judgments. The act utilitarian may conclude that in one specific situation civil disobedience obtains a balance of good over evil, whereas the rule utilitarian would seek to generate a broadly applicable moral rule such as "civil disobedience is permitted except when physically violent."[48]

Although happiness is an end few would wish to contradict, utilitarianism does present difficulties. It depends on making accurate measurements of consequences, when in everyday affairs the result of choices is often blurred vision, at least in the long term. For instance, who can possibly calculate the social changes that we will face in future decades in the wake of converging media technologies? Moreover, the principle of the greatest public benefit applies only to societies in which certain nonutilitarian standards of decency prevail. In addition, utilitarians view society as a collection of individuals, each with his or her own desires and goals; the public good is erroneously considered the sum total of private goods.[49]

These ambiguities, although troublesome and objectionable, do not by themselves destroy the utilitarian perspective, at least for those who are intellectually sophisticated. For our purposes in examining media ethics, no moral norms can be considered free of all uncertainties. However, the obvious difficulties with utilitarianism usually can be addressed in round two or three when circulating through the Potter Box for specificity and clarification.[50] Occasionally, in resolving the cases considered in the following pages, utility is the most productive principle to include in the lower right-hand quadrant. In the classic case of Robin Hood accosting the rich in order to provide for the poor, act utilitarianism appropriately condones his behavior as morally justified.

4. Rawls's Veil of Ignorance: "Justice emerges when negotiating without social differentiations."

John Rawls's book, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), has been widely quoted in contemporary work on ethics. From Rawls's perspective, fairness is the fundamental idea in the concept of justice. [51] He represents a return to an older tradition of substantive moral philosophy and thereby establishes an alternative to utilitarianism. Rawls articulates an egalitarian perspective that carries the familiar social contract theory of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau to a more fundamental level.

In easy cases, fairness means quantity: Everyone in the same union doing similar work would all fairly receive a 10 percent raise; teachers should give the same letter grade to everyone who had three wrong on a particular test; and at a birthday party, each child should get two cookies. Eliminating arbitrary distinctions expresses fairness in its basic sense. However, Rawls struggles more with inherent inequalities. For example, players in a baseball game do not protest the fact that pitchers handle the ball more times than outfielders do. We sense that graduated income taxes are just, though teachers pay only 22 percent and editors, advertisers, public relations staff, and film producers perhaps find themselves in the 50 percent bracket.

When situations necessitating social contracts are inherently unequal, blind averages are unfair and intuitional judgments are too prone to error. Therefore, Rawls recommends his now classic "veil of ignorance," asking that all parties step back from real circumstances into an "original position" behind a barrier where roles and social differentiations are eliminated.[52] Participants are abstracted from individual features such as race, class, gender, group interests, and other real conditions and are considered equal members of society as a whole. They are men and women with

ordinary tastes and ambitions, but each suspends these personality features and regains them only after a contract is in place. Behind the veil, no one knows how he or she will fare when stepping out into real life. The participants may be male or female, ten years old or ninety, Russian or Polish, rookie or veteran, black or white, advertising vice president or sales representative for a weekly magazine. As we negotiate social agreements in the situation of imagined equality behind the veil of ignorance, Rawls argues, we inevitably seek to protect the weaker party and to minimize risks. In the event that I emerge from the veil as a beginning reporter rather than a big-time publisher, I will opt for fair treatment for the former. The most vulnerable party receives priority in these cases. Therefore, the result, Rawls would contend, is a just resolution.

Because negotiation and discussion occur, the veil of ignorance does not rely merely on intuition. Such individual decisions too easily become self-serving and morally blind. Nor is the veil another name for utility, with decisions based on what is best for the majority. Again, the issue is morally appropriate action, not simply action that benefits the most people. In fact, Rawls's strategy stands against the tendency in democratic societies to rally around the interests of the majority and give only lip service to the minority.

Two principles emerge from the hypothetical social contract formulated behind the veil. These, Rawls declares, will be the inevitable and prudent choices of rational women and men acting in their own self-interest. The first principle calls for a maximal system of equal basic liberty. Every person must have the largest political liberty compatible with a like liberty for all. Liberty has priority in that it can never be traded away for economic and social advantages. Thus, the first principle permanently conditions the second. The second principle involves all social goods other than liberty and allows inequalities in the distribution of these goods only if they act to benefit the least advantaged party. The inequalities in power, wealth, and income on which we agree must benefit the members of society who are worse off.[53]

Consider the press coverage in the well-known case of William Kennedy Smith for the alleged rape of a woman at the Kennedy Palm Beach compound in 1991. The case continues to be used as a learning tool, even though Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts is now deceased. The extensive media coverage at that time was justified on the basis of Senator Kennedy's role at the bar earlier in the evening and public interest in the Kennedy family. Given conventional news values, the public's right to know supersedes the Kennedy family's right to privacy. But what if we go beyond values to ethical theory? What if Senator Kennedy and a newsperson had been put behind the veil of ignorance, not knowing who would be who when they emerged. Undoubtedly they would have agreed that reporting on the public acts of public officials is permissible but that publicizing the alleged rape incident itself, now many years later, would be undue harassment in the absence of any new material. Rawls's principle precludes reporters from using their power to pester without end those who are caught in a news story.

On a broader level, place politicians and journalists behind the veil and attempt to establish a working relationship agreeable to all after the veil is parted and space/time resumes. All stark adversary notions would disappear. There would be no agreement that elected officials as a class should be called the enemy or liars, because those who emerge as politicians would resent such labels. Independence, some toughness, and persistence seem reasonable for media professionals, but a basic respect for all humans would replace an unmitigated and cynical abrasiveness among those wielding instruments of power.

5A. Judeo-Christian Persons as Ends: "Love your neighbor as yourself."[54]

Ethical norms of nearly all kinds emerge from various religious traditions. The highest good in the *Bhagavad Gita*, for example, is enlightenment. Of all the options, however, the Judeo-Christian tradition has dominated American culture to the greatest extent, and its theological ethics has been the most influential. By studying a prominent religious perspective in terms of the issues and cases

in this textbook, students should be inspired to take other religious ethics seriously as well. The intention here is pedagogical—to learn a system of ethical reasoning and ethical concepts within a familiar context. On that foundation, other frameworks can be added, and dilemmas in different cultural contexts can be addressed responsibly. Islam and Confucianism, for example, have developed sophisticated ethical traditions.[55]

The ethics of love is not exclusively a Judeo-Christian notion. In the fourth century B.C.E., the Chinese thinker Mo Tzu spoke in similar terms: "What is the Will of Heaven like? The answer is— To love all men everywhere alike."[56] Nor are all Judeo-Christian ethics a pure morality of love; some ethicists in that tradition make obedience or justice or peace supreme.[57] But the classic contribution of this religious perspective, in its mainline form, contends that ultimately humans stand under only one moral command or virtue: to love God and humankind. All other obligations, though connected to this central one, are considered derivative.

"Love your neighbor" is normative, and uniquely so in this tradition, because love characterizes the very heart of the universe. Augustine is typical in declaring that divine love is the supreme good.[58] The inexhaustible, self-generating nature of God is love. Therefore, human love has its inspiration, motive, and ground in the highest reaches of eternity. Humans are made in the image of God; the more loving they are, the more like God they are. At this very point the Judeo-Christian norm differs from other ethical formulations. Love is not only a raw principle, stern and unconditional, as in Kant's categorical imperative. Regard for others is not simply based on a contract motivated by self-interest, as in John Rawls's theory. Love remains personal at its very roots, and although rigorously dutiful, it is never purely legalistic.[59] As Heinrich Emil Brunner noted in summarizing the biblical exhortations:

> "Live in love." Or, still more plainly: "Remain in love." . . . It is the summons to remain in the giving of God, to return to Him again and again as the origin of all power to be good and to do good. There are not "other virtues" alongside the life of love. . . . Each virtue, one might say, is a particular way in which the person who lives in love takes the other into account, and "realizes" him as "Thou."[60]

The Old Testament spoke of loving kindness, but the Christian tradition introduced the more dramatic term *agape*—unselfishness; other-regarding care and other-directed love; distinct from friendship, charity, benevolence, and other weaker notions. In the tradition of agape, to love a human being is to accept that person's existence as it is given; to love him or her as is.[61] Thus, human beings have unconditional value apart from shifting circumstances. The commitment is unalterable; loyalty to others is permanent, indefectible, in sickness and in health. It is unloving, in this view, to give others only instrumental value and to use them merely as a means to our own ends. Especially in those areas that do not coincide with a person's own desires, love is not contradicted. In this perspective, we ought to love our neighbors with the same zeal and consistency with which we love ourselves.

Agape as the center of meaning in Judeo-Christian ethics raises significant issues that ethicists in this tradition continue to examine: the regular failure of its adherents to practice this principle; the relationship of love and justice, of the personal and institutional; the role of reason as distinguished from discernment; and whether agape is a universal claim or, if not, what its continuity is with other alternatives.[62]

However, all agree that loving one's neighbor in this tradition is far from sentimental utopianism. In fact, agape is strong enough to serve as the most appropriate norm in Chapters 4, 5, and 14. Moreover, it is thoroughly practical, issuing specific help to those who need it. (*Neighbor* was a term for the weak, poor, orphans, widows, aliens, and disenfranchised in the Old Testament.) Even enemies are included. This love is not discriminatory: no black or white, no learned or simple, no friend or foe. Although agape does not deny the distinctions that characterize creaturely existence, it stays uniquely blind to them. Love does not first estimate rights or claims and then determine whether the person merits attention. The norm here is giving and forgiving with uncalculating

spontaneity and spending oneself to fulfill a neighbor's well-being. Because of its long attention to understanding the character of humanness, the agape principle has been especially powerful in its treatment of social injustice, invasion of privacy, violence, and pornography.

5B. Noddings's Relational Ethics: "The 'one-caring' attends to the 'cared-for' in thought and deeds."

Feminist scholarship in the past decade has given more precise development and higher status to the central terms in love-based ethics: nurturing, caring, affection, empathy, and inclusiveness.[63] For Carol Gilligan, the female moral voice roots ethics in the primacy of relationships. Rather than the basic standard of avoiding harm to others, she insists on compassion and nurturance for resolving conflicts among people.[64] Nel Noddings's *Caring* rejects outright the "ethics of principle as ambiguous and unstable," insisting that human care should play the central role in moral decision making.[65] For Julia Wood, "an interdependent sense of self" undergirds the ethic of care, wherein we are comfortable acting independently while "acting cooperatively . . . in relationship with others."[66] In Linda Steiner's work, feminists' ethical self-consciousness also identifies subtle forms of oppression and imbalance and teaches us to "address questions about whose interests are regarded as worthy of debate."[67]

For Noddings, ethics begins with particular relations, and there are two parties in any relation. The first member she calls the "one-caring," and the second, the "cared-for." The one-caring is "motivationally engrossed in the cared-for," attending to the cared-for in deeds as well as thoughts. "Caring is not simply a matter of feeling favorably disposed toward humankind in general. . . . Real care requires actual encounters with specific individuals; it cannot be accomplished through good intentions alone." And, "when all goes well, the cared-for actively receives the caring deeds of the one-caring."[68]

Noddings does not explicitly define a care ethics, but she emphasizes three central dimensions: engrossment, motivational displacement, and reciprocity. The one-caring is engrossed in the needs of the other. "The one-caring is fully disposed and attentive toward the cared-for, has regard for the other, desires the other's well-being, and is responsive and receptive to the other." Through motivational displacement, those caring retain but move beyond their "own interests to an empathy for or 'feeling with' the experiences and views of the cared-for." The cared-for must reciprocate in order to complete the caring relationship. "Reciprocity may be a direct response or it simply may be the delight or the personal growth of the cared-for witnessed by the one caring."[69]

TO WHOM IS MORAL DUTY OWED?

The Potter Box forces us to get the empirical data straight, investigate our values, and articulate an appropriate principle. Once these steps are accomplished, we face the question of our ultimate loyalties. Many times, in the consideration of ethics, direct conflicts arise between the rights of one person or group and those of others. Policies and actions inevitably must favor some to the exclusion of others. Often our most agonizing dilemmas revolve around our primary obligation to a person or social group. We may ask ourselves this question: Is my first loyalty to my company or to a particular client?

To reach a responsible decision, we must clarify which parties will be influenced by our decision and which ones we feel especially obligated to support. When analyzing the cases in this book, we will usually investigate five categories of obligation:

1. *Duty to ourselves.* Maintaining our integrity and following our conscience may be the best alternative in many situations. However, careerism is a serious professional problem and often tempts us to act out of self-interest while we claim to be following our conscience.

2. *Duty to clients/subscribers/supporters.* If they pay the bills, and if we sign contracts to work for them, do we not carry a special obligation to them? Even in the matter of a viewing audience that pays no service fee for a broadcast signal, our duty to them must be addressed when we are deciding which course of action is the most appropriate. Patrick Plaisance is correct that the principle of transparency is essential for trust to develop between media practitioners and these stakeholders.[70]

3. *Duty to our organization or firm.* Often company policy is followed much too blindly; yet, loyalty to an employer can be a moral good. Whistle blowing, that is, exposing procedures or persons who are harming the company's reputation, is also morally relevant here. Reporters might even defy court orders and refuse to relinquish records in whistle-blowing cases, based on the thesis that ultimately the sources on which media companies depend will dry up. Thus, duty to one's firm might conceivably take priority over duty to an individual or to a court.

4. *Duty to professional colleagues.* A practitioner's strongest obligation is often to colleagues doing similar work. Understandably, reporters tend to prize, most of all, their commitments to fellow reporters and their mutual standards of good reporting. Some even maintain an adversarial posture against editors and publishers, just short of violating the standards of accepted etiquette. Film artists presume a primary obligation to their professional counterparts, and account executives to theirs. However, these professional loyalties, almost intuitively held, must be examined when we are determining what action is most appropriate.

5. *Duty to society.* This is an increasingly important dimension of applied ethics and has been highlighted for the media under the term *social responsibility*. Questions of privacy and confidentiality, for example, nearly always encounter claims about society's welfare over that of a particular person. The "public's right to know" has become a journalistic slogan. Advertising agencies cannot resolve questions of tobacco ads, political commercials, and nutritionless products without taking the public good fully into the equation. When some Tylenol bottles were laced with cyanide, the public relations staff of Johnson & Johnson had its foremost obligation to the public. Violence and pornography in media entertainment are clearly social issues. In such cases, to benefit the company or oneself primarily is not morally defensible. In these situations, loyalty to society warrants preeminence.

Our duty to society requires a world vision. International trade and global communication have fundamentally altered the boundaries in which we live. Many social issues are worldwide in scope—global warming, food supply and distribution, risks of nuclear and chemical warfare, health and infectious diseases, world travel networks. Regardless of our home country, we are citizens of the world. Stephen Ward has developed a global journalism ethics based on cosmopolitan values such as human rights, freedom, and justice. "We live simultaneously in two communities: the local community of birth and a community of common human aspirations. . . . We should not allow local attachments to override fundamental human rights and duties."[71] Instead of following the fragmented "act locally and think globally," world citizens think and act locally and globally at the same time.[72]

Throughout this book, the media practitioner's moral obligation to society is stressed as critically important. Admittedly, the meaning of that responsibility is often ill-defined and subject to debate. For example, when justifying one's decision, particular social segments must be specified: the welfare of children, the rights of a minority, or the needs of senior citizens. We have emphasized that, in spite of the difficulties, precisely such debate must be at the forefront when we are considering the loyalty quadrant in the Potter Box. No longer do the media operate with a crass "public be damned" philosophy. Increasingly, the customer is king; belligerent appeals to owner privilege have been lessened. However, these gains are only the beginning. They need to be propelled forward so that a sincere sense of social responsibility and a genuine concern for the citizenry become characteristic marks of all contemporary media operations in news, advertising, public relations, and entertainment.

The version of the Potter Box described in this introduction furthers this textbook's overall preoccupation with social responsibility. Consider the upper quadrants of the Potter Box (empirical definition and ultimate loyalties), which stresses the social context. As was noted earlier, the Potter Box as a schematic design is not just an eclectic, random gathering of several elements for justifying a decision or policy. Although the lower half (values and ethical principles) deals more with analytical matters than it does with sociological ones in everyday experience, it also feeds into the higher half. Additionally, the two levels are integrated at crucial junctures so that social situations initiate the process and the choice of cultural loyalties forces one toward the final decision. Thus the loyalty component especially provides a pivotal juncture in moral discourse and indicates that conceptual analysis can hardly be appraised until one sees the implications for institutional arrangements and the relevant social groups. Along those lines, Nel Noddings strongly urges that caring—the notion of relatedness between people—take a central role in decision making. From her perspective, mere subscription to principle without concentrating on the people involved has caused much needless wrong.[73]

The line of decision making that we follow, then, has its final meaning in the social order. Certainly, precision is necessary when we are dealing with ethical principles, just as the relation of principles must always be drawn to the values held and empirical definition described. But the meaning becomes clear when the choice is made for a particular social context or a specific set of institutional arrangements. Considered judgments, in this view, do not derive directly from normative principles but are woven into a set of obligations one assumes toward certain segments of society. In this scheme, debate over institutional questions is fundamental, and ethical thinking is not completed until social applications and implications have been designated. In social ethics of this kind, the task is not just one of definition but also an elaboration of the perplexities regarding social justice, power, bureaucracies, and cultural forms. Social theory is central to the task, not peripheral.[74]

WHO OUGHT TO DECIDE?

During each phase of ethical reasoning, some actor or group of actors is directly involved in deciding, determining values, selecting moral norms, and choosing loyalties. The cases in this book cannot be read or discussed fruitfully without constant attention to the question of who is making the decision. At every step, applied ethics always considers seriously the issue of who should be held accountable.

Usually many decision makers are involved. In simple cases, it is an organizational matter where an editor or executive decides, rather than a reporter or sales representative. In more complicated areas, can producers of entertainment dismiss their responsibility for quality programming by arguing that they merely give the public what it wants? Are parents to be held solely accountable for the television programs that children watch, or do advertisers and networks carry responsibility also? If advertisers and networks have responsibility, in what proportions? Does the person with the greatest technical expertise have the greatest moral obligation? We must be wary of paternalism in which consumers and informal social networks are removed from the decision-making process. When is the state, through the courts, the final decision maker? Giving absolute authority or responsibility to any person or group can be morally disastrous. Requiring accountability across the board helps to curb the human penchant for evading one's own liability.

For all the emphasis in this textbook on social ethics, individual practitioners ought not become lost. The individual is the authentic moral agent. A firm or institution, when infused and animated by a single spirit and organized into a single institution, is more than a mere sum of discrete entities—it has a personality of its own. It is also true that such institutions can, in a sense, be held accountable for their deeds and become the object of moral approval or disapproval. But only

in a limited sense. Such institutions are real enough, but they lack concreteness. It is the individual who reasons morally that we consider the responsible agent. These individuals alone can be praised or blamed.[75]

Certainly, corporate obligation is a meaningful notion. The British company, Guardian News and Media, is a prime example of how corporate responsibility can be taken seriously. Over fifty years ago, its *Manchester Guardian* adopted specific corporate values that continue to this day, a charter that employees practice and the public knows.[76] When individuals join an organization, and for as long as they remain members, they are coresponsible for the actions taken by that organization. What is most important, however, is that ultimate responsibility finally rests on individuals. This is not a plea for a heavy-handed individualism; that would stand directly at odds with the social ethics of the Potter Box model. The point is that responsibility, to be meaningfully assigned and focused, must be distributed among the individuals constituting the corporation. Individuals are not wholly discrete, unrelated, atomistic entities; they always stand in a social context with which they are morally involved. But individuals they nevertheless remain. And it is with each person that ethics is fundamentally concerned. Gross attacks and broad generalizations about entire media systems usually obscure more than they enlighten. On most occasions, such assessments are not normative ethics but hot-tempered moralism. The cases and commentaries that follow, filtered through the Potter Box model, steer media practitioners toward socially responsible decisions that are justified ethically.

NOTES

1. For details, see Associated Press wire copy, February 12, 1993 and November 26, 1993, and Ray Moseley, "What Made Toddler's Killers Tick?," *Chicago Tribune*, November 26, 1993, sec. 1, 1. See also David Lynch, "Killers Released into a Maelstrom in England," *USA Today*, June 27, 2001, 102.
2. "Bulger Killing Anger Revived as Killer Back in Custody," CNN World, March 3, 2010, http://www.cnn.com.
3. Henry D. Aiken, *Reason and Conduct* (New York: Knopf, 1962), 65–87.
4. For helpful background, see Richard L. Morrill, "Values as Standards of Action," in his *Teaching Values in College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980); David Boeyink, "What Do We Mean by Newspaper Values," unpublished paper, February 8, 1988, Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, St. Petersburg, FL; Everette E. Dennis, "Values and Value-Added for the New Electronic Journalism," The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, March 15, 1995; and *Journalism Values Handbook* (Boston, VA: The Harwood Group, American Society of Newspaper Editors). For values among artists, see Horace Newcomb and Robert Alley, *The Producer's Medium: Conversations with Creators of American TV* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

     Here are examples of the values that are often important in media practice:

     Professional values: proximity, firstness, impact, recency, conflict, human interest, entertainment, novelty, toughness, thoroughness, immediacy, independence, watchdog, public's right to know, no prior restraint, independence
     Moral values: truthtelling, humanness, fairness, honesty, stewardship, nonviolence, commitment, self-control
     Sociocultural values: thrift, hard work, energy, restraint, heterosexuality
     Logical values: consistency, competence, knowledge
     Aesthetic values: harmonious, pleasing, imaginative
5. Karen Lebacqz of the Pacific School of Religion named the model "Potter Box" after the original version described in Ralph B. Potter, "The Structure of Certain American Christian Responses to the Nuclear Dilemma, 1958–63." PhD diss., Harvard University, 1965. See also Ralph B. Potter, "The Logic of Moral Argument," in *Toward a Discipline of Social Ethics*, ed. Paul Deats (Boston: Boston University Press, 1972), 93–114.
6. Potter himself labeled it the "ground of meaning" level. As he describes it, "Even when ethical categories have been explicated with philosophical exactitude it is possible for one to ask, 'Why ought I to be moral?'

or 'Why ought I to consider your expressions of ethical judgment and your pattern of ethical reasoning to be convincing?' " Further inquiry "drives men ultimately to reflect on their more fundamental ideas concerning God, man, history, and whatever is behind and beyond history." Potter, "The Structure of Certain American Christian Responses," 404–405.

7. Taking the empirical dimension seriously does not imply a commitment to neutral facts and what is called "abstracted empiricism" in C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 50–75. W. I. Thomas's "definition of the situation" is actually a more sophisticated way of explicating the empirical dimension of moral questions; see W. I. Thomas, *Primitive Behavior: An Introduction to the Social Sciences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937), 8. For a comprehensive introduction to this strategy, see *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed., eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 2005).

8. Patrick Plaisance, *Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 30–31.

9. See Karen Lebacqz, *Professional Ethics: Power and Paradox* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985).

10. Obviously, the anatomy of values and their relation to beliefs and attitudes are complex issues both in psychology and in axiology. In terms of the Potter Box model, our concern is to identify the values invoked in various cases and to ensure that they are understood as only one phase of the decision-making process. In that sense, instead of the values-clarification approach of Louis Rath, Sidney Simon, and Merrill Harmin, we insist on the critical normative reflection represented in quadrant three.

11. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

12. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 18; see also his *Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), and his *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

13. Ethical egoism has not been included in the list despite its immense popularity. The authors stand with those who doubt its adequacy and coherence as an ethical theory. Furthermore, the view that everyone ought to promote his or her own self-interests does not agree with the emphasis on social responsibility in the Potter Box model. There are several formulations of ethical egoism, however. Students interested in pursuing this option should see Edward Regis's significant attempt to present a conception that overcomes the standard objections. Edward Regis, "What Is Ethical Egoism?," *Ethics* 91 (October 1980): 50–62. For a history of the debates in this area, see Tibor R. Machan, "Recent Work in Ethical Egoism," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (1979): 1–15.

14. Peter Euben, "The Debate Over the Canon," *The Civic Acts Review* 7:1 (Winter 1994): 4–15. Euben gives a comprehensive overview of the canonicity issue in this article. The ideas in this paragraph and the cited material are taken from Euben's essay. See also, Clifford Christians, "Media Ethics in Education," *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 9:4 (Winter 2008): 186–187.

15. For a summary of Aristotle's work and its application to media ethics, see Lee Anne Pack, "Aristotle: Self-Development," in *Ethical Communication: Moral Stances in Human Dialogue*, eds. C. Christians and J. Merrill, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 55–60.

16. For example, see *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Modern Library, 1947); (1104a), 333; (1106a), 340; (1107a), 341; (1138b), 423.

17. *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. II, ch. 6. This is H. Rackham's translation in William Alston and R. B. Brandt, *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Allyn & Bacon), 1978, 187. In J. A. Stewart's version: "Moral Virtue may then be defined, as a habit involving choice, lying in a relative mean fixed by reason, that is, as the prudent man would fix it."

18. Stanley B. Cunningham, "Getting It Right: Aristotle's 'Golden Mean' as Theory Deterioration," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 14:1, 10. Cunningham correctly insists that "congruent behavior within a career of character and emotional development, rather than isolated answers to textbook-style conflicts, defines the Aristotelian moral enterprise" (p. 11).

19. *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. McKeon (1107A), 340. For practical wisdom in Aristotle, see Christopher L. Johnstone, "Aristotle's Ethical Theory in the Contemporary World: Logos, Phronesis, and the Moral Life," in *Moral Engagement in Public Life: Theorists for Contemporary Ethics*, eds. S. Bracci and C. Christians, (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 16–34.

20. Ibid. (1107a), 340–341.

21. Ibid. (1107a), 340.

22. Ibid. (1106b), 340.

23. For "The Doctrine of the Mean" by Confucius, selected from *The Four Books*, see *Beyond the Western Tradition: Readings in Moral and Political Philosophy*, eds. Daniel Bonevac, William Boon, and Stephen Phillips, (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1992), 264–269. See also James Legge, ed., *Four Books of the Chinese Classics: Confucian Analects, the Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, Works of Mencius*, 4 vols. (Corona, CA: Oriental Book Store, 1991). For background and application to communication ethics, see Virginia Whitehouse, "Confucius: Ethics of Character," in *Ethical Communication*, eds. Christians and Merrill, 167–172.

24. Bonevac et al., "The Doctrine of the Mean," 252.

25. Ibid., 252–253.

26. For an application of Confucius to business, see Stefan Rudnicki, ed., *Confucius in the Boardroom: Ancient Wisdom, Modern Lessons for Business*, 1998. See also Tom R. Reid, *Confucius Lives Next Door: What Living in the East Teaches Us About Living* in *the West* (New York: Random House, 1999). For Confucius as the basis of human rights, see Dong-Hyun Byung and Keehyeung Lee, "Confucian Values, Ethics and Legacies in History," in *Moral Engagement in Public Life,* eds. Bracci and Christians, 73–96. For a discussion of Confucian values for press theory, see Jiafei Yin, "Beyond Four Theories of the Press: A New Model for the Asian and World Press," *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 10, no. 1 (2008): 5–62.

27. For general background and an application of Kant's thinking to media ethics, see Lee Anne Peck, "Immanuel Kant: Importance of Duty," in *Ethical Communication*, eds. Christians and Merrill, 145–150.

28. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 69–71, 82–89.

29. Patrick Plaisance elaborates on the truthtelling imperative in Kant based not only on Kant's *Groundwork* but also his *Metaphysic of Morals* published twelve years later in 1797. He demonstrates that Kant's deontological system should not be grounded first of all in the universalist maxim but in the philosophical basis for his categorical imperatives—human dignity. Kant's claim regarding the distinctive rational agency and free will of the human species expands our understanding of truthtelling as an imperative so that transparency in communication may be considered Kant's "greatest gift to media ethics today" (191). Patrick Plaisance, "Transparency: An Assessment of the Kantian Roots of a Key Element in Media Ethics Practice," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22:2–3 (2007): 187–207. For elaboration, see Plaisance, *Media Ethics*, ch. 3.

30. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, 62.

31. Plaisance, *Media Ethics*, 54.

32. Christopher Meyers, "Appreciating W. D. Ross: On Duties and Consequences," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 18:2 (2003): 81–97.

33. The translation is from A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 10th ed. (Beltsville, MD: Amana Corp., 2001). The description of Islamic ethics in this section relies principally on Ali Mohamed, "Journalistic Ethics and Responsibility in Relation to Freedom of Expression: An Islamic Perspective," in *Media Ethics Beyond Borders: A Global Perspective*, eds. S. J. A. Ward and H. Wasserman, (Johannesburg, SA: Heinemann Publishers, 2008), 142–156. See also Mohammad A. Siddiqi, "New Media of the Information Age and Islamic Ethics," *Islam and the Modern Age* 31:4 (2000): 1–5. For a Jewish version of monotheistic ethics, see William Babcock, "Moses: Deontological Norms," in *Ethical Communication*, eds. Christians and Merrill, 151–157.

34. Muhammad Ayish and Haydar Badawi Sadig, "The Arab-Islamic Heritage in Communication Ethics," in *Communication Ethics and Universal Values*, eds. C. Christians and M. Trabers, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 108.

35. Hamid Mowlana explains some of the different emphases in Islamic ethics over history, among varied schools of thought, and in different geographic regions (137–141). For applications to media issues and practices, see Hamid Mowlana, "Communication Ethics and the Islamic Tradition," in *Communication Ethics and Global Change*, ed. Thomas Cooper, (New York: Longman, 1989), 137–146.

36. Ayish and Sadig, "Arab-Islamic Heritage in Communication Ethics," 115.

37. Mohamed, "Journalistic Ethics and Responsibility in Relation to Freedom of Expression," 8–9.

38. Ayish and Sadig, "Arab-Islamic Heritage in Communication Ethics," 109.

39. Zulkiple Abdullah Ghani, "Islamic Ethics and Values in the Life of a Communication Scholar," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 27 (March 2004): 58.

40. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, 429.

41. Ayish and Sadig, "The Arab-Islamic Heritage in Communication Ethics," 113.

42. From *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari* (Chicago: Kazi Publication, 1979), 75.

43. Mohammad A. Siddiqi, "Muhammad: Honor-Centered Morality," in *Ethical Communication*, eds. Christians and Merrill, 143.

44. When utilitarianism is linked to both Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, the principle of utility is ordinarily stated as "seek the greatest happiness for the greatest number." Deni Elliott argues that when speaking of Mill's theory, "the greatest good for the greatest number" is misleading. Mill's principles of justice come before the utility calculus, and throughout his work, Mill seeks to protect individuals who may be sacrificed for the good of the whole. "The greatest number" is an arithmetic statement, implying that the majority wins. Elliott suggests that "the aggregate good" is more accurate to Mill—those actions are right that produce the most overall good for the community as a whole or "for all the people who can be identified as being affected by a particular action." See Deni Elliott, "Getting Mill Right," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22:2–3 (2007): 100. In order to indicate the importance in Mill of valuing all people involved, the term *aggregate whole* is used here.

45. Bentham suggested a scheme for measuring the quantity of pleasure in human acts in Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (New York: Hafner, 1948), chs. 3–7.

46. John Stuart Mill reached this conclusion in the last chapter of *A System of Logic* (London: J. W. Parker, 1843). He attempted eighteen years later to expand and defend this conviction. See John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1861), especially ch. 2.

47. Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863), in *Utilitarianism: Text and Critical Essays*, ed. Samuel Gorovitz (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), 59–401.

48. The Potter Box can function without this distinction, but a working knowledge of act and rule utility increases the Potter Box's sophistication. Students are therefore encouraged to read additional descriptions of these two forms of utilitarianism, such as William Frankena, *Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1962), 29–35; C. E. Harris, Jr., *Applying Moral Theories*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1992), 123–154; and Robert L. Holmes, *Basic Moral Philosophy* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1993), 154–174. A twentieth-century act utility is presented in George E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1954), ch. 5. Richard Brandt and J. O. Urmson are prominent rule utilitarians. See Richard Brandt, "Toward a Credible Form of Utilitarianism," in *Morality and the Language of Conduct*, ed. H. N. Castaneda and G. Nakhnikian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), 107–143; and J. O. Urmson, "The Interpretation of the Moral Philosophy of J. S. Mill," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 3 (1953): 33–39.

49. For a detailed critique of utilitarian ethics, see Clifford G. Christians, "Utilitarianism in Media Ethics and Its Discontents," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 22:2–3 (2007): 113–131.

50. For an exceptional analysis of utilitarianism for beginners, see Arthur J. Dyck, *On Human Care: An Introduction to Ethics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1977), 57–71.

51. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Belknap Press, 1971), 3–53.

52. Ibid., 118–192.

53. For a critique and elaboration of the two principles, see *Reading Rawls: Critical Studies of a Theory of Justice*, ed. Norman Daniels (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 169–281. For an effective classroom strategy to teach Rawls's theory, see Ronald M. Green, "The Rawls' Game: An Introduction to Ethical Theory," *Teaching Philosophy* 9:1 (March 1986): 51–60. For elaboration and application, see Plaisance, *Media Ethics*, 85–104.

54. A secularized account of this principle was developed by Kant, who contended that we ought to treat all rational beings as ends in themselves and never as means only. The Judeo-Christian version is included here because of its vast influence on the popular level. William Frankena judged Judeo-Christian ethics to be even more important to Western society than utilitarianism.

55. For an introduction to the central concepts and relevant literature, see Part IV, "East Asia," in Bonevac, *Beyond the Western Tradition*; and Hamid Mowlana, "Communication Ethics and the Islamic Tradition," in *Communication Ethics and Global Change*, eds. Thomas W. Cooper et al. (New York: Longman, 1990), 137–146. The best historical background for Confucianism is Kai-wing Chow, *Ethics, Classics, and Lineage Discourse: The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China, 1600–1830* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993). A comprehensive list of the relevant material is included in *Bibliography of Comparative Religious Ethics*, eds. John Carmen and Mark Jürgensmeyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For a theoretical attempt to integrate diversity and universality, see Clifford G. Christians and Michael Traber, *Communication Ethics and Universal Values* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997).

Important essays on intercultural studies and moral norms are included in Ellen F. Paul et al., eds., *Cultural Pluralism and Moral Knowledge* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

56. See E. R. Hughes, *Chinese Philosophy in Classical Times* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1942), 48.

57. Pedro Gilberto Gomes, *Direto de ser: A ética da Comunicácão na Americana Latina* (*The Right to Be: An Ethics of Communication in Latin America*) (São Paulo, Brazil: Ediciones Paulinas, 1989).

58. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. J. G. Pilkington (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1943); (2.2), 40; (4.10–4.13), 71–75; (7.12), 150; (9.1), 188; (10.1), 218; (10.29), 249; (13.1–13.4), 340–343. God's love is a basic theme throughout Augustine's writings. For a summary, see Frederick Copleston, "St. Augustine: Moral Theory," in his *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1960), 81–86.

59. For elaboration, see Mary Hulst, "Jesus: Loving Neighbors," in *Ethical Communication*, eds. Christians and Merrill, 18–24.

60. Heinrich Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), 165, 167.

61. For a comprehensive review of this concept, see Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972); 7–16 are particularly helpful in understanding the meaning of agape.

62. For the best available introduction to the historical and contemporary issues in Christian ethics, see Edward LeRoy Long, Jr., *A Survey of Christian Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); and his *A Survey of Recent Christian Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). See also E. Clinton Gardner, *Justice and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995). James M. Gustafson develops a systematic approach to theological ethics in *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981 and 1984). As an alternative to both rationalist and narrative ethics, see Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and the Moral Order*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

63. For an evaluation of the role of gender in contemporary theoretical ethics, see Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992). Of particular interest to students of communication is Charlene Siegfried's *Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Social Fabric* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Virginia Held's *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society, and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Lea P. Stewart's "Facilitating Connections: Issues of Gender, Culture, and Diversity," in *Communication Ethics in an Age of Diversity*, eds. Josina M. Makau and Ronald C. Arnett, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 110–125; Julia T. Wood, "Gender and Moral Voice: Moving from Woman's Nature to Standpoint Epistemology," *Women's Studies in Communication* 15 (1992): 1–24; Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Linda Steiner, "Feminist Media Ethics," in *The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics*, eds. L. Wilkins and C. Christians, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 366–381. For a general overview of the current theorists and issues, see Rosemarie Tong, *Feminine and Feminist Ethics* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1993); C. Card, ed., *Feminist Ethics* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991); Maurice Hamington and Dorothy C. Mille, eds., *Socializing Care: Feminist Ethics and Public Issues* (Oxford, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). Paul Martin Lester and Susan Dente Ross's *Images That Injure*, 2nd ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003) includes a section of eight chapters on gender stereotypes.

64. Cf. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Carol Gilligan et al., *Mapping the Moral Domain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 1988). For background and application to media ethics, see Lee Wilkins, "Carol Gilligan: Ethics of Care," in *Ethical Communication*, eds. Christians and Merrill, 33–39.

65. Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 5. Cf. Nel Noddings, *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

66. Julia T. Wood, *Who Cares? Women, Care and Culture* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 108–110. Cf. also her *Relational Communication*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000).

67. Linda Steiner, "Feminist Theorizing and Communication Ethics," *Communication* 12:3 (1991): 158; cf. Linda Steiner, "A Feminist Schema for Analysis of Ethical Dilemmas," in *Ethics in Intercultural and International Communication*, ed. Fred L. Casmir, (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997), 59–88; and Linda Steiner and C. M. Okrusch, "Care as a Virtue for Journalists," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 21:2–3 (2006): 102–122. Daryl Koehn, *Rethinking Feminist Ethics: Care, Trust, and Empathy* (New York: Routledge, 1998) supports the turn away from an abstract rationalistic ethics and likewise emphasizes a relational rather than individualistic understanding of persons. She insists on an empathic rather than legalistic approach to community life.

However, in her view, the Gilligan–Noddings tradition tends to favor caregivers over those on the receiving end. She calls for a dialogic ethics that is shaped by feminist ethics but is broader in scope.

68. Tong, "Nel Noddings's Relational Ethics," in her *Feminine and Feminist Ethics*, 109.

69. Quotations from Richard Johannesen's summary of Noddings' *Caring* (12–19, 69–75, 176–177, 182–197) in *Ethics in Human Communication*, 6th ed., eds. R.L. Johannesen, K. S. Valde, and K. E. Whedbee (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2008), 206–210.

70. Plaisance, *Media Ethics*, 33–72.

71. Stephen J. A. Ward, "Philosophical Foundations for Global Journalism Ethics," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 24(1), 15. See Stephen J. A. Ward, *Global Journalism Ethics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

72. M. S. Ronald Commers, "Global Ethics and World Citizenship," in *Ethics in an Era of Globalization*, eds. M. S. Commers, Wim Vandekerckhove, An Verlinden (Adlershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 75–94.

73. Noddings goes further than urging that human loyalty mitigates stern application of principles; she rejects outright the "ethics of principle as ambiguous and unstable," *Caring*, 5. As further background to Noddings's work, refer to Nel Noddings, "Ethics from the Standpoint of Women," in *Theoretical Perspectives on Sexual Difference*, ed. D. L. Rhode, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 160–173; also helpful is Nel Noddings, *Women and Evil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), and Noddings et al., eds., *Justice and Caring: The Search for Common Ground in Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999).

74. The precise role of philosophical analysis and social theory has been debated even among those who generally follow this decision-making paradigm. Potter himself emphasized philosophical analysis as the primary element in moral deliberation, highlighting, in effect, the third quadrant as the key to a tough-minded social ethics. James Childress follows the spirit of Potter's apparent focus on philosophical ethics in the analytical tradition. See James Childress, "The Identification of Ethical Principles," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 5 (Spring 1977): 39–66.

    The desire for precision threatens the power of a comprehensive method. But the issue is not the desirability of philosophical rigor versus the benefit of social theory. Both are indispensable forms of knowledge for ethical reflection. The question is which domain galvanizes the total process of reaching a justifiable moral decision. Which particular emphasis achieves a superior disciplinary coherence for applied ethics? Stassen argues for a "focus upon social theory which includes philosophical analysis but extends beyond it" See Glen H. Stassen, "A Social Theory Model for Religious Social Ethics," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 5 (Spring 1977): 9. In this book, we provide a streamlined version of Stassen's adaptation of Potter, a schematic model that seeks to be both useful and rigorous.

75. Henry Stob, *Ethical Reflections: Essays on Moral Themes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 3–6. For a distinction between task and collective responsibility, see Clifford G. Christians, "Can the Public Be Held Accountable?" *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 3:1 (1988): 50–58.

76. Walter Jaehnig and Uche Onyebadi, "Social Audits as Media Watchdogging," Southern Illinois University manuscript, April 2010, 1–35.