Global media and communication ethics

The tension between universalism and cosmopolitanism

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Introduction

In a globalized world, communication involving contact between people of different national origins and cultures has become the norm. Media offerings are distributed globally, but at the same time are culturally shaped and received locally. The intertwining local, national, and global conditions of media production, distribution, and reception, sometimes subsumed under the notion of the *glocal*, offer potential for conflict as well as new possibilities for understanding (Thomaß, 2013, pp. 353–354).

The search for norms that enable this understanding of human coexistence is subject to the respective historical, cultural, and social conditions. In an increasingly globalized world, the question arises as to how universal these norms can or must be. In contrast, there is a call for a cosmopolitan turn in communication studies. In this article, the debate about universalist thinking and its significance for media and communication ethics is shown, as well as its aporias and the challenges it faces in the field of media and communication ethics through cosmopolitan approaches.

Christians et al. (2009, pp. 37–39) identified, from the perspective of Western history, four historical phases in which normative foundations of public communication developed that are still relevant today and still dominate the discourse:

- the classical period from 500 B.C. to 1500, in which the main concern of theorists was the veracity of public discourse within a corporatist order;
- the early modern period (c. 1500 to 1800), in which the main concern was the freedom of those participating in the public sphere in a liberal order;
- the period of modern popular democracies (from 1890 to 1970), in which the social responsibility of those participating in public communication was at the center of aspirations;
- the current "postmodern" period (since the 1970s), in which civic participation in the public sphere is the central target value.

It is important to note that these phases describe the developments in the occidental cultural sphere, and they have been described without knowledge of other communicative-ethical developments. Normative communication theory (even if it did not bear this designation at the periods mentioned) thus revolved around the question of how public discourse should be constituted in a given socio-political context (Christians et al., 2009, p. 65).

Now, international and intercultural communication is characterized by the fact that entities enter into communicative exchange with each other, each of which can or does follow different target values of public communication. Given this plurality of worldviews about the ideal communicative order, conflicts that arise at the interfaces of different orders are predictable. A blatant example was the publication of the Muhammad cartoons in 2005 in a Danish daily newspaper under the title "The Face of Muhammad" (Benatar, 2008; Debatin, 2007; Levey & Moodod, 2009). This series of 12 cartoons focused on the Islamic prophet and religious founder Muhammad. The publication triggered demonstrations and violent riots in many countries around the world, particularly in regions with strong Islamic cultures. This led to diplomatic conflicts between the Danish government and Islamic states as well as a global debate about religious freedom, freedom of the press, artistic freedom, and freedom of expression.

Plurality is set as a value in itself in democratic societies; thus, communication studies, having emerged and differentiated in Western pluralistic societies, is imbued with the fundamental values of their social systems. Most scholars and media practitioners in pluralistic and Westernized societies will agree that the following core values are to be protected in regulating the media sector in the public interest: freedom of expression, democracy, protection and promotion of culture, diversity, universal access, and privacy rights (Babe, 1990; Napoli, 2001), and it is obvious that these values are based on a Western perspective, in which this author is firmly rooted, so that their juxtaposition with values from other parts of the world is still an open task.

This normative bias can be made conscious, and the aforementioned prerequisite of any research can be handled transparently, but it can hardly be overcome. How limited such a view is becomes clear whenever one is confronted with the value systems of other societies and communication cultures. Then, the value of plurality becomes a challenge because it includes the acceptance of other values—cultural autonomy, consensus principle, national ethos, priority of religious views, to name but a few—that may conflict with one's one.

Conflict is thus, on the one hand, inscribed in the encounter or confrontation of different communication cultures. A few years ago, for example, the cultural scene in Germany was shaken by a debate that brought to light the contradictory nature of values: At the internationally acclaimed international art exhibition Documenta 15, the work *People's Justice* by the artist group Taring Padi was initially on display, showing, among other things, a soldier with a Star of David and a pig's face wearing a helmet labeled "Mossad," the name of Israel's foreign intelligence service. Because of this imagery, which was widely interpreted as being anti-Semitic, the banner was first covered up and then taken down. Artistic freedom as a universal value collides here with the high sensitivity to anti-Semitism expected in and by Germany. Not only was it seen as a conflict between the artists' responsibility to act ethically and responsibly and the right to freedom of expres-

sion but also it was interpreted as a domination of the host country over the Indonesian artists' freedom of expression.

Avoiding conflicts that can become destructive, on the other hand, can therefore be regarded as the lowest common denominator of all participants. Beyond such a pragmatic determination of a universal norm, it is worth examining how the claim to the universality of norms came into the world in the first place and how it can be justified.

Therefore, this chapter examines the philosophical origins and dimensions of universalism and its historical development. It reveals the contradictory implications of the concept and shows how it became a significant influence in philosophy about the state. With this background, we point to the limits of universality in view of context and power and discuss the relation between cosmopolitanism and universalism in media and communication ethics.

What is universalism?

Universalism is derived from the Latin word *universalis*, which means "general." This ideal indicates an assumption and claim that all the diversity of reality as a whole can be traced to a single principle or law of order. From this, it follows that ideas, ideals, rights, and obligations apply in principle to all human beings. Universalism is therefore a perspective that prioritizes the whole of an entity above singularity, and generality above specificity. The concept contends that some principles and norms are valid for all human beings.

In societal applications, universalism is operationalized in rules and practices that have general widespread value. To work properly, these rules must be generally accepted by society and internalized by its members. When effective, universally applicable rules are a proper basis for the pursuit of justice and provide clarity about the conditions and obligations that apply to each and all. The effectiveness of universal rules is ensured by prioritizing fairness and justice over creating good relations through favoritism, and exceptions to the rules are not tolerated, as they would jeopardize the universal principle.

Universalism can be observed in individualistic societies, as is clearly the case in many Western societies. The prevailing emphasis on social justice, maintaining order, and being able to plan in a thoughtful, rational way are based on respect for values that are presumed to be universal and are considered positive and beneficial for the welfare of all. The disadvantages are keyed to degrees of inflexibility and rigidity in patterns of required adherence to values and rules. Defenders of universalism have been accused of ignoring cultural differences and promoting Western values, which indicates an attitude of ethnocentrism (Benhabib, 1994; Donnelly, 2003; Marko, 2012; Namli, 2018; Vattimo, 2007).

This brief overview of universalism hints at a complex development of thinking about "the universal" that spans from ancient Greece to the French Revolution and beyond. The ideal that some fundamental things are universal and should be respected as such is the cornerstone of significant codifications pertaining to the rights and liberties of free peoples. This is evident, for example, in the American Declaration of Independence (Jefferson, 1776), which claims, "all men are created equal." Thus, the context of universalism

has been usefully applied from the broadest and most fundamental claims of universal rights to technical systems of communication, transportation, and other matters of social welfare. It is timeless in principle because universalism claims that, once identified, universal values are all-encompassing and always valid.

Universalist thinking entered normative views of media ethics and communication at an early stage. Since universalists postulate universal principles and norms that should apply to all people, in terms of media and communication ethics, this means that certain ethical standards and responsibilities should apply universally to journalists and media organizations. Thus, truthfulness and objectivity in reporting and the unhindered circulation of information have been established as universal values, according to which journalists endeavor to provide and circulate accurate and balanced information, regardless of cultural or national differences. As early as the 1970s, the debate about the so-called "New World Information and Communication Order" showed how much this Western view clashed with the countries of the Global South, which were then referred to as developing countries, because they feared the intolerable cultural influence of international news agencies.

Today, such universal claims are less often accepted as valid and are often challenged. The all-embracing pretension of universalism has been challenged by its conceptual counterpart: particularism—the attitude that underlines the specifics of single cases, the uniqueness of a given culture, or the individuality of a person. The degree to which universalism is universal is arguable. The claim has limits because in application the practice excludes certain groups—typically minorities and the disadvantaged—in various ways. The principle is more transcendent than the practice. As hinted at in the American claim noted above, the universalism of human rights excluded women until they won their rights through struggle. And there are many regions where women have not won their rights to this day.

After this short explanation of the concept of universalism, we will see how the development of universalist thinking became an influential intellectual abstraction about the nature and value of the human being that has inspired political philosophers and the political shaping of societies.

How did universalism emerge and develop?

Universalism emerged not as a fact in the real world but rather as an intellectual reality or construct. The principle of *quod semper, quod ubique, quod omnibus* (Tönnies, 2001)—forever, everywhere, for everybody—postulated that from a distanced viewpoint, all human beings are equal. This thought became a manifestation of material power. However, the aporias inherent in universalism have come to light since the beginnings of the concept of universalism.

The Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle were early advocates of universalism. They constructed views of an ideal state in which every free man (only) is empowered and appointed to discuss and decide public affairs in open debate. The Greek polis corresponds to this phenomenon, which contains a germ of universalism. However, the Greek philosopher Seneca addressed the tension between those included in the universal and

those excluded: "Although everything is permitted against a slave, there is something that is not permitted by the common right of every living being against a human being, because he is the same nature as you" (as cited in Tönnies, 2001, p. 66).

Later, in ancient Rome, there was a fundamental shift in the legal system. The legal rights of the *pater familias*—the head of a greater family—were extended to every Roman citizen, to the effect that every man was at liberty to act on his own rights. This grounds a point that Talcott Parsons (1971) stipulated: "Modern society originated only in a single evolutionary arena, the West, i.e. essentially in Europe, which inherited the legacy of the western half of the Roman Empire" (p. 10). This aligns with the views of Max Weber, who, in his work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/1930), posited that cultural phenomena occurred on the soil of the Occident, which were of universal significance and validity in a developmental direction.

This strand of philosophic history suggests a noble ideal but also indicates good reason for associating universalism with the critique of imperialism. All too willingly, Western thinking has claimed for too long and too exclusively advances in human progress for itself and has relegated other societies and cultures as backward and deficient by its own self-acclaimed standards.

Tönnies (1995) described the origins of universalism as endeavoring to legitimate the claims of a group (i.e., the particular but not all groups) amid competing claims by other groups in differentiating society. This view was supported by Schweppenhäuser (1998) who claimed that early stages of bourgeois self-knowledge were characterized by the will to assert oneself as a particular social group fighting for the preservation of its prerogatives against the central power of a community and the nobility of a given time.

The idea and ideal of unalienable individual rights emerged in the Enlightenment, which created the basis for the modern notion of universalism that is based on a recognition of the power of the human spirit. The philosophers of Enlightenment aimed to identify general laws for all mankind and to follow them as such.

All of this explains why the universal is not manifest in the material world but is an influential intellectual abstraction about the nature and value of the human spirit. The French Revolution converted these intellectual claims into a basis for real power in the timeless triad of "liberty, equality, and fraternity." The proclamations of a revolutionary bourgeoisie, especially the Declaration of Human and Civil Rights of 1789 and the French Constitution of 1791, transformed the particular bourgeois interest into a universal human interest. The constitutions of modern societies almost universally believe that *citoyens* in democracies have the same freedom rights and the right of self-preservation.

Nonetheless, the foregoing has already noted the persistent problem that universalistic thought, since its inception, has never referred to everyone in practice but always to select groups. Beyond this privileged selection, the same "universal" rights were not accorded to large groups of people: slaves, women, colonized peoples, children, and so forth. Societies have made corrective progress, however, and today, the universalism principle is being extended to the idea of animal protection, the rights of animals, and the rights of nature. The universal is becoming more universal than before.

However, the underlying problem persists. François Noël Babeuf, an agitator during the French Revolution and founder of the Conspiracy of the Equals, was among the first to point out the inherent contradiction of universalism—a philosophic claim of rights

for all that in practice excludes many. He took the French Revolution's idea of equality to a radically serious level and, with his notion that all people are factually equal and should enjoy equal rights and conditions in economic terms, created the first attempt to realize the concept of a classless society in political practice (Buonarroti, 1909). Later socialists referred to his ideas.

Karl Marx, author of the seminal *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867) and the political pamphlet *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), defended the idea of a classless society in which no one should have privileges resulting from possession of the means of production. While he had claimed to turn the philosophical thinking of Hegel upside down—which means to ascribe to it a material base—we can state that Marx has turned universalism upside down, as he spelled out the material prerequisites of equality.

Universalism in the twentieth century

In the twentieth century, individual rights as a universal enfranchisement were codified in the International Declaration of Human Rights (1948). This was the result of a long process in which the idea of human rights gained a symbolic and politically fundamental significance for thinking about how to create a more peaceful world order. The profound crises experienced in the international order during the second half of the twentieth century inspired reflection on how to create a fairer world order.

These crises included the devastation of World War II, independence for former colonies and the often messy aftermath, an awareness of the interdependence of states that spread in the 1970s, and the dissolution of Soviet power with the collapse of socialist states in the 1990s. Also important after 1945 was the question of how to organize the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals. This revived the debate as to whether there were inalienable rights that would validate the intervention of the international community. The judgments handed down in the Nuremberg Trials were based on the conviction that individuals—regardless of respective national legislation—had a range of universal rights that warranted the conviction of war criminals on this basis (Sands, 2016).

The creation of the United Nations (UN), whose founding documents included the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), was a monumental step forward in the codification of universal rights and the assertion that they applied universally to all individuals on earth. This did not emerge from a vacuum. In the 1920s, international law scholars and internationally oriented lawyers had given thought to the meaning and possibility of international human rights. From 1948 onward, the concept has been a persistent and foundational aspect of the human rights system that grounds the UN. The establishment of the UN was linked to the question of how more effective mechanisms of international security and peacekeeping could be established (Eckel, 2019). This was followed by the confirmation of a human rights regime in the Council of Europe, adopted as a corresponding convention in 1950.

The leaders of the anti-colonial struggle relied on the promise of human rights to legitimate their cause but did not shy away from noting the persistent problem of a hypocritical Western deception, which they had experienced for centuries. Human rights were not universal in the practice of the colonial masters (Nkrumah, 1962). In the United

Nations General Assembly, in which the former colonial states had the same voting rights as all members, past human rights violations were discussed. During the escalations of the Cold War, the culprits of the most violent abuses of human rights were accused. This also contributed to the instrumentalization of human rights discourse for respective international interests (Westad, 2007).

Significant advances are evident in the Declaration on the Grant of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960, the inclusion of the right to self-determination of peoples in UN rules in 1966, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1965 (Jensen, 2016). These represented significant milestones on the road to universal rights in the international order (UN, 1994). The attempt of the former colonial states to wrest the commitment to a new world economic order from the industrialized West in the 1970s was also based on the idea of human rights and their universality. Although this did not bring any immediate result, and was hotly contested by the USA in particular, a right to development was proclaimed in 1986 (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 1986).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) included communications rights—framed at that time as information rights—and the debates concerning the interpretation of these rights gave rise to the claim of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) (Servaes, 1984). The debate about the NWICO within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) unfolded in the 1970s and 1980s and ultimately led to the USA temporarily withdrawing from UNESCO. This example illustrates the problems of universalist thinking within applied and globalized media and communication ethics (see also Averbeck-Lietz at el. in this book).

When UNESCO was founded in 1946, a commitment to freedom of information was one of its basic principles. The strong position of the media of the former colonial powers was condemned as media imperialism, particularly by the young governments of the post-colonialist states. The aim of the NWICO was to push back the reporting of the Western media in favor of the local and regional media. The preamble to the UNESCO Declaration of 1978 explicitly called for a "New World Information and Communication Order."

The declaration represented a compromise between a commitment to the so-called free flow of information and concessions to the (socialist) countries of the East and the countries from the Non-Aligned Movement, which wanted to prevent the unbridled flow of information from capitalist states. This, in turn, was interpreted by Western states as a license to control journalists and the media. In 1984, the USA withdrew from UNESCO, followed a year later by the UK. In 1989, UNESCO abandoned the term "information order." In view of the extremely unequal communication relations between the North and the South, the universalist claim of unbridled media freedom, which was a market freedom under the given economic conditions, met with massive resistance from the weaker parties, who, however, were unable to prevail. The debate about NWICO thematized UNESCO's claim of a central role in defining culture's place in international relations and the limits of state sovereignty with a view to media and communication (Brendebach, 2021).

In the 1970s, a new and growing awareness of environmental hazards caused by humans as a consequence of industrialization emerged. The importance of resource man-

agement and the need for sustainability has grown in the decades since, accompanied by the idea of a universal claim across generations to an intact environment (Kaiser & Meyer, 2016; Macekura, 2015).

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process in Europe, the activities of opponents of dictatorship in Latin America, and dissidents in Eastern Europe, as well as the growing emphasis on human rights in the Global South, dramatically demonstrate the diversity of national, cultural, and historic contexts in which protagonists of universal rights operate. These also demonstrate the volatility and difficulty of advancing a unified political project. Nevertheless, universal human rights have become a persistent issue and are now a foreign policy reference point for many Western governments (and beyond).

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of dictatorships in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the Philippines, and South Korea, as well as Greece, Portugal, and Spain, and the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa have given rise to the hope that universal human rights could be enforced worldwide. At the 1993 UN Human Rights Conference, 171 states declared their support for the universal application of human rights (OHCHR, 1993). The question is not in the principle but rather in the practice: How should and would this be implemented, and should international interventions to enforce rights be universally recognized? This is the subject of ongoing debates in the face of diverse conflict situations.

In postmodern thought, universalism is subject to a variety of criticisms. The most far-reaching critique is drawn from the impossibility of achievement, because the world and its inhabitants are too diverse to be subsumed under a universal view. Another powerful critique from a cultural perspective links this to the problem of relativism. Perhaps less is universal than particular, because everything is relative to varying degrees. Moreover, who are the protagonists of Western societies that they should be allowed to proclaim their values as having general validity? European human rights concepts arise from a specifically European civil, liberal, and secular historical project, as indicated earlier in our brief look at Greek and Roman philosophers. Therefore—so the argument goes—they cannot easily (or at all!) be "transferred" to other cultures.

Another serious critique stems from a multiculturalist perspective. As Jürgen Habermas keenly observed, behind universalistic legal claims the particular assertiveness of a particular collective are concealed on a regular basis (Habermas, 1997) Habermas argued that the moral universe extends to all natural persons, however, and in that light has been regarded as perhaps the most famous living "universalist" (Köhl, 2003).

The fact that all existing societies do not grant universal rights to all people does not make the idea obsolete or invalid. The problem in the formulation of human rights, and especially in their establishment as rights for all humans, hinges on factors that prevent their realization, and these are constitutively inscribed (Schweppenhäuser, 1998). Property, security, and freedom are the central criteria of universal human rights but are also equated with individual rights, especially in antagonistic competitive societies that do not question the appropriateness of a capitalist orientation. This creates a contradictory situation: The foundation of human rights—which has a universal claim to validity—and the worldwide establishment of social conditions that would not only permit this formulation, but almost require it, at the same time blocking their realization.

The continuation of freedom and property rights based on universal human rights has enormous implications for the media sector in democratic societies and for democratic rights, which are also based on universalism but are in conflict. We address this next.

Universalism and media in the welfare state

The step from universalism as a philosophical tradition of thought to the universal claim of citizens to certain state services of common interest is enormous. It is generally explained with reference to the construction of a welfare state. The principle of equality, which is so important for democratic states, has never been fully realized, as noted above. This is mainly due to prevailing ownership structures and discrepancies between rich and poor citizens. In an ongoing struggle over conflicting ideas on how to reconcile freedom and equality, modern democracies have increasingly set themselves the task of providing at least equal opportunities for all citizens to live in dignity and have an essential degree of social security.

This is how the modern welfare state was created, with the essential task of subsidizing certain meritorious goods that the market does not or cannot provide due to the need for profitability. Perhaps some degree of supply is provided by the market but not to a sufficient extent in relation to the need for these goods. Such merit goods include education, security (including social security), public infrastructure, and culture. These are services that benefit everyone in society, that is, the public at large. Hence, they must be provided as public services. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mediated social communication was defined as a merit good.

The principle that media are merit goods that can and should be made available to every citizen to the same extent and at the same quality is the core value of the universal service obligation. This obligation implies a universal human right and requires societies to provide an adequate infrastructure for their delivery and performance. Everyone should be reached by postal services, everyone should be supplied with electricity, and all people need access to a telephone connection—and today, access to the Internet. People who are not able to access online media suffer a "digital deficit" that puts them, and their life chances, at risk compared with people who have access. This is especially true for the citizen's right to be informed. Golding (2017) argued that despite the abundance of information available online, there is a growing inequality of access to quality information. This deficit of access to high-quality online services can, when it comes to deficits of quality of information, translate into a citizen detriment (Thomass, 2019). The debate about the implementation of universal services has always centered on the scope and quality of the service. Today, for example, the question in modern industrial societies is not only whether Internet access exists but also whether it meets the requirements of broadband connection. The invention of public service broadcasting (PSB) had its origins almost 100 years ago and was established in many countries that were structured by policy and practice to provide universal services, such as social welfare states. It is one important materialization of universalistic thinking in the realm of communication. And vice versa, universalistic thinking has inspired communications studies in many respects.

There is another line of important argumentation that still legitimates universalism in the media that has significant implications today. This is the argument for media responsibility—the social responsibility of media—to strengthen democracy. Universalism is a prerequisite for realizing that mandate as a project of addressing universal rights. From this perspective, citizens' communication and information rights are the focus of discussion: "The logic is simple. Democracy needs citizens who are equally informed; thus, they must be guaranteed equal access to all relevant information" (Nieminen, 2019, p. 58). This makes the case for citizens' communication and information rights explicit. The basic elements are derived from, among others, international treaties and conventions, such as the UN Declarations of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Horowitz & Nieminen, 2016). Nieminen (2019) proposed five areas of communication and information rights, which all refer to the universalist claim of rights: rights to access, availability, critical competence, dialogue, and privacy (p. 58).

Universalism and cosmopolitanism

With a cosmopolitan turn in communication studies, which should strive for the given diversity of communication cultures and the inclusion of glocal perspectives, as stated in the introduction, we hope for and expect enriched communication studies that take note of the diversity of communication conditions on the globe and test its own theoretical arguments and empirical questions against the background of the diversity of these communication conditions. But in view of the high importance of the equality of cultures that cosmopolitanism propagates, it must be asked what to de-Westernize and to become more cosmopolitan means in consequence. How does this relate to universalism?

It is argued in this book to push forward a less hegemonic approach that presents multiple and critical perspectives on what is understood as international and inter- and transcultural in our discipline. The inclusion of a broader range of ideas and comparative research, the bridges to other disciplines, and the sound consideration of context knowledge are the benefits of this approach.

However, the enrichment that cosmopolitan communication studies would experience through deep internationalization comes up against limits when one realizes that a strongly normative component is inherent in communication studies. There are relevant questions concerning international and intercultural communication, such as those pertaining to the concepts of the recipient, objectives of political communication, the role of self-image and practice in journalism, public relations theories, communication policy, and the ways media and communication ethics are dealt with. Nevertheless, normative assumptions and presuppositions will always flow into these research questions, methods, research designs, and interpretations of results, which will ultimately result from values that predominantly go back to the philosophy of the Enlightenment (Karmasin et al., 2013; Zillich et al., 2016). In a volume on the normativity of communication studies, we argued that these assumptions and presuppositions should always be made transparent and explicit as part of the research process (Karmasin et al., 2013, p. 473).

The integration of diverse perspectives into a cosmopolitan-oriented media and communication ethics will have to provide approaches to the questions of how freedom of speech can be balanced with the perseverance of culture and tradition and how self-determination can be organized in relation to the requirements of collective and social cohesion in media production, distribution, and reception. As answers to these questions are far from being easy, the focus will be on who can enforce which values in which contexts, with which arguments, and also which positions of power in the background.

Cosmopolitan communication studies can promote the sensitization for the implicit presuppositions of research of Western/Northern provenance, and thus enrich one's own state of research and open it up for new questions. In particular, the discrepancy between postulated values and real inter- and transcultural communication relations, which are inherited, (re)produce disadvantages, exclude participation, and perpetuate positions of power, result in new research questions that can only be grasped with a cosmopolitan view of these communication relations.

However, it is precisely the normative dimensioning of many research fields and subdisciplines in communication studies that is in tension with the basic understanding of cosmopolitanism. This becomes clear when one considers how a cosmopolitan would argue against universal values and what positions a universalist would take against a cosmopolitan approach.

Some examples of questions within applied ethics may illustrate this. The universalistic demand for unconditional equality of women and all genders is opposed to the defense of the family, which is postulated as a high value in many cultures. Animal rights conflict with dietary habits; a pluralistic conception of religious freedom cannot be reconciled with the culturally justified and defended unity of a nation with one religion. For ethical questions of communication, a comparable tension arises: Who speaks? Who is allowed to speak? How sensitive should the media be to questions of religion? Should the media address the new, the unknown, or the problematic in a society, or should they preserve prevailing social patterns or contribute to social cohesion? The treatment of such questions in research is based on different normative assumptions, which ultimately include values that are culturally conditioned. The tension between cosmopolitanism and universalism is thus rooted in the different assessment of whether universal values should apply or whether all cultural values have an equal existence.

Conclusion

The history of the concept of universalism is an ongoing attempt to determine what is universal for all people and to embed it in norms. Since the Enlightenment, universalism has been fundamental to Western state constitutions, which were later adopted by many countries around the world. Universalist claims to validity, however, have always been criticized because of the presumption of comprehensive applicability, especially when the application has excluded so many who are also entitled to claim the right. As articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, universalist ideas have become a model for the international order. An essential component of human rights—the

freedom of communication—has achieved decisive importance for the media order of pluralistic states.

Universalism, as a notion of the boundless universality of consensual norms and values, has led to the adoption of the Declaration of Universal Human Rights of 1948. The ideas of the equal rights of all people expressed therein enter into the notions of ideal communication relations that inspire and often guide research in communication studies. These ideas have led to a sustained hegemonic representation of positions in Western/Northern communication research. It is the legitimate interest of researchers from the Global South to overcome this hegemony, and researchers from the North/West to overcome the theoretical and empirical truncations that result from this hegemony. But even as citizens of the world, as cosmopolitans see themself, they must ask themselves which norms and values are guiding, shaping, or even merely accompanying their research. The demand for equality of cultures does not exempt us from taking a stand when universal values are affected.

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