Ubuntu for Journalists Covering War

Abstract

There is a growing pool of literature on the implications for journalism of the African moral philosophy of ubuntu. However little of this literature is framed around the conception that the world is fundamentally violent and/or that communication itself is violent, focusing on the idea of harmonious life. This article contributes to changing this, insisting that valuing of harmonious community relations should neither involve denying the violence within which communities are established nor the taking for granted of any "we". After all, communication is violent and failing to conceptualize African journalistic practice in ways that are consistent with how Africans inordinately experience violence is concerning. With special interest in news regarding violent, I draft an attractive understanding of news that reflects values of ubuntu, tentatively conceptualizing news values inspired by ubuntu, and advocating an ubuntu-informed normative account of how journalists should cover conflict, war and possibilities regarding peace.

Introduction

There is a growing pool of literature on the implications for journalism of the African moral philosophy of ubuntu (Chasi, 2015; Christiaans, 2015; Christians, 2004; Fourie, 2008; Kasoma, 1996; Rodny-Gumede, 2015; Sesanti, 2010; Skjerdal, 2012; Tomaselli, 2003; White, 2012). However little of this literature is framed around the conception that the world is fundamentally violent and/or that communication itself is violent. Indeed, the common line is exemplified by Metz's (2015) work which expresses the idea that ubuntu values harmony and shared identity, without acknowledging and examining the violent contexts within which

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this valuing emerges. The one clear exception is Mboti's (2015: 144) (2015, p. 144) *May the Real Ubuntu Please Stand Up* which fundamentally challenges how scholarship on ubuntu invoke ideas of harmony disowns the reality of collisions and messiness: "Halfway between harmony and discord, protest and silence, horse and rider, individuality and interdependence, the real ubuntu may just be able to stand up" . Only indirectly, however, does Mboti indicate that there is a paucity of scholarly accounts of ubuntu that recognize that African lives are lived amidst violence, which sometimes arises as war and structural violence. This article contributes to changing this by insisting that valuing of harmonious community relations should neither involve denying the violence within which communities are established nor the taking for granted of any "we".

It is important that the descriptions of reality and practices that theory makes are defensible otherwise the theory presented is easily falsified unless it is maintained by praxeomatic or paradigmatic factors. Moving beyond cosmological claims that Africans view the world as fundamentally harmonious will enable us to present an account of ubuntu that is more relevant to everyday concerns of Africans today. It is not clear there are any conceptual elegance or cultural authenticity gains to be won from claiming that Africans see the world in terms that are patently falsifiable by references to everyday experiences. Quite the converse, it surely denigrates African intellectual and moral insights to insist that it is not possible for Africans to debate or articulate elegant accounts of how people should live that recognize the harms associated with present violence while aspiring to achieve more desirable social orders characterized by greater harmony.

The account of ubuntu presented here takes cognizance of the fact that the relations at stake in claims that Africans value harmony are established by means of communication. Much

will be made of the view that communication is violent for this characterization of communication further emphasizes the need to move away from conceptions of ubuntu that claim Africans understand the world to be fundamentally harmonious.

Failure to conceptualize African journalistic practice as regards war in ways that that are consistent with observations that Africans inordinately experience violence in their lives is concerning. I think that if the world and communication are both characteristically violent, it worthwhile to 1) present an attractive understanding of ubuntu that reflects the fundamental role of communication in human relations, 2) draft an attractive understanding of news that reflects values of ubuntu, 3) tentatively conceptualize news values (that apply to violent news) inspired by ubuntu, 4) and advocate an ubuntu-informed normative account of how journalists should cover conflict, war and possibilities regarding peace.

Ubuntu for journalists

Some think that ubuntu gives value to harmony, friendship and community and that among Africans one's humanness is diminished to the extent that one somehow falls short of achieving these (Ikuenobe, 2006; Metz and Gaie, 2010; Metz, 2007; Metz, 2011; Ramose, 1999). Nearly twenty years ago Kasoma (1996) argued that African journalism assume its values from the societies that surround it.

Kasoma argues that the problem of journalism in Africa is that it mimics Western professional norms which he considers to be individualist or self-serving in such a way that it no longer serves society – it even harms society. Kasoma (1996) says: "The unbelieving African society watches in awe as the largely incorrigible press literarily maims and murders

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those it covers to fulfil its not-so-hidden agenda of self-enrichment and self-aggrandisement and refuses to be held accountable for the harm it causes to society both individually and collectively."

For many Afrocentrists and neo-Afrocentrists it is desirable to present Africans as people who have something to teach the world *because* they are different from Westerners. This requires these Afrocentrists to imagine Africans as Europe "upside-down" (Appiah, 2010). Kasoma (1996) may be seen to assume such an Afrocentrist position in the ways in which he contrasts a Western journalistic profession which is imagined to be characterised by individualism and selfishness which are anathema to Africans who rather value "Journalistic solidarity and common problem-solving" in ways that can give journalism the human face he thinks it has lost.

Cross-cultural studies have, however, shown that it is a fallacy to think that individualism and collectivism are separate and distinct (Brewer and Chen, 2007) in the ways that Kasoma theorises them. Similarly, cross-cultural studies (Schlösser et al., 2013) indicate that the kind of humaneness that Kasoma (1996) appears to hint at, when speaking about giving a "human face" to journalism , is as associated with practices that promote violence against both out-group members and against in-group members who fail to conform to group norms.[1]

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[1] Coetzee (2001) supposes that usages of the word ubuntu, which references the essence of being human, suggests that often Africans who are referred to, for instance as *abelungu* in isiZulu, are excluded from the humankind which ubuntu is interested in. I think that an etymological account of the word *mulungu* would however relate it to words such as *kurunga* ('to make right' in the Shona language of Zimbabwe) or to the word *amalungelo* (or 'rights' in isiZulu). So I am less confident than Coetzee that usage of the word *abelungu* is necessarily pejorative – and I in fact think it often denotes the 'right' place of privilege that whites enjoy in many African societies. Whatever the case, the point is that whites are often excluded from the general population of *abantu* (people) in Africa – with both positive (privileging) and negative (harm-inflicting) consequences.

With South Africa of the 1990's being the centre of this development, drawing on traditional moral practices, the early scholarship of sages and more recent developments in places such as Zimbabwe where Samkange had written on hunhuism, African moral philosophical thinking has come to be known as ubuntu (Gade, 2012). Kasoma does not give his moral arguments the name ubuntu but they evidently cohere with the ubuntu philosophy, particularly as articulated by scholars such as Shutte (2001) and Ramose (1999). In South Africa, often quoted voice of ubuntu, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999: 29), has said the following:

> Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the *summum bonum* – the greatest good. Anything that subverts, that undermines this sought-after good, is to be avoided like the plague. Anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness, are corrosive of this good. To forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest. What dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me. It gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.

Tutu's ubuntu abhors competitiveness which undermines harmony which is prized for the ways in which it builds community. However, it is notable that Tutu recognises that self-interest has value if humans are to survive and thrive. Tomasello (2009), an evolutionary biologist, who has developed a thoroughly enthralling account that interrelates the origins of communication and human cooperative relations, and the philosopher Nagel (1970), both

make the point that human altruism is layered atop an animal base of selfish instincts, motives or drives.

In contrast, Kasoma appears to see Africans as largely altruistic people for whom:

> Journalism is not just any trade. It is a special type of trade whose wares, news, has traditionally in African society, been given free. To an African, it is bad enough to have group of people selling news as journalists do. But to have them sell it without due regard to the sensitiveness of the family, the clan and the tribe is worse. (Kasoma, 1996: 112)

Kasoma is seemingly appealing here to the idea that Africans are socialists. This may be particially explained by the fact that Kasoma emerged as a scholar during the cold war era. Among others, epitomised by Nyerere's (1968) idea of ujamaa and Cabral's (1973) ideas of an African socialism, the claim that Africans are collectivists and socialists had much currency during the cold war period, which encouraged crude glocal bi-polarities of this variety (Chabal, 2009: 4). After the cold war ended in 1994, less countries in Africa and across the world now position themselves as socialist states and more nuanced accounts of ubuntu are emerging (Gade, 2012). What this suggests, is that as West (2012) recognises, African moral-economic values are contested and it is not altogether clear that we can distinguish the moral concerns of ubuntu from some moral concerns that one finds in Western theories that seek to regulate individual freedoms while advancing collective organisation.

Kasoma (1996: 111) grants that the wares of his imagined African communal approach to journalism should be produced competitively. This is consistent with his view that in the world there are good and bad people and his idea that the "aim is to have the good acts of the good people rub-off on the not-so-good so that they too can emulate them and also become good" (Kasoma, 1996: 103). The task of journalism in Kasoma's account is to enable both good and bad acts to be known by audiences so that in this proverbial clash, the best ideas can win public favour. This idea is consistent with the utilitarian calls for freedom of expression espoused by Mill (1874) and with claims that Africans value freedom of expression presented by Seleoane (2001).

Journalism's utility, argues Kasoma, should be assessed in relation to the service it gives society, on terms that take into account the values of the society and then of the journalistic community. Specifically he says, "the basis of morality in journalism in Africa should be the fulfilment of obligations to society and to the journalistic corps." (Kasoma, 1996: 109). I argue that this is significant because moral values associated with ubuntu are worked for, by people, in community. As people are increasingly distanced from one another, compared with traditional densely-knit communities, the work of journalists is central to achievement of solidarity, community, friendship and even of the morality that are associated with ubuntu. This is signally clear in instances, such as when vigilante or xenophobic violence flare out, where journalistic input into public discourses are viscerally seen as pivotal to the articulation of sustainable journalistic outputs.

Africans are not unalterably-in-community; they are individuals who chose, seek and find ways to live well with others (Diagne, 2009; Eze, 2008). The fact that Africans are not inextricably in community, or more importantly, the fact that the valuing of certain ideals of

community is something that must be sold should be noted. In South Africa the word ubuntu has also been consciously deployed to the work of nation building and modernization (Coetzee, 2001: 115). Journalism is now foundational to how the communication which enables moral communities to be imagined is achieved (Bourdieu, 1996; Herman and Chomsky, 1988). The nationalist struggle by which national solidarity and shared identity are attainable now relies significantly on the work of media practitioners. Journalists are stewards and functionaries of the mediation by which the nation community may be imagined, in the sense that Anderson (1983) has described. In this light, Kasoma's (1996: 112) protestation that journalism has become a profession for which people are paid is a romantic lament against modernism and the mass organisation of society that is associated with it. One must recognise that others, in the West, such as Kierkegaard (1940) in 19th century Europe, have made similar romantic arguments against journalism for the ways in which it appropriates the role of storyteller of the times. As scholars such as Metz and West (2012) have argued, this is not strange as one may consider that what is morally desirable and defensible following ubuntu should be morally defensible anywhere – otherwise ubuntu appears to be a sham and hypocritical value system. So, for Metz:

> A moral theory counts as 'African' if informed by many of the firm ethical beliefs of a variety of sub-Saharan peoples. To deem a moral theory African does not therefore imply that all sub-Saharan societies have believed it or, indeed, that any has been aware of it. An African ethical principle is a philosophical construction unifying a wide array of the moral judgements and practices found among many of the black and Bantu-speaking peoples of the sub-Saharan region. Furthermore, it is possible for a moral theory to be defined as African yet resemble one found in the West. (Metz, 2009: 339)

If we are to be able to conceptualize the practices that inform ubuntu, it may be useful to move away beyond the metaphysical interests of philosophers to ask questions concerning the communication practices by which morality is achieved. A similar epistemological maneuver has been employed by the philosopher, McIntyre (2007: 33), in his search of more grounded insights into questions of morality. There is much to learn about ubuntu from asking questions about how communication patterns and related processes of sense-making enact moral orders that label certain practices excellent while condemning others. In the following sections I will explore the idea that the relations that ubuntu is interested in are produced and reproduced in communication. From the insight that relations are communicational, I will sketchily

- reinterpret the idea that ubuntu says people are people in relationships

- notice that communication is associated with unique human possibilities for cooperation.

- consider the role of disruption in human communicative and relational existence.

- propose that the disruptive and interrelating quality of human communicative and relational existence entails that sharing news is a fundamental aspect of being human. In short, since everyone shares news, I take that everyone is a journalist. This is an idea that is being alternatively theorized in the notion of citizen journalism which underscores the fact that not every journalist is a professional/journalism is not just for professionals.

While this paper does not have the space to develop this fully, in the next section, I will briefly outline the view that ubuntu involves a praxis of communication, news, relationships and community that deserves to be researched.

Ubuntu as a communication practice

For Metz (2009: 343), "Morality, from a resolutely African perspective, arises only from relationships" so that the question "is precisely what type of relationship is prescribed." I think it is worth going back to the isiZulu aphorism, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (which translates to something like saying: a person is a person with others) which is widely associated with ubuntu. Since the 'with' relations that are posited here are achieved in communication, one may say that ubuntu teaches that *a person is a person (in communication) with others.* There is added explanatory power in this move as it accounts for why after noting that ubuntu speaks of what it is to be human, "the secondary qualification of *ubuntu* or *botho* [the isiSotho translation of *ubuntu*) found in the standard dictionaries are all of a positive nature of humanness, to be of a good moral character, to show goodwill, kindness, charity and mercy to one's fellow beings, etc." (Coetzee, 2001: 113)

Qualified and conceptualized in terms of communication, the practice of ubuntu can be said to excellently direct human morality in the world when its adherents are led to act with the altruism and cooperativeness which make human beings unique among animals. Where other animals form cultures based on mainly exploitative and imitative practices, human beings, on the basis of their unique communicative abilities, form cooperative cultures that out-compete other animal cultures (Tomasello, 2009: xv-xvi). The point is that the turn to a communication approach allows us to see that human beings are excellently reflecting the unique altruism which, according to Tomasello (2010: 73-108), enables people to share, help and inform one another in ways that are unique among other animals. Human communication is

…a fundamentally cooperative enterprise, operating most naturally and smoothly within the context of (1) mutually assumed common conceptual ground, and (2) mutually assumed cooperative communicative motives. (Tomasello, 2010: 6)

The above recognition that human communication necessitates and assumes cooperation can be more clearly inscribed into our understanding of ubuntu to yield the aphoristic view that *a person is a person (in communication and cooperation) with others* which further explains the idea of ubuntu. The elegance of this aphoristic turn is that it recognizes how human cooperation is shaped by the shared intentionality which human beings summon jointly or mutually in shared enterprises that are characterised by cooperative motives. "The jointness involved is especially salient in institutional interactions…, which exist only within an institutional reality, collectively constituted, in which we believe and act together as if they do exist. (Tomasello, 2010: 6-7)

The above suggests that as a conceptual-moral approach to what it is to be excellent at being human, ubuntu attractively foregrounds how humans cooperate with others. Metz (2009) thinks that what distinguishes African moral philosophy from Western utilitarianism is that for utilitarians what matters is that an action improves individual life while for African morality value is fundamentally attached to "sharing a life with others". He also thinks that African moral philosophy is not Kantian because

> …the Kantian places no fundamental moral value on identifying with others. A Kantian can respect others by being distanced and not including them in any 'we'. Furthermore, African ethics, unlike Kantian, requires agents to strive to improve other people's well-being, even if they fail. Kantians basically believe that people's welfare does not matter morally. What matters is to respect their capacity for autonomy.
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> (Metz, 2009: 343)

As earlier noted in relation to Kasoma's (1996: 112) intonations that Africans are quite 'socialist' in their moral inclinations, particular care is needed to ensure that it is not suggested that Africans value unmeasured altruism or altruism that knows no self-interest. As it happens, impressing the idea of communication on how ubuntu is conceptualised has the added gain that it recognizes how for individuals involved, selfish or Gricean (1957) intentionality is paramount. The Gricean point is that people tend to think that communication has taken place only when their intentions as speakers have been achieved through requisite changes in the state of being of the receiver of the message.

Communication is violent. In communication individuals not only "rub-off" (Kasoma, 1996) against each other, they also "clash" with one another in ways that change the "mutual cognitive environment of the audience and communicator" (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 61) so that quite what a person is can associated with the communication he or she is involved in. For this reason, when we think of ubuntu as involving communication, we are fundamentally acknowledging that the relations by which personhood (in cooperation with others) is achieved involve violent communication. One way to grasp this is to say ubuntu is consistent with the idea that *a person is a person (in communicative disruption and cooperative relations) with others.*

As can be told by any student who has spent time in a lecture in which material already dealt with is rehashed, in cases where no new information is shared, it is fair to say that 'nothing was communicated'. Technically, on the terms of the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson (1995), when nothing new is communicated there is no change in the state of being of the audience and communicator and it is appropriate to claim that no communication has taken place. It is instructive to go further and say that communication happens when news is shared.

I propose that *a person is a person (meeting and expressing news in communicative disruption and cooperative relations) with others.* The elegance of this elaboration of the theme of communication in ubuntu is that it goes some way to explaining why, as for example seen in the reception of Spivak's (1988) seminal paper on the silencing of the subaltern, it has been widely accepted that silencing others is a way to dehumanise them. What is more, this elaboration of this theme of communication reflects that the sharing of news is a fundamentally human task. This may explain why it is so important that constitutions and legal frameworks give privileged places to journalists and other producers of news (such as academics and whistle-blowers). It also explains why Kasoma (1996: 112), for example, is keen that African learn to "revere and canonise" journalists who have served their societies well and to dishonour those practices by which journalists cheat their audiences by publishing materials that make "journalism irrelevant to their lives". At the same time it explains why we must condemn bad journalism. For if news expresses what is met in human existence, then we must condemn practices of journalism that compromise how people can engage in Buberian (1987: 11) "real living [that] is [achieved in] real meeting".

Given that African lives are characterized by inordinate levels of violence, including structural violence, it is extremely important that foregrounding the idea of communication in our thinking about ubuntu has yielded an approach which makes central concerns about violence. Accordingly I am of the view that it is possible to say that *the concern of ubuntu is to ensure that people use the violence of communication in such ways that persons can experience personhood through (meeting and expressing news in communicatively disruptive and cooperative relations) with others.* Afriethics lead us to be concerned with questions to do with participation. In the context of the media, Kasoma (1996: 109) concurs with this view in claiming that Afriethics demand that we recognize the "need for a dialogue among media people so that the practice of mass communication becomes a democratic and participatory one drawing its strength from the African cultural heritage."

From the above, the suggestion, yet to be further articulated, is that it is not enough for Africans to merely value having the capacity to participate in communicative processes by which people can experience personhood with others. This suggestion contradicts, but does not reject out of hand, the Metzean (2011) view that ubuntu values the capacity for personhood, for communing, for solidarity, friendliness, shared identity. For Metz, in my view, by focusing on capacities and not on capabilities, too easily lets go of utility-concerns in his articulation of African moral thinking. As Sen (2010) argues, if one is to aspire to overcome poverty, it is important to focus on securing the capabilities by which people can use their capacities with the understanding that both deontological and utilitarian concerns can in this way be brought to bear on lived-needs.

Looking specifically at the challenges facing journalism where children can access violent news content, Chasi has come to the view that:

> *Violent or otherwise, grounded on goodwill the actions of media actors are right and honour-worthy only insofar as they dutifully promote the just advancement of the welfare of societies in which individuals 'get on by listening to each other' in ways that enable heterogeneous yet shared identities to be formed. At the same time, a communicative act of the media is wrong to the extent that it tends to vitiate 1) the pursuit of justice, 2) the advancement of the welfare of the community, while promoting 1) unjust division and 2) ill will.* (Chasi, 2015 Itallics in original)[2]

I think it is useful to modify this view a little by expressing concern for the promotion of the attainment and development of relevant capabilities by which people can attain their personhood:

> Violent or otherwise, grounded on goodwill the actions of media actors are right and honour-worthy only insofar as they dutifully promote the just advancement of the welfare of societies in which individuals 'get on by listening to each other' in ways **that build capabilities which may be expressed as heterogeneous yet shared identities**. At the same time, a communicative act of the media is wrong to the extent that it tends to vitiate 1) the pursuit of justice, 2) the advancement of the welfare of the community, while promoting 1) unjust division and 2) ill will.

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[2] Italics in original.

To adequately sum up the above discussions is difficult. Instead, I will offer tentative statements of news values that draw on and emerge from the argument thus far. There is insufficient space to elaborate on them, but it is surely worthwhile for scholars of journalism to think that ubuntu enjoins them to practice journalism in ways that:

1. foster common conceptual grounds.

2. evidence listening and answering to others.

3. promote individual and mutual motives.

4. promote heterogeneous and collective identities.

5. reduce social transaction costs.

6. promote participation.

7. attack practices which vitiate the pursuit of justice and social welfare.

8. contest discourses that promote unjust divisions and ill-will.

9. change environments in disruptive and cooperative ways.

10. enable individuals to be the most that they can be.

These values, derived from thinking about ubuntu, reflect a broad interest in promoting the possibilities and capabilities by which, with the mediation of the media of and of media actors, persons in their relations with others can participate to more fully realize the elaboration of their personhood.

Discussion and conclusion: Thoughts on ubuntu for journalists covering war

In this concluding section I specifically discuss three questions to tentatively illustrate what my conception of ubuntu and journalism may have to say about journalistic coverage of war.

1. *Is a relational journalism possible?* The idea of enabling people to experience personhood seems eerily similar to the Kantian (2007) idea that protecting and promoting individual freedom is the best guarantee against tyranny. However, as Metz (2009: 343) rightly points out, the difference is that, unlike the Kantian, ubuntu places fundamental moral value on creating common conceptual grounds by identifying with others, forming a 'we' orientation with them and hence striving to improve their well-being. Societies that do not think about and use war with wisdom are liable to fall into victimhood and repeated suffering. From the point of view of ubuntu, it is interesting to conceptually investigate a relational account of the limits and relationships between the journalist and society and between the media and individuals in society for this may yield a moral theory different from the Kantian or utilitarian orientations to media and society. This conceptual work may center on the feasibility of thinking and practicing journalism as communication that promotes social welfare by informing all interested parties in ways that enable them to build capabilities needed to resolve complex social problems.

2. *How should journalists who are influenced by ubuntu communicate about war?* Yes, a journalist is a journalist with others – just as a person is a person with others, but the situatedness which is thus posited and emphasized is not respected by taking community for granted. Ubuntu surely urges journalists to work to establish communication/relations that respect others. This sense that journalists should value the otherness of others is expressed by Sontag (2003: 7) who when, while discussing how photography may

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express the horrors of war, says "no 'we' should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain." This is an important admonition which should also be directed at those who take other Africans for granted when speaking of "us" and when saying "we" in relation to the immeasurable pain, victimhood and sacrifices that war inflicts.

Perhaps the contentious issue is that war is given an overly bad name because people under-recognize its potential of war as a means of communication by which power is negotiated and managed in ways that can produce settled and productive social orders (Sonderling, 2013). Indeed, for example, the fact that Africans have not waged many wars across boarders partly explains the prevalence of internal struggles (Mazrui, 2008). Because people who have not directly experienced war are able to learn about war by receiving information about it, journalists have a special role to play in enabling members of societies to deliberate about decisions that should be made in periods leading to war, in times of war, and in working to end war.

In communicating about war and so in sharing news its horrors, journalists who value ubuntu should avoid falling to practices which simplistically objectify and confine people to confrontational roles. Journalists may avoid this error by recognizing that ironically the objective horror and pain of war are experienced subjectively. When this irony is lost sight of, objective illusions are constructed (Sen, 2010: 163) making it easy to deny the complexity of the contexts and motives that produce wars. With this in mind, Mamdani (2009: 15) argues that failure to tell complex stories that question assumptions, explore contexts and reveal motives from multiple local and international perspectives is at the core of the crisis of Sudanenes nationalism. He thinks this failure explains how the Sudan

crisis has been labeled and addressed, also by journalists, as a genocide when other explanations that he thinks would be more useful are possible. Insofar as ubuntu demands investing in the establishment of relations in which persons experience informed personhood in cooperative relations with others, journalists have a role to play in suitably elaborating complex narratives that debunk unhelpful assumptions and reveal alternatives that are worth deliberating about.

3. *Is the temptation to take other Africans for granted is heightened by the notion that Africans are fundamentally collectives?* A consequence is that it appears viable to tell the story of all Africans through the lens or voices of 'big men and women' when these perspectives are signally different from the perspectives of the 'whole people' or 'multitudes' they purportedly represent. Another consequence is that African stories are often told in terms of the stereotypical case, or the lowest common denominator. Yet it is well established in the literature that when journalists sink to the lowest common denominators by which people are viscerally connected to each other, to events and issues, what happens is that in the long term the quality of public discourse is lowered. Quality journalism rather tells stories nuanced which are nuanced in ways that enable faces of humanity (or ubuntu) to be seen.

Perhaps if journalism is to be nuanced, journalists should strive to increase the transpositional objectivity of their stories by imbuing them with multiple perspectives. The perspectives of journalistic stories should include those that arise from self-reflexive reflections of the journalist which reveals the assumptions and standpoints on the basis of which stories are narrated. Surely journalists who do this are likely to appear more trustworthy to audiences. Surely audiences may be expected to value such sharing of

assumptions and standpoints as gestures of trust on the basis of which person-to-person

relationships may be formed. Both journalists and audiences may be humanized when the

register of the interlocution is not dominated by journalistic pretense at

perspectivelessness. Part of the point then is that journalists should be circumspect in their

communication about war. As Sontag (1989: 95) observes, while speaking out against

overmobilizing, overdescribing, excommunicating and violating HIV/AIDS messages:

"No, it is not desirable for medicine, any more than for war, to be 'total'." The problem,

one may circumspectly say, with objective journalism is that it is too total in its regard for

itself and its truths to be able to tell the complex stories of war and of the pain of others.

I have argued that journalism should tell the truth about situations in ways that enable

audiences to establish desirable communities. A great step is taken against wanton,

destructive war when societies ensure that people use the violence of communication to

ensure *that persons can experience personhood through (meeting and expressing news in*

communicatively disruptive and cooperative relations) with others. Journalism has a

significant role in this – as may be seen in the various debates about the CNN effect (Gilboa,

2005; Livingston, 1997).

Seeing communication as violent probably makes it easier to speak of war when the

communication used is understood to quite ordinarily be associated with violence. For, that

way, it is less likely that we think the incommunicability of war is unusual and it is quite

likely that we normalize talk of war – in ways that make journalistic war-talk norm and

available for tasks associated with producing desired social orders.

Some may say that the arguments made, that violence characterizes the world and communication, are pessimistic. My counter to this accusation is that the understanding of ubuntu that I am presenting is fundamentally optimistic in the ways in which it proposes that people can variously use, manage and confront communication and violence – to produce more desirable social-moral orders. Given that pessimism tends to encourage more realistic assessments of solutions and that optimism tends to be associated with the willingness to confront situations without fear of failure (Waller, 2003), it is possible that the mix of optimism and pessimism that comprise this paper is quite attractive!

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