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Mass Media and Manipulation – ethical considerations

The mass media are now so deeply anchored in public life that they are ascribed the position of "the first government". They have become the mysterious and great world of man. In their extensive function mass media are the holders of varied good, intended for individuals and society, or a factor of widespread evil. The media enslave the human mind so that they serve the political and social groups which exploit us. Various forms of manipulation, which cause degradation of the personality of man and contribute to actual brainwashing, are today a challenge for competent professionals and scientists, to provide a solution to the problem of mass means of communication. The so-called "new philosophy of communication" plays a very important role in this process – liberty does not mean only freedom and liberalism, but it means upholding truth and responsibility.

Thus, while social communication rightly looks to the needs and interests of particular groups, it should not do so in a way that sets one group against another—for example, in the name of class conflict, exaggerated nationalism, racial supremacy, ethnic cleansing, and the like. The virtue of solidarity, "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common "good" ought to govern all areas of social life—economic, political, cultural, and religious. The origin of some individual and social problems lies in the replacement of human relations by the increasing use of the media and their passionate identification with fictional heroes. The media cannot replace direct personal contact or relationship between family members or among friends. However, the media may also contribute to the solution of this difficulty when using focus groups, interviews about films and radio broadcasts, communication between people to help stimulate, rather than replace it.[1]

[1] Pastoral Instruction "Aetatis Novae" On Social Communications On The Twentieth Anniversary Of Communio Et Progressio (1996), pp. 13-14, p. 7.

Man as a recipient of the media

Man is a creation of God – God is the creator and the creator is an artist. The artist gives his work shape and form. Nowadays mass media has become a great artist, "a rival to God", especially television and the internet. We can say that since we were born, in principle we have not changed much – we allow them to form our thinking. Therefore it is important that the media and their staff have in mind the moral aspects of the influence of the media. People are influenced in four main areas:

1. Intellectual – our mind has a craving to know something new,
2. Moral – there is an emphasis on the responsibility of the authors as well as the recipients of media products,
3. Aesthetic – desire for beauty, the artistic experience, entertainment, is good as far as it goes, but it can be done in a decent, attractive and dignified manner,
4. Religious – this factor is essential because it permeates all previous areas. Christians should understand and take to heart Christian principles and live by them. About 70% of the population claim to be Christians in Slovakia. Unfortunately this is not reflected in programmes produced by the mass media!

The German thinker, writer on ethics and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer during the time of World War II as he addressed himself to the media said. "Anything clothed, veiled, pure, and chaste is presumed to be deceitful, disguised, and impure; people here simply show their own impurity."[2] Roman Králik commented upon this and said: "God has been displaced from the world and from the public areas of human existence."[3] In this regard, I am often reminded of the warning statement of the famous professor of Bratislava Andrej Dermek who commented on the impact of mass media. He said: "The mass media do the public harm. We are formed by a certain power, so that we stop thinking like humans: we are only left with great desires and expectations."[4]

The media have great power in influencing the common man. The media are able to influence attitudes, opinions, values, beliefs, the behaviour of individuals and society as well. They affect every human activity. "In order to live well, man must know the purpose of his activities, his actions. Purpose cannot be recognized without everyday wisdom and

[2] D. Bonhoeffer*, Letters and Papers from Prison*, An Abridged Edition, SCM Classics, 2002, p. 128.

[3] R. Králik, , "Dynamika vnútorného prežívania ako výpoveď o človeku a jeho svete – Dietrich Bonhoeffer a jeho zápas," Fyzika a etika III, eds. Cyril Diatka and Ivana Miháliková,Nitra: UKF Nitra, 2009, p. 194.

[4] M. Klobušická, "Najobľúbenejší profesor," *Život a dielo dona Andreja Dermeka*, eds. Július Obonya, Bratislava: Don Bosco, 2005, p. 47.

prudence (*fronesis*). These two civic virtues shape the ethically capable, advanced citizen (*spondaios*) to create order, coherence and harmony in a cosmos of his own.[5]

Information from the media affect man in several ways, for they affect his senses. Perhaps the most obvious is their power during campaigns when more and more media are merged into one. Contemporary mass media are characterized by a preference for all that is negative, which often gives the impression that evil always wins. If the media discover the spirit of truth, they have to make an effort to refute the view that the most important news is negative news and that affects the public in that it gives them the impression that it does not always pay to be good. Public media must take a clear stance to this issue, since the recipient is man who is easily influenced.

The media are essentially characterized by the following features: the tendency to monopolization, an increase in size, vertical integration, creating conglomerates (mixture, conglutinate), diversification (subversive and destructive activities), transnational character, cooperation, tendency towards complete domination of the process (production – financing – distribution), notifications of certain values.[6]

Another negative feature is that the media create a distorted version of reality. They cause a secondary cultural and intellectual illiteracy, obscure ethical standards, and even undermine the moral foundations and responsibility of society. This can happen by watching various reality shows or simple-minded soap operas. The negative aspects of mass media can include the possibility of political and ideological manipulation. The media often give partial truth and partial information, which may impede or preclude a critical assessment of individuals, institutions and ideas, because much depends on the method of their presentation.

The Ethics of Mass Media and Manipulation

"Accelerating the pace of life is highly damaging to the moral condition of man's relationship to the values and the poor condition for the presence of ethics in everyday life."[7] The same is true with regard to addressing the issues of Mass Media Ethics.

Mass media are the most important information, cultural, educational and artistic tool that leads and inspires the family and society. If they

[5] M. Bal-Nowak, *Prawa człowieka a dobro wspólne*, [w:] *Etyka i polityka,* eds. Dorota Probucka, Kraków: Impuls, 2005, p. 361.

[6] G. Burton, J. Jirák, *Úvod do studia médií,* Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2001, p. 148.

[7] J. Byrska, *Pochodzenie treści etycznych w życiu publicznym*, [w:] *Etyka i polityka*, eds. D. Probucka, Kraków: Impuls, 2005, p. 235.

respect the ethical and moral principles they can become an effective instrument for unity and understanding, a messenger of human and societal values. On a daily basis, however, we encounter much negative phenomena stemming from their influence. Therefore, it needs a new philosophy of communication: freedom means responsibility! "Public authority in these matters is bound by special responsibilities in view of the common good, to which these media should be committed... Lastly, the same public authority which legitimately concerns itself with the health of its citizens is obliged, through the promulgation and careful enforcement of laws, to exercise a fitting and careful watchfulness lest grave damage befall public morals and the welfare of society"[8]... "They punish any violation of each man's right to a good reputation, secrecy and privacy. Nothing can justify resorting to false information in order to manipulate public opinion through the media. Public interventions do not restrict the freedom of individuals and groups."[9] From a psychological point of view this is a remarkable reflection of Dorotha Probucka. Regarding the question of the threat of legal proceedings against the media and its educational character she said: "We should also mention the educational function of punishment, intended as moral retaliation. The sharing of experience of what we did to others should be the expiation of wrongs caused and their understanding as well. Only by understanding what we have done to other people can we provide a remedy and one of the methods which leads to such an attitude is a personal experience of injustice we had to face. In the case of people unable to imagine themselves in the place of someone else and for people suffering from moral immaturity only the individual experience of those who suffer can be a condition for internal transformation" [10]

All human life is lived in a particular moral context. Even the mass media (especially television) shape the public morality. It is a process which is encouraged if we allow television to shape our morality. According to Thompson, the media enable "... communication from a large spatial and temporal distance ..."[11] It was Bernard Cohen who originally suggested that "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."[12]

[8] Druhý Vatikánsky koncil, Inter mirifica (Vatikán: 12 ACTA APOSTOLICAE SEDIS 56, 1964), 149.

[9] *Katechizmus Katolíckej cirkvi, V. Používanie prostriedkov spoločenskej komunikácie, b. 2498* (Trnava: SSV, 2002), p. 597–598.

[10] D. Probucka, *Etyka normatywna wobec sytuacji granicznych czyli jak reagować na zło,* [w:] *Etyka wobec sytuacji granicznych*, eds. D. Probucka, Kraków: Impuls, 200), p. 66.

[11] G. Burton, J. Jirák, *Úvod do studia médií...,* p. 18.

[12] M. Iłowiecki, T. Zasępa, *Moc a nemoc médií,* Bratislava: SAV, 2003, p. 38.

The electronic expansion of the media have raised awareness of people, but on the other hand also increased their manipulation. What is happening today is a proof that the media control and manipulate people like never before. This happens on the basis of how people behave and what they are focused on.[13]

Manipulation (from Latin – *manus*) can be understood as a kind of behaviour in a clever or dishonest way. It is a means of coercing the listener/viewer, by achieving the ideological, political, business, cultural dominance over the individual and society. The recipient of this information, who is the subject of the manipulation, is not simply unaware of being manipulated. These effects on people are aimed at the individual and hidden, often creating a false sense of reality.

According to Polish experts, mass media manipulation is vague, devious, a sly choice of information and language resources with intention to:

– Affect the moods and opinions of other people,
– Obtain the possibility of manipulating the behaviour of people and achieving the goals and benefits of the manipulator. "[14]

We can say that manipulation is very close to violence. Nowadays it is the most effective way that mass media can obtain money and power. It is created by whole team created of experts from the field of psychology, sociology, mass media communication and public relations.

It would be untrue to say that media reality is emerging as a result of intentional manipulation – it is more an "aesthetic" change of reality – creating pseudo-events, the choice of topics to be discussed, highlighting the negativity and elitism (ethnocentrism), "said Ivan Vagner in his book entitled TV news – psychological pressure? He also defines the main reasons why there is this manipulation.

TV News must follow as certain pattern. There is constant emphasis on a specific "theme for the day", relating to new affairs and assumptions.

1. It is important not to ignore economic aspects – the desire to sell information. Therefore it is necessary to have information as soon as the incident occurs, even if the report is not detailed enough. It is necessary to bring a varied and interesting picture of the world in order to satisfy the reader or viewer.
2. It should rather provide the information that the reader expects, than those that are available. In practice, this means the selection of a certain press agency as the source of news. In practice, this means that the assumption that an assassination is more impor-

[13] M. Béreš, *Jak manipulovat s lidmi,* Brno: Computer Press, 2007, p. 89.
[14] M. Iłowiecki, T. Zasępa, *Moc a nemoc médií...,* p. 36.

tant than a report on a new method of irrigation. A report on an assassination has a limited impact of several hours duration. A report on irrigation can affect the next decade. Elitism states prefer to have more influence in international decision-making environment, they are capable of better business relations and they have better and more stable currency.

3. All this information should be preferably brief, clear, and permit fast processing. Information on disasters, violence and terrorism in general and negative phenomena are also popular because they permit a clear and concise treatment of the event.[15]

The media are a reflexion of society. They mainly follow the interests of their owners, the media tycoons. And these are the main reasons for manipulative efforts and practices. Therefore, it is impossible to expect different behaviour and keeping ethical standards. Their social system and internal adjustment leads to the manipulation of people.

Methods and effects of manipulation

Manipulation is understood as a way of influencing individuals or groups, or the community, in order to change their views and opinions, of course, without a group or individuals being aware of this. Information and events which the mass media pay attention to are focused on the topics which the public consider to be of most interest.

Manipulation influences all areas of our life and has an impact on everyone. There is no escape, it is up to each of us how to process it, or we can live a lonely life. But that would mean avoiding contact with other people. Most of the population is characterized as unable and depressed to exist without communication and contact with other people. Simply said we are sociable creatures.

Manipulation can be seen as:

– Elements of processing information: such as fear, emotionalism, or concealment of fact in saying only half the truth, abuse of terms, hiding the real intentions while using people who have some authority
– Means of processing information: the use of stereotypes, myths, political gossip, and camouflage.
– Principles of processing information such as individualization, graduation, creating the illusions of reality, the use of funds accepted by society, incomplete information, or expected information
– Techniques of processing information such as repetition, concealment, misuse of symbols, extraordinary speeches, selection, other attractive manoeuvres, refinement of terms, fashion, indirect influence

[15] I. Vágner, *Televizní zprávy – psychický nátlak?,* Praha: Argo, 199), p. 150.

– Because of this manipulation it is hard to distinguish truth from falsehood and reality from propaganda. If there is any other opinion, alternative, inadequate current propaganda, manipulators are designed to instantly discredit or ridicule it. Methods for determining the order of the day and influencing public awareness have significantly improved. For one of the modern methods of the processing of information we can say: "Manipulation of any kind, even so delicate and refined as for NLP (Neurolinguistic programming), always results in the total defeat of the individual, and the loss of any human dignity. The subject of loss is a person of different intervention and loser is also the initiator of the influence itself. Defeated person lost dignity and loser resigned by making a decision for such action."[16] Manipulation can be implemented in different ways. Frequent methods used in the processing of information are: order of presentation, omission of certain facts, the effect of a third person and hidden persuasion.

Hidden persuasion – is the most dangerous method of mass media manipulation for it involves the dishonest processing of information. Journalists who are dedicated to this form of manipulation in the USA are called "the hidden persuaders". Hidden persuasion, among other things, is when the opinion of a certain group with a political axe to grind is presented as the total truth about reality. This truth is so evident that only fools do not understand it. In using hidden persuasion the most effective way is to deal in vague and ambiguous terms so that the recipient believes that these terms are precise, having only one sense, but which were created by their producer.

A recipient must feel ashamed that he did not understand or ascribed to it another meaning, a very traditional one, so he starts to believe that producer is aware of what he says. In this spirit, a certain order in the presentation of information is considered to be obvious and widely accepted: it is tacitly accepted as the only correct and democratic version, but the most modern, advanced and open form of it.

In hidden persuasion there is always a tacit assumption (hidden of course). Such convictions clash against those of all sensible people, and in addition, give the impression that this is an open-minded approach to the question, as it comes from a group of eminent people. Hidden persuasion carefully avoids the suspicion that it could sow even the slightest doubt in the recipient. Where there are no doubts – because it is a confirmed fact or an obvious truth – hidden persuasion causes them by using ignorance of the matter in hand.[17]

[16] D. Probucka, *NLP a imperatywy kategoryczne Kanta,* [w:] *Etyka – Psychologia – Psychoterapia,* eds. A. Margasiński, D. Probucka, Kraków: Aureus, 2004, p. 107.

[17] M. Iłowiecki, T. Zasępa, *Moc a nemoc médií...,* p. 41–42.

Ironically, the educated part of the population then becomes the subject of media manipulation rather than ordinary and simple people. The reason may be the fact that educated people with a higher social status are much more interested in politics and in the economy. They read more, they discuss more, etc.

Advertising as the most common means of media manipulation

Advertisement is a philosophical and psychological phenomenon, especially in the context of creating its own truths about advertising. Sometimes we talk about so-called "innocent lies" which are the part of everyday life. Since the essential characteristic of lies is their vulnerability, in advertising lies this threat becomes more urgent.

People often find advertisements disturbing. It is considered to be unpleasant and even nasty sometimes. People often complain about being disturbed by it while watching TV, listening to the radio or reading newspapers. It is important to remember that without advertising much of media would not be able to exist. Media earn much money by advertising. Without this income, there could be only the media that someone would be willing to finance or state media.

Advertising is a special type of manipulation of human mind and emotions. We have to face it everywhere. Media influence human and cultural life and are financially dependent on advertising. "There is no doubt about the fact that mass advertising is nothing more than handling people, but a controlled one. It happens because most of the people like advertisement and want to be manipulated."[18]

Advertising is often criticized as a tool to manipulate people. Advertising sells an image and the lifestyle more associated with the product than the product itself. Advertising continues to evolve along with the entire society and under its influence people form new ideas of utopia.

Advertising also can be, and often is, a tool of the "phenomenon of consumerism," as Pope John Paul II delineated it when he said: "It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a lifestyle which is presumed to be better when it is directed toward 'having' rather than 'being', and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself.

Sometimes advertisers speak of it as part of their task to "create" needs for products and services — that is, to cause people to feel and act upon cravings for items and services they do not need. "If ... a direct appeal is made to his instincts — while ignoring in various ways the reality

[18] M. Béreš, *Jak manipulovat s lidmi...,* p. 97.

of the person as intelligent and free — then consumer attitudes and lifestyles can be created which are objectively improper and often damaging to his physical and spiritual health.

This is a serious abuse, an affront to human dignity and the common good when it occurs in affluent societies. But the abuse is still more grave when consumerist attitudes and values are transmitted by the communications media and advertising to developing countries, where they exacerbate socio-economic problems and harm the poor.

Similarly, the task of countries attempting to develop types of market economies that serve human needs and interests after decades under centralized, state-controlled systems is made more difficult by advertising that promotes consumerist attitudes and values offensive to human dignity and the common good. "[19]

Advertising attacks emotions and instincts, and often exploits human weakness. It is so subtle and sophisticated that it is hard to escape its influence. Someone has jokingly said that word advertising means a repeated lie. Perhaps this statement is not far from the truth. The use of mass media advertising is a tool that has a large, widespread force capable of influencing the attitudes and behaviour of people today. This way they can be controlled and manipulated.

Oliviero Toscani in his book *Advertising Is a Smiling Carcass*, states: "Advertising does not sell products or ideas, but false, intoxicating idea of happiness. It is harmful and hedonistic just by its instructions for the joy of living under idealized standards of wealthy consumers. Advertising offers us a world of increasingly enthusiastic naiveties in times of economic and spiritual crisis."[20]

According to J. T. Russell and R. Lana we can distinguish three main periods in the history of advertising:

Pre-marketing period – from the beginning of the commodity exchange in prehistoric times until the mid-18th century – communication between the seller and the buyer takes place in primitive ways – print era began only at the end of this period

Period of mass communication – from the mid-18th century to the first decade of the last century – from the use of printing, film and radio,

Research period – within the last fifty years techniques that enable the identification and achievement of a specific target group with the assistance of modern communications technology have improved.[21]

[19] Pápežská rada pre spoločenské komunikačné prostriedky, Etika reklamy /10/, eds. John P. Foley and Pierfranco Pastore, (Vatikán 22. februára 1997), [cit. 2012.08.03.] Dostupné na internete: www.kbs.sk.

[20] O. Toscani, *Reklama je navoňaná zdochlina,* Bratislava: Slovart, 1996, p. 20-21.

[21] P. Štarchoň, *Vademecum reklamy: vybrané teoretické aspekty,* Bratislava: UK, 2004, p. 9–11.

These periods, however, cannot be equated with the revolutionary upheavals in advertising, but we associate them with the development of the means of communication. This development proceeded in an evolutionary manner which was affected by the external influences of the society.

How is advertisement connected with ethics? Ethics in advertising is an area in which adherence to ethical principles is required by public opinion, especially in the sphere of influencing the recipient to purchase goods and services. One of the most famous advertising codes of ethics is the International Code of ads (also referred to as a code of advertising techniques) which is based on the principles of the International Chamber of Commerce.

The ultimate goal of ethics in advertising is a real benefit for all the components of the promotional process. It is beneficial not only for the advertiser, advertising agency and the transmission medium but especially for the consumer.[22]

Ethical advertisement should:

– Be true, inform and persuade, respect the dignity and value of man in shaping the personality of man – to be educational, it is also useful if it is aesthetic and contains elements of humour.

Unethical advertising:

– is untrue, disrespectful, rude, unfair – accepts only a certain group of people (the rich), manipulates man, degrades and humiliates man and the real issues are omitted.

View on internet and electronic fraud

Nowadays man is increasingly looking for an information refuge in aesthetics and culture. Supposed transcendentalism, conducted through cyberspace becomes more interesting than the Good News about God, the Gospel. This has become a major challenge to theology. In fact, there is no culture without discernment (nature of the internal content of works of art). The media, especially television and the internet are the opposite of discernment. They attack us in a continuous flow of images and information. We get so embroiled in this chaos which is the exact opposite of culture. It becomes a non-culture or counterculture. One response to this threat of chaos is a general idea of communication. The basic tool of this idea is the internet. Nowadays, the internet is certainly considered to be a modern phenomenon in the media. It is a global network of computers. It is used mainly to transmit different types of information in the form of text, images, photographs, videos, etc. It provides a number of

[22] P. Horňák, Ľ. Šefčák, *Etika reklamy. Etika žurnalistiky,* Bratislava: SOSPRA, 1999, p. 14.

services in the form of "online communication". Internet connection is almost everywhere.

The internet is based on these three basic principles:

– Connectivity of all computers of the world (the fastest transfer of data at the same time)
– Simple network (connectivity)
– Ability to send all datagrams of the Internet via all media (multimedia). [23]

The internet allows us to increase contact with mediated reality, but also causes a lack of direct contact with people, nature or works of art. We have to pay for it all. Modern media gifted us by divine power: we can see into the far future.

However, we have reduced our ability to distinguish between what is real and what is an illusion. For children it can have tragic consequences. There is a limit that cannot be exceeded.

Most Internet violations are associated with widely understood manipulation. A common form of manipulation is to modify the web's foreign websites. The press has reported the modification of websites in such institutions as the CIA, Department of Justice, and the U.S. Air Force. It is also known that election websites representing different parties in the UK have been changed. In Poland, there was a modification of the Government Information Centre. Hacking unknown websites can be fun, but it can also be a sign of terrorism. The stealing of mailing lists has become notorious. Nowadays even e-mail addresses can be stolen. [24]

Handling and offenses which has appeared on the Internet do not destroy the value of this new tool of interpersonal communicating. They depend on the man who is responsible for each act – good or bad. Solving complex problems of the Internet depends mainly on education and moral formation of man.

The "image" character of the current mass media culture

The modern media have the power to create symbols that play a significant role in shaping the moral environment of contemporary man.[25] However, they can perfectly handle the interpretation of events. Masters of the spiritual life say that ‚God gives facts and their interpretation is shaped by the Devil'.

[23] J. Charvát, L. Šefčák, *Médiá a politika,* Bratislava: MERKUR Print, 1998, p. 23.

[24] T. Zasępa, *Media, człowiek, społeczeństwo*: *Doświadczenia europejsko-amerykańskie,* Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła, 2000, p. 276.

[25] T. Zasępa, *Médiá v čase globalizácie...,* p. 31.

This is a crisis of European culture, particularly the Christian element of European culture. It is a crisis of "European transformation of consciousness in extreme contradictions of Christian heritage. European atheism is a challenge that should be seen from the perspective of a European consciousness. It is more a rebellion against God, and infidelity in relation to God than just simple negation of God. This is a crisis and challenge to Christianity and the Church in Europe."[26]

Nowadays, mass media compete with traditional methods of education. They completely occupy time, space and internal adjustment of children and young people. Young people are very fascinated by the behaviour of celebrities and media heroes. In the past children and the young people used to be educated and formed by school or by church institutions. Nowadays the media takes this place thanks to their sophisticated forms of manipulation. The question is whether this process is of educational and enriching quality or whether we can observe rather the opposite tendency.

Igor Lomnický said: "The problem we have to face today is the reality that in the past children used to have their parents as role models. They lived with them and helped them. Nowadays they live individual lives in an isolated world full of complicated and various "media" heroes. This way child loses the live model, a kind word, empathy, positive acceptance and affection. In order to become an empathetic human being a child needs to share the rich human experience. Children miss those positive situations and activities that they once shared with their parents and grandparents as well. There are fewer tasks, which former generations dealt with together. At the present time, there is a lack of cooperation; they who were once united by a common parental pattern are now forced to live as isolated individuals."[27]

The mass media have become the status quo rather than the bearers of change. They are able to form a semblance of normality to all cultural and moral deviation, by promoting violence, greed, and sexual deviation. In the world of the media everything all these perversions are presented as being entirely normal.[28] Andrea Lesková said: "The currently pressing question becomes what are the real values in the media compared to commercially prioritized media contents, presenting even negative value."[29]

[26] Ján Pavol II, *Kryzys Europy jest kryzysem chrześcijaństwa w Europie.* Przemówienie do uczestników V. Sympozium Konferencji Episkopatów Europejskich, 5. 10. 1982, L'Osservatore Romano, 1982 nr 10, s. 12.

[27] I. Lomnický, *Etická výchova ako inšpirácia na každý deň,* Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 2010, p. 44.

[28] T. Zasępa, *Médiá v čase globalizácie...,* p. 33.

[29] A. Lesková, "Masmediálne vzory vo vzťahu k adolescentom," *Podnikanie v konkurenčnom prostredí,* Komárno: EF Univerzita J. Selyeho v Komárne, 2012, p. 280–286.

The knowledge accumulated in seventy years of research shows that the media provide us with a blurry image in which we can see ourselves. Through the glass of this mirror we live, breathe and feel our existence at the same time.

Not only each individual, but the whole human society inherited a rich network of socio-cultural and moral traditions. The media seems to have lost this true value, logic and consistency. Culture is inseparable from public information. [30] The source of information is important because in it we can achieve recognition of truth or falsity. Work is important in its sources and facts – making connections, interpretation, presentation methods, the process of selection / prioritization, emphasis, omission /.[31]

The formation of morality in the culture of the media

A media culture has its own system of attitudes that affects:

1. Manipulation of the recipient – using the ethos of profit leads to an infinite demand for various products. When we agree, we lose part of our free will. Consumerist ethos is a combination of "tastes" and "need." Passion becomes a thing similar to a moral principle.
2. Fear of being left out – one of the most negative consequences of television ethos which impact on people is the destruction of their natural ability to live in solitude, which a person sometimes urgently needs.
3. Self- satisfaction is one of the aspects of culture in which we consider the hypocrisy of any concern for values, particularly religious ones.
4. Sexual stimulation – has to attract the attention of the audience and therefore there is a visible increase of viewership. It is really difficult to find TV shows in which sexual abuse is not used as a backdrop for their plots or entertainment.
5. Taboos remedy – the need to demystify every obedience and values. It would mean the destruction of any poetry of life, especially the religious one and religious rites.
6. Sentimental relationship with people on the margins of society – common sense is less important than emotional sympathy for the "damaged" characters regardless of the values they held.[32]

[30] T. Zasępa, *Médiá v čase globalizácie…*, p. 40.
[31] Z. Vybíral, *Lži, polopravdy a pravda v lidské komunikaci,* Praha: Portál, 2003, p. 112.
[32] T. Zasępa, *Media, człowiek, społeczeństwo…*, p. 94–95.

Is there any meaningful solution worthy of man?

The overwhelming presence of mass media in the contemporary world by no means detracts from the importance of alternative media which are open to people's involvement and allow them to be active in the production and even in the designing the process of communications itself. Then, too, grassroots and traditional media not only provide an important forum for local cultural expression but develop competence for active participation in shaping and using mass media.

Similarly, we view with sympathy the desire of many peoples and groups for a more just, equitable systems of communications and information which safeguards them against domination and manipulation, whether from abroad or at the hands of their fellow countrymen. This is a concern of developing nations in relation to developed ones; and often, too, it is a concern of minorities within particular nations, both developed and developing. In all cases people ought to be able to participate actively, autonomously, and responsibly in the processes of communication which in so many ways help to shape the conditions of their lives.[33]

Cardinal John Chrysostom Korec, who is the highest moral authority in the Slovak Republic on the issue of the media remarked, "If I had my real attitude toward the media, I would say this little prayer for them: Thank you, Lord that we are informed about everything what we know about small and big events of the Earth and humanity. Others help us to understand things and they are not afraid of toil and danger, they are ready to entertain us. We are not indifferent to what is happening in the Far East, Africa and Alaska. For all this we owe our gratitude to journalists and reporters, newspapers, television and the Internet. Lord, save us from reporters looking for lies, crimes and vices, from those who are just looking for sensations and sell them to newspapers, magazines and television. Protect us from disturbing people who are paid for their indiscretion and who publish offensive diaries, photographs and disgusting crimes and who are not positive role-models for young people. Protect us from journalists, who speak half-truths and spread gossip. Lord, bless us with good writers, artists and journalists, who will give a true picture of the world, who would know what is appropriate to write and what to take a photograph of. Protect them from these mistakes and from temptation. "[34]

How should people behave who are working for media? First of all they should be people who value ethics and morality. It is clear that the mass media have great power; they can control, lead, and manipulate society,

[33] *Aetatis novae*, p. 25–26.

[34] J.C. Korec, *O kultúre*: *Rozhovory Márie Bátorovej s kardinálom Jánom Chryzostomom Korcom*, Bratislava: Lúč, 2001, p. 16–17.

as well as public opinion. Ethics relates to professionalism and the moral truthfulness of man. It is determined by the religious responsibility of media professionals and not only towards each other but also towards God.

The basic principles of moral and ethics of the mass media for people working in the media can be formulated as follows:

- The principle of homogeneous words and images in media culture
- Respect for the principle of seeking a common good,
- The principle of good values
- The principle of accountability and veracity
- The principle of the respect for human dignity

Freedom and Mass Media

Freedom is a precious gift from God and each man is called to be free. Using the freedom properly is closely associated with the way man perceives good and evil. When we consider ethics to be a philosophical discipline dealing with moral aspects of human actions, it needs to draw on substantial quality of will which is freedom. Free human creativity is being effectively and permanently developed if it is based on unshaken truth given to man. Knowing the truth goes hand in hand with accountability for decisions and acts. Acts of love and goodness present the most impeccable way of the implementing of freedom.

„The act of faith does not deprive the freedom of a man, but on the contrary, it strengthens it. However, his freedom is inseparably linked to a sense of responsibility before God – the only guarantee of absolute values. This responsibility cannot be expressed in moral categories whereas according to Kierkegaard not virtue, but faith is the opposite of sin. The man of faith is free to such a degree that he can review all values."[35] Pope John Paul II. often points out that man is free when he recognizes the principle of an absolute respect for the truth.

The mass media affect our imagination through images and sounds, creating an ideal image, which is in all of us. Our imagination creates us.

Creating a single person is the role of a lifetime; it is an activity that takes place even outside our mind. "The essence of freedom is the spiritual, inner experience of man, the facts, that is an entity with a constitutive factor. A condition in which there is total integration of personality is the state of religion."[36]

[35] S.a Lubańska, M. Jozek, "Viera ako dialektický protiklad zúfalstva," Kierkegaard as Challenge to the Contemporary World /Kierkegaard ako výzva k súčasnému svetu/ eds. R. Králik, Khan Abrahim H., T. Máhrik, Ľ. Török, J. Turnbull, Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Kierkegaard Circle 2011, p. 170.

[36] S. Lubańska, *Wolność w koncepcji wiary Kierkegaarda,* [w:] *Wolność we współczesnej kulturze,* eds. Z.J. Zdybicka, J. Herbut, A. Maryniarczyk, A. Łyskawka, N. Szutta, Lublin: KUL 1997, p. 737.

The media reflect the values of the world around us. When deciding on the specific acts and structures that support basic freedom, we can appeal on psychological and moral values. "Culture, based on the mass media can have a positive effect on the formation of moral life in Western societies and the opening-up companies in Central and Eastern Europe. [37]

The media must take advantage of this great opportunity to further their mission of fostering dialogue, cultural exchange, solidarity and peace in the world. The formation of responsible and critical use of the media allows us to use them wisely and appropriately. Because of their help to shape today's culture they should not manipulate the younger generation. They should rather take the place of educators.

Formation in the responsible and critical use of the media helps people to use them intelligently and appropriately. The profound impact upon the mind of new vocabulary and of images, which the electronic media in particular so easily introduce into society, cannot be overestimated. Precisely because contemporary media shape popular culture, they themselves must overcome any temptation to manipulate, especially the young, and instead pursue the desire to form and serve. In this way they protect rather than erode the fabric of a civil society worthy of the human person.

Participation in the mass media arises from their nature as a good destined for all people. As a public service, social communication requires a spirit of cooperation and co-responsibility with vigorous accountability of the use of public resources and the performance of roles of public trust, including recourse to regulatory standards and other measures or structures designed to affect this goal. [38]

The social means of communication are a powerful force, which can use the imagination, freedom and reflection can be used to support development of a free man. On the other hand they can destroy balance and order in man as well. The process of restoring balance is hard, unpleasant and painful, but it bears fruit in the form of a morally mature person, who is in harmony with the world. The most sophisticated way of manipulation is a sense of "free will and decision" with the recipient. Affected man is not aware of the manipulator's influence on his mind. On the contrary, he is still convinced of his free will and decisions.

[37] T. Zasępa, *Médiá v čase globalizácie…*, p. 341.

[38] *Posolstvo Svätého Otca Benedikta XVI. k 40. svetovému dňu spoločenských komunikačných prostriedkov (*Trnava: SSV 2006), p. 14.

Summary – In conclusion

Nowadays media manipulation becomes one of the "worlds" of man living in XXI. century. This should lead to an active stance on the issue of processing information, protecting both the individual and society from its unpleasant adverse effects. Therefore the question of media impact on man becomes the subject of interest for ethical people, educators, practitioners and theorists of education.

There are some possible suggestions as to how to eliminate negative influences of manipulation:

- The family should have a positive influence on the quality of information and making decisions at the local and national level.
- There is a need for information to be available; especially in educational programmes
- Professionalism is necessary, but it does not replace the wisdom of the common man who speaks his mind
- It is essential and necessary to create an independent organization that will protect the interests of consumers.
- It is necessary to restore the social conscience of individuals and social groups.
- Equal access to information that will satisfy the educational, cultural and educational needs of the people.

In autobiographical film John XXIII Pope of Peace by Giorgio Capitany, John XXIII said: "When storm and darkness is everywhere, follow the teachings of the Gospel and of the Church. It is our duty and our salvation. Blessed are those who demand justice. No need to be afraid. Evil is never equal to God! "

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Summary

Mass media are now so deeply anchored in public life, that they are ascribed the position of "the first government". They have become the mysterious and great world of man. In their extensive function mass media are either the holders of varied good, intended for individuals and society, or a factor of widespread evil. The media enslave the human mind so that they serve the political and social groups, which exploit us. Various forms of manipulating, which cause degradation of the personality of man and contribute to the actual brainwashing, are today the challenge for competent professionals and scientists, to the expeditious solution to the problem of mass means of communication. So called "new philosophy of communication" plays a very important role in this process – liberty does not mean only freedom and liberalism, but it means the truth and responsibility.

Abstrakt

Mass media są dziś tak głęboko obecne w życiu publicznym, że przypisuje się im pozycję "pierwszej władzy". Stały się tajemniczym i wielkim światem człowieka. W swoim rozległym funkcjonowaniu media są albo nośnikiem różnorakiego dobra, kierowanego do jednostki i społeczeństwa, albo też stają się czynnikiem upowszechniającym zło. Chodzi o to, że środki masowego przekazu zniewalają umysły ludzkie, by służyć w ten sposób wyzyskującym nas grupom politycznym i społecznym. Różne formy manipulowania wywołują degradację osobowości człowieka. Dlatego przedstawiciele nauki powinni pilnie zająć się problematyką mass mediów. Ważna staje się "nowa filozofia komunikacji", zgodnie z którą wolność oznacza wzięcie odpowiedzialności za prawdę przekazu.

Keywords: Mass Media, Manipulation, Ethics, Responsibility, Person

Słowa kluczowe: środki masowego przekazu, manipulacja, etyka, odpowiedzialność, osoba

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