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**Media ethics in professional journalism:**

***As the conscience within the human mind & Media experts and Social justice***

The questions arise, why morality and ethics are important for professional journalists. The answer is simple – To make difference between good and evil. Universal values as the truth, justice, love, beauty, freedom, goodness, solidarity, human dignity, peace-glorifying of the life. Characteristic attributes of the journalists are integrity, honesty, harmony, respect, sacrifice, trust. Questions about universal values and norms that came out of it becomes very important every time when basic human rights are brutally violated in the name of some state, national, racial, class, party…interest.

When the moral decay, than the laws are fulfilling the emptiness: that is why we have today so many law and layers – German saying states: ”Where the law does not have power, that the power become the law.” *I add that where we do not have Rule of law, we surely have Law of rule.*

By punishing and awarding we can come to decent behavior, but never we will come to the moral behavior, because the motive of the behavior has been imposed from outside and is not experienced from inside. I can be obedient citizen but not a moral person.

Legal norms are endured, moral norms are respected: distrust towards the state and their institution is widely spread. That is why people more often break legal than moral norms.

Responsibility of the journalists and media considers responsible acting and behavior towards him/herself, people near them, others, call, nature, narrow groups and the whole community, respectively the state itself. Only when individual become mature and achieve ability for the responsibility, becomes religious, customary, moral and legal subject, otherwise, without that he/she stays on the level of biological nature. Here is the key concept of conscience. Victor Hugo used to say: “I am a convict who only listen his own conscience.” To have conscience means to be honest to yourself. Conscience is the authority to whom you cannot lie.

*Professional journalism as realistic mirror of the society*

From professional journalists is expected to write for the media that is realistic mirror of the society, in which will every social class and group of the people have its own picture and hear own voice. But from the picture about the society that is imposed on us by majority of media anywhere in the world fall out many groups and nobody can hear other voices than the voices of the ruling clique, regardless was it political or economic because very often there are both. Instead different information you get carefully packed lie – it is offered surplus of the news and shortage of the truth! Hana Arendt warned:” Persuasion and compulsion can destroy the truth but cannot replace it”. Concept rules supremely where was talk exclusively about the conscience. [Karl Marx underlines](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Karl-Marx):” Interest does not have memory, because thinks only about itself.”

*Ethics and privacy*

Privacy and alleged invasions of privacy by the media are central issues in the ethics of journalism. Clearly, we all live in the societies that values personal privacy and are concerned about intrusions into privacy from whatever source, including the media. Yet, perhaps paradoxically, we also live in a society that thrives on publicity, or at least one in which many individuals depended on publicity for their lives and activities.

This seeming paradox is usually defused by drawing a distinction between the private and the public aspects of people’s lives, and by further claiming that there is indeed a right to privacy, but in certain circumstances the right can be overridden in the name of “the public interest”.

But what is privacy? One influential theory is that put forward by [Sissela Bok](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sissela_Bok) in the context of an investigation of secrecy. Bok claims that privacy and secrecy are closely linked yet are essentially different. Secrecy can involve a range of related concepts, including sacredness, intimacy, privacy, silence, prohibition, furtiveness and deception. The core of secrecy is, however, intentional concealment.

That which is private is not always secret: the ordinary events and experiences of everyday life are not intentionally concealed but are simply maintained within the personal domain, not offered to the gaze and scrutiny of the public. Secrecy can be a means to or a form of privacy, if privacy is “the condition of being protected from unwanted access by others. Secrecy, however, although its use by an individual could be widespread, requires a specific object – that which is concealed.

Privacy meets a need: it offers the self-protection against vulnerabilities by providing comfort and control and by strengthening the sense of identity.

In considering where the media should draw the ethical boundaries of privacy, there are three groups that we might look into – First are personalities, those who are created and sustained by publicity. Second are people who find themselves trust into the public eye involuntarily. Third, and most important, are politicians and similar figures who occupy positions of power in society.

My opinion, and some of my fellow colleagues also, is that ethics should instead the law – protect the privacy. Of course, a reasonable code of ethics would also not inhibit investigative journalism but encourage it. In other words, rather than containing a negative list of restrictions, the code should have a positive emphasis on the role of the press within a democratic society.

A democratic society is ideal. There is always slippage from the ideal. Here again emphasis should be on the positive role of the journalists in promoting a fairer society, by attacking discrimination, hypocrisy and bigotry, for example, or by combating political corruption and corporate fraud. It is the big-time enemies of a fair and democratic society that should be the targets of the press, not trivial details about the lives of personalities. Uncountable power is the enemy of democracy, and the investigation of both the use and abuse of power can never be an invasion of privacy. Of course, in a democratic society there will be protection for the privacy of citizens. But in a genuinely democratic society it would be unthinkable for the press to invade anyone’s privacy.

*Violence in media and professional journalism*

It should be said that people are complaining about violence in media since the beginning of the use of media.

To analyze that we should focus on two fundamental subjects on which the violence in media is based. First, should be analyzed influence and then nature of violence in media.

 If you ask ordinary people, majority of them will, on question: „Does the violence on TV and in the movies makes influences on people” answer – positively-YES., but if you ask them concretely if the violence has an influence on them, they will answer – negatively – NO. Majority people think that there is a risk about other people, but not about themselves. This difference within the stand about us and others is called – *effect of third person*.

Just an example- According to Gallup survey back in 1999 (even 20 years ago, and what about [today](jstor.org/stable/2747843?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)?), 75 % of the public considers that there is a connection between violence on TV and the crime rate in USA.

Maybe, the most widely spread influence of constant exposure to the violence in media is the one that is so imperceptible, and a lot of people are not aware of it at all. That is the influence which creates belief that in world rules the violence and cause fear from the victimization.

So, what professional journalism can do, respecting ethics in reporting, to prevent violence in media? First, public is constantly complaining that there is too much violence in media, especially on TV. But, mitigation of violence in media would contribute sensitivities spectators on violence and that is negative consequence.

Professional journalism should be focus on creation of approach in reporting which will help spectators and readers to make easy transition to media literacy that might be of help for both sides – media and the consumers. Namely, violence will never disappear 100 % from the society, but if everybody works towards behavior which will respect other and different one, ethics will prevail, as in media literacy kind of reading and viewing as well as in reporting, with the focus for the establishment or real presentation of the events and not just to focus too much on blood, but also to be focused on the honey as well.

*Principle of formal (general) justice*

There are few ways how to treat justice might be observed, but for all of it there is common principle: *similar case must be treated similarly,* there cannot be double standard. This thought, ascribed to Aristotle, sometimes is called Principle of formal (general) justice because it represents minimum requests that are necessary for the existence of any justice system without prescribing of any criterions that determines when two sides van be treated equally.

Being born into any society and any social group means that members of this particular society and social group must learn about and practise the norms and rules of that particular society and social group. This is the process called ‘socialization’. Normally, different sets of norms and rules apply to different groups of people (one fundamental division being that between men and women). Accordingly, learning about and practising norms and rules is tantamount to two distinct sets of behaviour. On the one hand it means knowing, practising and expecting a certain set of norms and rules; on the other it means knowing and expecting, but not practising the same set of norms and rules – in other words, ingroup and outgroup behaviour. The norms and rules regulating the actions of outgroup members have to be known, and the observance of these norms and rules is expected. However, the practice oriented towards the outgroup is regulated not by the norms and rules of this group, but by those of the ingroup. Within an ingroup, expectation and action (speech acts included) are symmetrical: *I do in relation to you exactly what I expect you to do in relation to me, for the simple reason that we are both supposed to observe exactly the same norms and rules*. By contrast, in relations between ingroup and outgroup, both expectation and action (speech acts included) are asymmetrical: *I expect you to do something different from what I do, for the simple reason that we are supposed to observe different norms and rules, or, at least, different ones in addition to common ones*. This is obviously a simplified model. Social relations are far more complex than this even when they occur in a so-called ‘primitive’ milieu. But this simple schema is an ideal point of departure for the establishment of a preliminary, formal concept of justice.

*Social Justice and ethical decision making*

Moral issues greet us each morning in the newspaper, confront us in the memos on our desks, nag us from our children's soccer fields, and bid us good night on the evening news. We are bombarded daily with questions about the justice of our foreign policy, the morality of medical technologies that can prolong our lives, the rights of the homeless, the fairness of our children's teachers to the diverse students in their classrooms.

Dealing with these moral issues is often perplexing. How, exactly, should we think through an ethical issue? What questions should we ask? What factors should we consider?

The first step in analyzing moral issues is obvious but not always easy: Get the facts. Some moral issues create controversies simply because we do not bother to check the facts. This first step, although obvious, is also among the most important and the most frequently overlooked.

But having the facts is not enough. Facts by themselves only tell us what is; they do not tell us what ought to be. In addition to getting the facts, resolving an ethical issue also requires an appeal to values. Philosophers have developed different approaches to values to deal with moral issues which we have mentioned already.

Philosophical approaches suggest that once we have ascertained the facts, we should ask ourselves five questions when trying to resolve a moral issue:

* What benefits and what harms will each course of action produce, and which alternative will lead to the best overall consequences?
* What moral rights do the affected parties have, and which course of action best respects those rights?
* Which course of action treats everyone the same, except where there is a morally justifiable reason not to, and does not show favoritism or discrimination?
* Which course of action advances the common good?
* Which course of action develops moral virtues?

This method, of course, does not provide an automatic solution to moral problems. It is not meant to. The method is merely meant to help identify most of the important ethical considerations. In the end, we must deliberate on moral issues for ourselves, keeping a careful eye on both the facts and on the ethical considerations involved.

Question to think about: Does the professional journalism reflects ethical decision making in regard social justice?

Next: Media ethics in professional journalism: Responsibilities in Media