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**Media ethics in professional journalism:**

**To inform entertain and interpret**

We all are living in two worlds: reality one and in the world of media.

Especially with the new media where we sometimes escape from the real to virtual world of social media and become to be something virtually what we cannot be in the real world. That reminds me on soap-operas on Cable TV and numerous numbers of it and identification of the people with, very often, fake pictures of the real world.

We are entering the world of media constantly to experience proficiency and get the information which are unreachable to us in real life.

But we are forgetting that experiences which we are getting from media world are not the same which we are experienced in the real world.

Entertainment content of the media follows clearly determined formulas that have a goal to attract and keep the attention of the public.

Of course, there are limitations established by the media, and limitations as the result of social norms – read ethical behavior. Namely, without ethical limitations and I would rather call it ethical satisfactions instead limitations, media owners would do anything to get as much money from the consumers as possible going with the phrase that “the end justify a mean”. Media limitations are limited with the media, of course – depending on which media story will be presented - TV, Radio, newspaper, internet…Social limitations are linked with certain expectations by the side of the audience what is entertainment and what is not. That limit of acceptation is visible when audience find themselves insulted by media content and reacts – especially when is in question indecent behavior, sex scenes and violence.

But, as society evolves, limitations do also. Ethics evolves also, depending about what kind society we are talking about.

Criminal, violence and human tragedies are everyday job of the professional journalist & reporter. However, regardless mentioned tragic events, not even one reasonable person would suggest that complete withdrawal of the media from reporting would be a cure for the sickness of the society.

For the journalists is ethical imperative to responsible transfer the news in a way not to encourage or abet further criminal and violence.

Media have been accused for the promotion of every imaginable shape of anti-social behavior, from abetting of non-respect for the government and up to causing of the growing of the number of suicides within teenagers populations. But my opinion is that our behavior is mostly linked to the primary cell of the society, family. That must be taken into the account. Violence of any kind is sociological and psychological status and it is consequence of the complex connection between individual and cultural statuses and we cannot blame media for all pathologies of the society.

*Myth of the Newspaper*

An important myth of modern communication could be called the Myth of the Newspaper. But, in USA there are a lot of „papers “– the globe is filled with various kinds of sheets, potpourri journals, specialized letters and publications of all kinds-but no newspapers. “News” as has been pointed out earlier, is one of the most difficult – if not the most difficult – semantic problems in journalism. News is made in the journalist’s brain and can be anything a journalist wants to consider news – from a bird falling from a tree to a powerful explosion in Iraq.

Most journalists seem to have fairy consistent idea of news, although there can be wide variation. At least there is an understanding of what is not news-e.g. advertising, editorials, feature stories, letters, essays, puzzles, and comics and other entertainment pieces. So, despite semantic difficulties, we can be safe in saying that what is left (the “news”) takes up very little space in a “newspaper”.

Entertainment as retro process in people’s mind exploits human despair and imperfection. Ethically, in one hand it relaxes people’s mind and takes it miles away from the real life but in other hand, the fake joy last as the show or story last. That is why producers of the entertainment would like never to stop, giving to the viewers’ constant retro vision in their minds that they could always escape from the reality into the “reality” of entertainment. When I said retro, I meant as the reflection of the new, possible way of living, unreachable really but reachable potentially, but only through the screen, online and/or through the press.

Interactive games have also the possibility of the opening of new worlds (it’s funny how it has been interacted between high science knowledge and interactive games in sitcom Big Bang Theory within the last couple of years) and offers interesting experience with giving possibility to participants in gaining new abilities. But, here is also present the risk of the fogging of the boundary between imagination and reality, dragging the people away from productive life in real world and gaining of abilities which are useless or dragging people into the trouble in real world.

Ethically, if the players of interactive games use digital games as possibility to increase their experience, widen the frames of their lives and get into the deeper knowledge about themselves, it will help to develop media literacy as well, and by that help them to survive better in this world, because in the game failures are quickly forgotten and we continue from the beginning again. But there is always but, dependence which is very harmful. Dependence connotes that people becomes slaves of the games (what about social networks and slavery?) and loose ability of self-discipline. That means that the games rule the players, and not vice versa. Proper control of the game we control also (through media literacy) adequate readings of the other media materials, from the news up to entertainment.

*Conflict of the values (at least two)*

In one part of ethical spectrum are journalistic association which does not encourage belonging or engagement within social organizations. According to that point of view, with membership or through engagement journalists become to be a part of the system about which they are reporting. Besides that this traditional vision of journalism consider that journalistic organization must stay, in civil way, distant and has to have a view on their communicates from a distant way to be able to create “objective” and impartial reports about the events in that community. On other end of ethical spectrum are those who are encouraging civil engagement and activism as the mean to stay in touch with need of the community, and by all means, to develop relations with the sources of information.

Maybe the best approach to solve the conflict of these two different values is the rule of “common sense”. As a matter of fact, certain civic activity helps journalists to become sensitive about a problem about which they should make report about. Sensitivity is close friend to ethics. Journalists must relate to the dynamics of their community. Maybe in modern society to avoid conflict of interest is not possible, but journalist still has an obligation to inform the public about the conflict of that kind.

When we talk about stereotypes within media communications, the media which are broadcasting and publishing the news, on which we are relying to give us accurate picture about our national being, are not innocent within the exploitation of the stereotypes. For example, Afro-Americans are very often shown as people living on welfare and deals with trade of narcotics, as poor and uneducated. Also, immigrants recently have been shown on media as dirty, obnoxious, nervous people who are almost conquered some of our countries in Europe. Instead of solving the causes, we are dealing with the consequences.

Ethically, talking about woman stereotypes, elderly people, sexual orientation, disable persons is very sensitive and that is a beauty of real professional journalism. Why? Because to combat against stereotypes is to win a battle against narrow minded surrounding which is just one step from doing direct harm to somebody who is other and different one. Our picture of others is usually our own reflection hidden deeply inside of us. Just reminded me on information about 16 [A n t i g a y Leaders Exposed as Gay or Bi in USA by ADVOCATE magazine 2015](https://www.advocate.com/politics/2017/11/21/17-antigay-leaders-exposed-gay-or-bi).

Question to think about: Are the media here to inform, entertain and interpret, or...?

Next: Media ethics in professional journalism: F-I-C-A-R