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**Media ethics in professionalism journalism:**

**Avocation and professional standards (part one)**

Journalism is honorable profession, though many of those who should care for it, often including its own professionals, have dishonored it. Ethics is not (just) a matter of codes of conduct (plus or minus sanctions), not just a matter of rules to be followed. It is more to do with principles concerning the rights and wrongs of human conduct, principles which have some reasoned theoretical basis, and which therefore apply objectively and impartially.

What is important for professional journalists is that the activity that wishes to call itself professional be conducted on an ethical basis and that its practitioners be accountable for their actions. Journalists should, respect the rules that are within the foundation of human actions, behaviors and relationships and professional standards of the profession. Those are theoretical, normative and practical knowledge that will help journalists that might be able to, in moral way, i.e. truthfully; correctly and honestly orientate within different situations in regards daily events when they are reporting to the public and, through that, making influence on forming of certain public opinion.

***AIMS***

To avoid having our ethical behavior being connected with so call “situational behavior of the individual” which very often exists on the ground o contemporary, today’s civilization, I am presenting the basic aims…

**The first aim is to present a knowledge from the issues of ethics and moral** knowing that ethical dilemmas are all around us and as constituent part of everyday life and that represents constant challenge of our feeling for the ethics. Just few issues: Do I have moral obligation to report my classmate who is lying? Do I have moral obligation to report the crime which I saw? Is it allowed by the ethics that TV journalist use hidden camera to be able to document illegal act or scandalous behavior? Majority of us would answer on the above given questions based on previously established stands. But, can we, then, defend decisions based on some established ethical principles?

My dear readers, that is the essence of living and behaving in an ethical way – also to learn how to publicly justify our ethical choice on the basis of firm ethical premises.

**The second aim is to encircle moral virtues of professional journalism as well as ethical and moral treatment of public and private in media having** in mind wide spectrum of moral dilemmas with which are faced professional journalists. Would you publish a link of terrorist WWW site knowing that, in one hand that it will help for the disclosure of the terrorist stands and views, but in other hand might be a problem that can cause canvassing of the new members for them among certain population of the people? Another sample is also a problematic one: advertising agency must fight with ethical consequences of advertising of video-games full of violence – in front of kids and teenagers.

Cynics might ask the questions what the values are of the above, simulations in learning of the ethics from the real world, especially when there is a fact that professional journalists works under the pressure of deadlines. However, experience within moral judgment, even being hypothetical, will help us to be prepared for the day when we will have to, within the scope of your work, make ethical decisions.

Learning ethics is something very sensitive, connected and intertwined with human nature, which is, more than often, depending on historical, cultural and national environment of their own.

**The third aim is to analyze responsibility of professional journalists and responsibility of the media as well as ethical codex of journalism profession** andthat will reflect a lot of issues, such as adequate, truthful, helpful and correct information, related to the direct responsibilities of professional journalists towards public, but also towards the owners of the media and towards, above all, professional journalist ethics and morality. Ethical codes of journalism profession provide, as being in utopian often way underlined, towards the whole population honest, accurate and complete information. Those codes, in the same time, should protect all of the professional journalists from the all kind of pressures and compulsions that would stop and block them in giving information to the public defined in the above mentioned way or abet them to work against their conscience. Responsibilities of the professional journalists are to, using ethical codes of journalism profession, provide best way possible flow of the information within the society, in accordance with basic and essential mission of the press within liberal and democratic regimes.

**AVOCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF THE JOURNALISTS**

Media ethics is inseparable from journalism, because the practice of professional journalism is centred on a set of essentially ethical concepts: freedom, democracy, truth, objectivity, honesta and privacy. That is why avocation and professional standards of journalists is deeply depending on practical implementation of the assumed presumption of common ethics.

Professional journalist should follow basic standards due to the logic of avocation:

* Knowledge and Abilities
* Experience and Conscience

To be able to shape up, as better as possbile, his journalistic avocation, for the professional journalist is needed to posses knowledges and abilities, experience and conscience. Those are the precoditions for the profession to be conducted due to logic of the avocation, but those are also the foundations standards as well.

The role of the media and journalists is threefold: to carry over information essential fot he public life; to go between authorities and citizens, apropos the state and civic society; and that are the first external critic and controlles of the authority. In the same time media and journalists are widening up of the cultural patern and in that way make influence on rising of the general level of citizens culture and, especially, of the democratic culture of the citizens. This might be sound as utopia, but if you would like really to become professional journalist and messenger from the media, those should be your professional commandments of this world.

Professionalism in journalism  
different combats:

* from freedom of expression up to freedom to express criticism

Within the different periods of development of journalist avocation and media mission it appeared to be expressed certain professional standards. At the beginning, the professional combat was related to the freedom of expression and freedom of criticism. No to go too far back in history, just to mention [John Milton](https://www.biography.com/people/john-milton-9409395), English poet, polemicist, and man of letters, and a civil servant for the Commonwealth of England, and he targeted the powerful bureaucratic system of pre-censorship practiced in late Medieval Europe in his much disputed speech "Areopagitica" to the Parliament of England in 1644. Milton vigorously opposed the Licensing Act that Parliament passed in 1643. In his noble plea for freedom of the press, Milton also quoted Euripides, adding the weight of the ancient struggle for free expression to his own arguments.

Milton's passionate and strong defence of free expression contributed to the final lapse of the Licensing Act in Britain in 1694. His "Areopagitica" also became one of the most quoted arguments for freedom of expression, and remains today a true beacon of enlightenment.

### In regards freedom of criticism [Winston S. Churcill](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Winston-Churchill), within the interview given to New Statesman,  Britain's Current Affairs & Politics Magazine, back in January 7th, 1939, stated: “*Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfils the same function as pain in the human body; it calls attention to the development of an unhealthy state of things. If it is heeded in time, danger may be averted; if it is suppressed, a fatal distemper may develop*."

* from independence up to integrity

Journalistic independence, as in the book *[The Elements of Journalism](https://www.amazon.com/Elements-Journalism-Newspeople-Completely-Updated/dp/0307346706)* wrote Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, is not neutrality. While editorialists and commentators are not neutral, the source of their credibility is still their accuracy, intellectual fairness and ability to inform – not their devotion to a certain group or outcome. In our independence, however, journalists must avoid straying into arrogance, elitism, isolation or nihilism. In the same time, without integrity your journalism is untrustworthy and suspect. Integrity gives a journalist the authority to investigate issues, shine a light in dark places and to dig where others don't. It is essential for informing the public debate with trustworthy, rigorous journalism.

***Lawyers and judges***

*The Laws are the foundations of our civilization*

*Not truth – Foundation of our civilization is within the moral respect of the Laws*

I always stimulate moral imagination, conduct recognition of ethical questions, work on development of analytics and also we will work on acquiring of the pulse of moral obligation and personal responsibility with expressed tolerance for disaccord, in other words – and put in just few words – I focus on development of ethical fettle. Mostly because ethics is the branch of the philosophy that deals with the issues of moral behavior.

Lawyers and judges are telling us that the laws are the foundation of our civilization. *They are wrong and it is not truth.* The foundation of our culture lies down within moral respect of the Laws.

**ETHICS OF THE MORALITY OR MORALITY OF THE ETHICS**

I am always focusing on ethical dilemmas and conflict of values. For example, during the armed conflict, the spokesperson of the Army might has to do the choice between the values of telling the truth to the journalists about the victims and the values of conservation of the support of the public for involvement of the Army within the conflict. Sometimes there is a conflict between general social and professional values. When none of the opposed values is satisfactory, it is worth to consider the third option. Let us assume that a Dean asks a professor to revise a decision about striking, knocking down a student on his final year. *Loyalty* to Dean might lead professor to fulfill the request. From other side, *sincerity* implies to that professor should not do it, and especially if he is assured in accuracy of his decision. However, maybe professor might consider a third option: *honesty.* Would it be decent and fair towards other students to revise a grade for one student and not to entire group?

Moral (Latin - mos, moris) means:

* “way of living”
* “procedure & practice”

So, what is the ethics, and what is the difference of the ethics and morality? Word “moral” is derivative from Latin word *mos, moris* and that means, among other things, “way of living” and “practice & treatment”. The word moral is very often connected with religious belief and personal behavior.

In the normative sense, according to [Stanford Encyclopeda of Phylosophy](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/morality-definition/) from 2002, “morality” refers to a code of conduct that would be accepted by anyone who meets certain intellectual and volitional conditions, almost always including the condition of being rational. That a person meets these conditions is typically expressed by saying that the person counts as a moral agent. However, merely showing that a certain code would be accepted by any moral agent is not enough to show that the code is the moral code. It might well be that all moral agents would also accept a code of prudence or rationality, but this would not by itself show that prudence was part of morality.

Ethics (from Grecian- ethos) means:

* “habit & custom”
* “usage” or “character”

From other side, word ethics is derivate from Greek word “ethos” that means “habit & custom”, “usage” and/or “character”. I will especially elaborate, within the months to come, the morality of certain ethical doubts, apropos ethical values of certain moral stands. Because if something is moral does not mean that is ethical, apropos vice versa. I will present my views about cynics, skeptics, but also about optimists when we are talking about ethics *sui generis.*

There are two schools of thought. Concretely, cynics claims that ethics must be subject of study because does not give firm answers. Besides that, skeptics’ claims, knowing of ethical principles and norms does not make a person automatically more moral. From other side, the optimistic representatives of the formal ethical behavior consider that the ethics is like mathematics, history or physics, with its agglomerate of problems and unique methods of its solving. It is considered that there exists the body of moral law which waits for ethically curious mind. And where is the professional journalist within that all?

**FUNCTIONS OF THE MEDIA WITHIN ETHICAL SYSTEM**

What are the functions of media within the system of ethics? Mass media are among most influential firm in democratic society, on the crossroads between citizens and their political, economic and social institutions.

How can we, in the situation when we are faced with flooding of social networks, to overcome problems with which journalism is faced? Problems of rumors, manipulations, disinformation, fake news, lies, deceptions and hypocrisy of politicians who are ready even to change the laws if suits them personally, apropos to adjust legislation with their own interests? How to be ethical in society, regardless to which political option they are belonging to, exists on the principle “in the society where everybody steals, nobody steals”?

There are many questions on which I will try to present possible answers. The ethicality of journalism is targeting universal, common good and not targeting just individual good.

* *End of part one -*

*Remark: Signature under the photo – Lecture (*[*1 hour lecture and 2 hours anwering the questions*](http://sabihadzi.weebly.com/poland-2732019.html)*) of Assoc.Prof. Dr. & Dr. Honoris Causa Sabahudin Hadžialić* [*conducted on 27.3.2019 in Poland related*](http://sabihadzi.weebly.com/poland-2732019.html) *to the ethics, mediation, media, media ethics, media literacy.*