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# Deficit of truth in mass media and its consequence for a political and international sphere

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**MEGATRENDS AND MEDIA**  
**Media Farm – Totems and Taboo**

Dana Petranová  
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(eds.)

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## **MEGATRENDS AND MEDIA: Media Farm – Totems and Taboo**

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**DEFICIT OF TRUTH IN MASS MEDIA  
AND ITS CONSEQUENCE  
FOR A POLITICAL AND INTERNATIONAL SPHERE**

*Arkadiusz Modrzejewski*

**ABSTRACT:**

In this paper I am considering the political and international consequences of departing from the principle of truth in mass media. Based on the premises of correspondence theory of truth and its ethical implications, I assume that truth is the fundamental objective of communicative activities, including the media ones. Rejecting the principle of objectivism and objective truth in mass media is a result of their commercialization and accepting post-modernist viewpoint which perceives truth as a tool of trouble and threatens freedom. As a consequence of the phenomenon of departing from truth the crisis of civic political culture and universal values occurs.

**KEY WORDS:**

mass media, normative theory, politics, international relations, truth

**1 Introduction: Some methodological remarks**

This paper is written from normativist stance. Normativism is still a present approach in a discourse conducted on the grounds of social sciences, including political sciences and theories of international relations, as well as in the field of the sciences of social communication and media. Although its significance due to so-called behaviouristic revolution diminished,<sup>1</sup> the problems concerning the sphere of norms and values are still extremely topical and taken up by a quite vast interdisciplinary circle of scholars. Normativist approach is characteristic of philosophers and “philosophically oriented” representatives of particular sciences that is political scientists, sociologists, media researchers or anthropologists who concentrate on the assessment of political, international, economic and media reality in their considerations. On the basis of the theory of social communication, normativism is defined by its aim, which is to determine an ideal standard according to which the assessment of the

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1 Cf. GUNNELL, J., G.: *Political Theory: The Evolution of a Sub-Field*. In FINIFTER A. W. (ed.): *Political Science. The State of the Discipline*. Washington : The American Political Science Assoc., 1983, p. 16.

functioning of a given media system can be done. Normative theory of media shows how a given media system should function to correspond to a given set of ideal social values or realize them.<sup>2</sup>

Although normativism is a research approach which refers to the philosophical premises, not every philosophy is normative by definition. It is quite the opposite. In case of speculative political studies, we may distinguish both *quasi*-formal theory of politics (this discipline can be defined as politics ontology) and a normative reflection over politics (normative philosophy of politics, or in other words ethics of politics).<sup>3</sup> The same applies to ethics and philosophy of media. We deal here with a normative view (ethics), but on the other hand with the “realistic” one which aims to explain the phenomenon of media and media reality by means of hermeneutical and phenomenological methods.<sup>4</sup> Despite the differences, both types of philosophical deliberations are combined. And at times they are so strongly combined that it is difficult to decide whether a given work or the approach of a scholar is “normative” or “real” by nature. Ultimately, ethics is a part of philosophy. The aim which we set in front of ethics is strictly philosophical. Its aim is first and foremost: “to build a moral-normative theory of human activity, that is to develop logically coherent collection of ethical tasks properly systematized and justified by means of methods of philosophical thinking”.<sup>5</sup> It is hard to imagine a philosophy free from normative premises. The analysis of a given reality is conducted on the basis of accepted normative premises. It is characteristic of normatively oriented representatives of social sciences and it differs their approach from the experimental and historical approach and functional view.

This article is not a report of research activity, I do not present here the results of empirical research, I do not form any theory of analytical-

- 2 BARAN, S. J., DAVIS, D. K.: *Teoria komunikowania masowego*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2007. p. 39.
- 3 SHIVELY, Ph.: *The Craft of Political Research. A Primer*. New Jersey : Prentice-Hall Inc., 1974, p. 6.
- 4 Compare: GÁLIK, S.: *Filozofia a médiá. K filozofickej reflexii vplyvu médií na utváranie (súčasnej) kultúry*. Bratislava : Iris, 2012. p. 12-13; SOLÍK, M., HRUBEC, M.: Global Conflicts and the Macro-regional Modernities. In *Communication Today*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 82-98; GÁLIK, S., GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Influence of the Internet on the Cognitive Abilities of Man. Phenomenological and Hermeneutical Approach. In *Communication Today*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 4-14.
- 5 ŚLIPKO TJ, T.: *Zarys etyki ogólnej*. Kraków : WAM, 2009, p. 38.

empirical character. However, I consider the influence of false media information on the sphere of politics and international relations. In fact I am writing about the ethical consequences of falsehood and lie in politics, also in international politics.

A peculiar fundamental statement is for me a correspondence theory of truth. However, I am inclined to so-called approximation approach rather than classical stance. I assume that objective, universal and absolute truth exists. Nevertheless, its cognition requires a constant intellectual effort, an approach open to criticism, abilities to verify own opinions and readiness to change them if they turn out to be false. Truth is the aim of our cognition; however, it is the aim to which we constantly approach but we never achieve it completely. As it was metaphorically expressed by Karl Popper: „we are the seekers of truth, but not its owners”.<sup>6</sup> Owning the truth is tantamount to totalization; making it a tool used by people with totalitarian tendencies, which I will explain in a further part of the article.

Epistemological position with which I identify creates the consequences of ethical nature. Truth is not only an epistemological category but also an ethical one, which is essential for normative political theories as well as normative theories of mass media. Truth can be examined in a category of aim or realization of the function of political and media systems. We may examine the issue from the other side, that is what consequences result from its deficit. I use the notion of *deficit* consciously. In relation to truth it encompasses two more notions which are sometimes wrongly treated as synonyms. These notions are falsehood and lie. While the truth is an epistemological and ethical category at the same time, falsehood is exclusively an epistemological category, and lie – an ethical category. The notion of falsehood is neutral in ethical respects, however it may cause certain moral consequences: by wrong discerning of the situation they may commit morally wrong acts. Whereas lie is morally wrong by nature because it is a conscious announcement of untruth (falsehood). In this paper I will refer to falsehood as well as to lie.

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6 POPPER, K.: *Wiedza obiektywna. Ewolucyjna teoria epistemologiczna*. Warszawa : PWN, 2002, p. 64.

## 2 Influence of mass media on political and international sphere

The notion of political system is an important analytical category in political science. While analysing the functioning of political system relations which occur between the system and its setting as well as sub-systems, that is the elements comprising this system are taken into consideration. Interactions which happen in this system are caused by the process of communication and information exchange. The significant role of mass media constituting so-called media system which is included in the content of political system setting and is a sub-system of social system reveals. Mass media perform the function of channels thanks to which information gets through to particular sub-systems of political system and its setting. Although there are various, sometimes excluding, theories concerning the relations between media and politics, for example the theory of instrumentalization and dependency theory, by means of systemic analysis we may indicate constitutive features of this relation which will be difficult to question. Certainly we deal here with the functioning of media in democratic conditions. These relations assume the form of mutual dependencies. On one hand, political system, and to be precise political institutions which form it, need legitimization, which can be ensured by mass media by informing public opinion about decisions and actions taken by the political centres as well as explaining their aim and possible consequences. Mass media provide political decision-makers and institutions with knowledge on social reception of their decisions and actions. On the other hand, mass media need information which for them is the basic ingredient ensuring the production of information materials. The basic providers of political information are the subjects of political system, such as political institutions, parties or parliamentary factions etc.<sup>7</sup> There is so-called feedback between politics and media, which indicates a strong connection between both spheres. Media shape political reality but at the same time the sphere of politics has an influence on media and media system. On account of the objective of this article, I concentrate rather on the influence of mass media on politics. However, contents transferred *via mass media* by decision-making centres and political actors, as for example propaganda forms the sphere of political relations. Media perform the role of an intermediary in the process of self-forming of political system.

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7 DOBEK, B., OSTROWSKA, B.: *Media masowe i aktorzy polityczni w świetle studiów nad komunikowaniem politycznym*. Wrocław : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2004, p. 109-110.



Winfried Schulz, a German political scientist and a theoretician of political communication, pays attention to the phenomenon of mediatization of politics, which consists of actions mediating in the political processes such as:<sup>8</sup>

- Collecting and selecting political information and spreading it to a vast mass of recipients; information whose source is mass media often constitutes the only premises to take up actions in public sphere by the citizens and political elites;
- Interpreting and assessing political events, political actors and decisions as well as the expectations of public opinions;
- Influencing current political events which lead to the creation of "pseudo-events" and fictional reality, which become the basis of political actions.

Selecting information, providing the interpretation of facts and events, assessing decisions and political actions, mass media have a great influence on the formation of public opinion. Mass media can effectively affect the form and course of political debate. Unlike political actors, they do not bear any political responsibility.<sup>9</sup>

Mediatization process is characteristic of contemporary political reality. In this process, media system interferes in political system. Media become the central point of political processes. Mediatization of politics displays in the following way:

- stronger alloying of media reality with political and social reality;
- more frequent experience of politics by means of media images;
- directing behaviours and political actions towards the logics of media system.

Briefly speaking, mediatization is a consequence of adjusting the subjects of politics to the systemic logics of mass media.<sup>10</sup> The influence of mass media goes beyond the framework of domestic politics. Mass media shape the opinions concerning international issues and at the same time

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8 SCHULZ, W.: *Komunikacja polityczna. Koncepcje teoretyczne i wyniki badań empirycznych na temat mediów masowych w polityce*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2006, p. 30.

9 DOBEK, B., OSTROWSKA, B.: *Media masowe i aktorzy polityczni w świetle studiów nad komunikowaniem politycznym*. Wrocław : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2004. p. 111.

10 MICHALCZYK, S.: *Demokracja medialna. Teoretyczna analiza problemu*. Toruń : Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2010, p. 153.

they affect the shape of foreign policy. Under its pressure or under the pressure of public opinion created by media, political decision-makers determine the course of foreign policy of the state, take specific decisions or actions. Therefore, one can mention the influence of mass media on the shape of international order. Especially, so-called global media are able to effectively create international reality. In the theory of international relations, the notion of *CNN effect* or its synonyms such as *CNN curie* or *CNN factor* appears quite frequently. This global TV network has become a symbol of the effect of media on political decision-makers who, under its pressure, take certain decisions and actions. This effect is enhanced by the real time during which the broadcast happens. Electronic media such as CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, Fox News etc. provide information about events and information from the events as they happen, "live". In a flash journalists arrive at places where "something is happening", reporting the course of events to millions of viewers.<sup>11</sup> An American political scientist Steven Livingstone specializing in political communication and international relations points at three functions of *CNN effect*: (1) as an *accelerant to policy decision-making*; (2) *an impediment to the achievement of desired policy goals*; (3) *a policy agenda-setting agent*.<sup>12</sup>

Global *real-time* media significantly shorten the time of response which political decision-makers must give concerning the events. Decisions are taken in a hurry, sometimes even dangerously fast as Livingstone notices. Such decisions may be unreasonable, hasty and or ill-judged. Politicians do not have time for consultation, reflection, detailed analyses or discussions concerning the issues provoked by media. Instant media conveying has also resulted in the formation of so-called *real-time diplomacy*. Political decision-makers as well as diplomatic service must react to all media reports and notifications in real time. Their comments are often diplomatic signals sent *via* global media to other participants of international relations.

Suggestive images broadcast in global *real-time* media may contribute and evoke negative emotions in the audience and at the same time shape the public opinion so that it would affect political decision-makers in order to abandon further actions. Therefore, *CNN effect* is perceived as

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11 GILBOA, E.: Global Television News and Foreign Policy: Debating the CNN Effect. In *International Studies Perspectives* (2005) 6, p. 325-327.

12 LIVINGSTONE, S.: *Clarifying the CNN effect: an Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention*. Cambridge : Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government. Research Paper – R 18, 1997. p. 4.

an obstacle in achieving political aims. A perfect example of this kind of reaction of public opinion is an American intervention in Somalia in 1993. The decision of Bill Clinton to withdraw American army happened after the broadcast of the programme in which the bodies of American soldiers killed in the streets of Mogadishu. Global media broadcasting in real-time may also pose a threat to *operational security*. Military leaders are often surrounded by journalists who accompany the armed forces. A careless word uttered near journalists, showing readiness to military action may endanger the success of the action.

Livingstone ultimately indicates a certain reduction of premises of foreign policy which relies on their convergence with the content of media notifications. Certainly he does not think that media create foreign policy *ex nihilo* but they affect the change of priorities towards the re-orientation of foreign policy. Briefly speaking, media as an *agenda-setting-agent* have a significant influence on determining the aims in foreign policy, especially in the scope of prevention of humanitarian crises and cruelty connected with a war or persecutions.<sup>13</sup>

### 3 Truth in postmodern mass media

Contemporary media systems of liberal societies of the West are based on axiology in which the supremacy of freedom over truth is noticeable; some contemporary philosophical-political notions treat truth as a threat to freedom and the source of authoritarianism. Postmodernism propagating the pluralism of idea and values juxtaposes with the creation and propagation of "absolute truth".<sup>14</sup> For postmodernists references to the arguments of truth mean return to the time characterized by lack of tolerance and violence committed in the name of "truth, which 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarianisms are a good example of. Therefore, postmodernism treats departing from the principle of truth in social and political life as a moral imperative. It is (e.g. Barry Allen or Michale Foucault) a tool of control, an instrument of power over behaviours.<sup>15</sup>

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13 LIVINGSTONE, S.: *Clarifying the CNN effect: an Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention*. Cambridge : Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government. Research Paper – R 18, 1997. p. 6-8.

14 GÁLIK, S.: *Duchovný rozmer krízy súčasného človeka*. Bratislava : Iris, 2010, p. 14.

15 BARTOŚĆ, T.: *Koniec prawdy absolutnej. Święty Tomasz z Akwinu w epoce późnej nowoczesności*. Warszawa : WAB, 2010, p. 39-41.

However, on the threshold of modernity freedom was supposed to be a guarantor of truth. Liberal thinkers, such as John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), were convinced that the way to truth leads through freedom. Only in the conditions of freedom can one discover truth as Mill was convincing.<sup>16</sup> The code of journalistic ethics coming from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century tradition indicated and often still indicates a moral imperative of striving for and propagating the truth. However, it is an expression of the state of emergency, certain point of reference for journalists or generally media people. Reality shows, after all, how far media distance themselves from the provisions of the ethics code.<sup>17</sup> This dissonance between a norm stating the necessity of propagating (objective) truth and a reality in which marginalizing the meaning of truth is inscribed in contemporary way of thinking. Contemporary world wrongfully called “steady modernity” rather avoids entangling into dull searching for and remaining in truth. Truth in its absolute and universal dimension does not guarantee a commercial success. It may become anti-democratic and anti-liberal as it may affect the will of majority as well as the demands of the minority groups. Post-modern political philosophy forces us to see in truth an enslaving factor which limits our freedom. Therefore, it is an ethical imperative to reject the values of truth for the benefit of relativism and egalitarianism of opinions, ideas and points of view. Truth has stopped – as it was perceived by a classic of liberalism John Stuart Mill – to be the aim of debates, disputes or exchanges of opinions, but it has become “suspected” of authoritarianism and totalitarianism. And it is not without reason, at least partially. There was truth behind each totalitarianism: class, racial, national truth. Totalitarianisms created “their own truth” promoting it as ultimate, universal and absolute truth. In fact, they have rejected epistemological absolutism establishing totalizing relativism as an epistemological and ethical rule. Absolute truth yielded to “total truth”. As it was rightly noticed by a British historian Robert Conquest: totalitarianism may be perceived as an extreme form of ideological subjectivism where the machinery of the state serves first and foremost to impose the ideas of the sovereign or the ruling group.<sup>18</sup>

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16 MILL, J. S.: *Utylitaryzm. O wolności* [English title: *Utilitariansim. On Liberty*]. Warszawa : PWN, 2005, p.109-154.

17 MAKOWSKA-RATKIEWICZ, S.: *Prawda w kodeksach etyki dziennikarskiej*. In DROŹDŹ, M. (ed.): *Prawda w mediach. Między ideałem a iluzją?*, Tarnów : Biblos, 2010, p. 118.

18 CONQUEST, R.: *Uwagi o spustoszonej stuleciu* [English title: *Reflection on a Ravaged Century*]. Poznań : Zysk i S-ka, 2002, p. 125.

Postmodernism is seen as a counterbalance to this type of tendencies. In my opinion, seemingly. Ernest Gellner notices the sources of contemporary post-modernistic approach in one of totalizing modern ideologies, namely Marxism. It is though that Marxists assumed that true objectivity required speaking from the perspective of class and politically adequate position.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it is a reduction of objectivism and objective truth to inter-subjectivism. The place of objective truth has been taken by a class rightness. From a postmodernistic view there are various equal narrations concerning reality. The degree of truthfulness does not have the slightest significance.

Media and media people from a post-modernistic viewpoint do not have the obligation to present facts in an objective way. Postmodernism undermines the existence of such objectivism. In media practice there occurs a situation of breaking truth away from the announcement. Truth referring to ontological order but in the epistemological layer being an agreement of though and that ontological order is not treated as a moral imperative any longer. It is not about the cognition of truth. The role of information which by definition is supposed to be at least intentionally true (false information is disinformation) is taken over by so-called *news*, which in fact is a commercial product. The aim is to sell the *news* that is media sensation, not to inform and therefore conveying true information. Even what is defined as truth has a commercial character, often assuming the form of psychological pornography. A good example of such approach to the notion of truth is a programme broadcast in many language versions called *Moments of Truth*. Truth is not treated as an epistemological and ethical category. Its aim is to shock the viewers. It is all about performance during which man is stripped off his privacy and intimacy.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4 Political and international sphere affected by truth-free media**

Empirical evidence indicates that news reports are often far from reality. However, they are not a neutral carrier of objective information. What

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19 GELLNER, E.: *Postmodernizm, rozum i religia* [English title: *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*]. Warszawa : PIW, 1997, p. 48.

20 GOBAN-KLAS, T: Momenty prawdy czy godzina kłamstwa? Anatomia pewnego programu. In DROŻDŻ, M. (ed.): *Prawda w mediach. Między ideałem a iluzją?*, Tarnów : Biblos, 2010, p. 280.

may be surprising, the recipients of media announcements take it as an objective truth.<sup>21</sup> Mass media create their own reality rather than inform about objective reality. Both internal and international policy is not free from this creation. It is just the opposite, creating political reality becomes a mission for many media concerns. Politicians become celebrities, they create themselves and they are created to be actors of soap operas, reality shows or film heroes. Political debates do not have substantial character. What is important is a political performance and for a performance substantial disputes are simply boring, therefore an emotional debate is created. Journalists frequently add fuel to the atmosphere, provoke, dynamize antagonists rather than ask reasonable and matter-of-fact questions. Viewers' attentions is attracted by sensation, so media people search for it venturing into private lives of politicians or exaggerating single incidents. Enhancing the atmosphere of fear, uncertainty and inevitability of evil is a perfect marketing strategy. A viewer, a reader or a listener cannot stop absorbing information of rather quasi or pseudo-information. The above-mentioned Winfried Schulz evaluates mass media approach categorically. He believes that "mass media are not in fact representative for reality and for sure they do not reflect it. Media announcements are often imprecise and deformed. Sometimes they present the image of the world which is clearly biased and ideologically tinged. Media reality allows the possibility to conclude concerning physical features of the world, social structures of course of events or disintegration of public opinion to a limited degree".<sup>22</sup>

This situation is a consequence of departing from the principle of truth. It poses serious threats to a political sphere, especially to democracy and civic political culture. If the principle of truth is not the fundamental premises for the functioning of media, especially so-called information media, its place will be taken over by a commercial principle of profit. As a Polish political scientist and political philosopher Stanisław Filipowicz notes: media occupied by the production of information and opinions are driven by "their own interests and not imaginary ideals of objectivity and objective rightness".<sup>23</sup>

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21 PRATKANIS, A., ARONSON, E.: *Wiek propagandy. Używanie i nadużywanie perswazji na co dzień* [English title: *Age of Propaganda. The everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*], Warszawa : PWN, 2003, p. 72.

22 SCHULZ, W.: *Komunikacja polityczna. Koncepcje teoretyczne i wyniki badań empirycznych na temat mediów masowych w polityce*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2006, p. 37.

23 FILIPOWICZ, S.: *Demokracja. O władzy iluzji w królestwie rozumu*.

A great threat to a civic culture is populism which accompanies the mediatization of politics. Commercial success is guaranteed not by ambitious programmes or substantial disputes but by easy, light and pleasant entertainment. Therefore, media are used to flattering average tastes and adoring mediocrity. It also concerns the sphere of media and political programmes. Politicians have stopped fighting for support by means of substantial reasoning. Election success is guaranteed not by substantiality but by mediality. It was well presented by a Czech prime minister Stanislav Gross: „the only reality is what media broadcast” [Quoted after: „Forum” 2004, nr 32, p. 15]. Media reality is far from promoting civic culture, this must be based on the ideal of truth and reason in Enlightenment and liberal tradition. In the post-modernistic world the citizens have been transformed into consumers. Politics also becomes a marketing sphere. As political philosophers Paweł Dybel and Szymon Wróbel notice this can result in the crisis of democracy, which is the crisis of representation (media politicians instead of statesmen) and participation (consumers instead of citizen).<sup>24</sup>

Media philosopher Michał Drożdż after Polish philosopher Wojciech Chudy proves that departing from truth which on an ethical level is included in a category of truthfulness, leads to a disintegration of community. “Without truthfulness – he claims – that is moral efficacy, which induces particular people to convey true information and be true in a language and media broadcast, social life would be simply impossible because every mistake, falsehood, manipulation of truth and lie violate the basic bonds of a community: mutual trust, openness to others, cooperation etc. Truth is a constitutive value both for person integrity and for unity and integrity of a community. Any negation of this value by means of information which carry falsehood undermines the foundation of a community.”<sup>25</sup>

Consequences of departing from the principle of truth also concern the international sphere. Our knowledge of international reality comes from media images and reports. The way events happening on an international plain are presented or the way how other nations and countries are presented affect relations between nations in an interpersonal and

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Warszawa : Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2007, p. 169.

24 DYBEL, P., WRÓBEL, Sz.: *Granice polityczności. Od polityki emancypacji do polityki życia*. Warszawa : Aletheia, 2008, p. 206.

25 DROŹDŹ, M.: Aksjologiczne uwarunkowania prawdy. In DROŹDŹ, M. (ed.): *Prawda w mediach. Między ideałem a iluzją?*, Tarnów : Biblos, 2010, p. 23.

institutional dimension. What accompanies international conflicts is so-called media war. Media become a propaganda tube distorting the image of reality, strengthen stereotypes and prejudices. There are also many examples which can be found in Russian-Ukrainian relations.<sup>26</sup> In media reports concerning international politics universal truth often lose to a particular interest. Truth is demanding. When it comes to relations between nations, it requires confession to guilt or mistakes. Political decision-makers can seldom have such a courage. It could endanger their political ratings. Therefore, they prefer to propagate their own truth under the pretext of objectivism and realism. However, departing from the principle of truth and objectivism will result in adding fuel to conflicts, breeding distrust and hatred as a basis of relations between nations. The power of propaganda is huge. Even enlightened and educated people give in to it because it is based on a simplified model of reality, which is rooted in our sub-consciousness. As a mass we are accustomed to schemes, and media schematically consolidate this thinking.

In her well-known book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Hanna Arendt noticed that masses „do not believe in anything visible, in the reality of their own experience; they do not trust their eyes and ears but only their imaginations, which may be caught by anything that is at once universal and consistent in itself. What convinces masses are not facts, and not even invented facts, but only the consistency of the system of which they are presumably part. (...) the masses refuse to recognize is the fortuitousness that pervades reality. They are predisposed to all ideologies because they explain facts as mere examples of laws and eliminate coincidences by inventing as all-embracing omnipotence which is supposed to be at the root of every accident. Totalitarian propaganda thrives on this escape from reality into fiction, from coincidence into consistency”.<sup>27</sup> Although the times of 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarianisms are already gone, we still give in to the charm of “total” truths. It is provided to us *via media* by a secular left wing with its political correctness as well as religious right wing which aspires to establish a legal order in accordance with the teaching of the Church.

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26 SZELEST, M.: Russian – Ukrainian Information War in the Context of Euro-Maydan. In *European Journal of Transformation Studies* (2014), Vol. 1, p. 75-85.

27 ARENDT, H.: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Cleveland – New York : Meridan Book, 1962, p. 351-352.



## Conclusions

Restoration of the principle of objectivism and objective truth in media appear as an ethical imperative. This is the only way we may prevent ourselves from negative consequences which are carried by relativism with its indifference or hostility towards truth. Media people must first put a lot of effort to self-improve for truth and then realize how important is it in media broadcast. Obviously, there appears a doubt to what extent it is possible to objectively get acquainted with reality and communicate this cognition in an objective manner. It is easy to fall into naïve objectivism and naïve faith owning objective truth. This may lead to totalization and become another “total truth”. The principle of truth is not contradicted by the principle of pluralism and freedom of speech. It is just the opposite, it is a guarantor of truth, to which John S. Mill already paid attention. Similarly truth may be a guarantor of freedom – a Polish Catholic philosopher Józef Tischner wrote: “There is no freedom in liberation from the value of truth (...) The more truth there is between us, the more freedom”<sup>28</sup>

Freedom of speech and opinion pluralism are both inscribed in media objectivism. In democratic conditions media must present various opinions taking all social powers into consideration and giving them the possibility to express their own opinions. Media should be – as Stanisław Michalczyk convinces multilaterally journalistic” and “a structure of media reality (that is, presenting reality by media) should reflect objective reality to an optimal degree”. As for journalists’ objectivism, a catalogue of postulates encompasses such principles as: (a) using facts (truth postulate), (b) completeness and complementarity of news and reports, (c) separating commentary from information, (d) distinct emphasis of journalistic opinions, (e) providing sources of information, (f) broadcast of information should be free from emotions, (g) neutrality and lack of involvement in reports from events and descriptions of situations, (h) avoiding being biased, that is rejecting political premises of information and commentaries.<sup>29</sup>

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28 TISCHNER, J.: *Myślenie według wartości*. Kraków: Znak, 2011. p. 218.

29 MICHALCZYK, S.: *Komunikowanie polityczne. Teoretyczne aspekty procesu*. Katowice: Śląsk, 2005, p. 152.

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