Placing the Man in Media Studies:
Theoretical Representations of Man Media Relations

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Abstract: This study deals with the types of theoretical representations of the man in philosophical and sociological interpretations of the man and mass media co-existence. The aim of this study is to reveal and compare the general representations of the man media relations in various theoretical approaches in media studies. The research mainly bases on the ideas of Frankfurt school of social theory, constructivist approaches, and also on works of Lippmann and Lasswell who fo cused on the social and personal effects emerging in mass media communications. The theoretical representation of the man contains the explication of his functional and role features, identity patterns, social and cultural contexts that have an impact on both the man and mass media. The study contributes to clarifying the variety of theoretical approaches to the interrelations between the social reality and the man in media studies. The researchers claim that the constitutive element of the theoretical representation of the man is the idea of the man's ability to resist to the impact power of mass media and to manifest the agentive mental and cultural status.

Key words: Man, mass media, communication, representation of the man, Lippmann, Lasswell, individualization, demassification of mass media

INTRODUCTION

The high interest towards the man and its social being and culture has always been one of the core issues in social sciences. Lotman, observing the global regularities of history and the moral and intellectual consistency of the society, claimed: "Who are we? Where are we from? Where are we to?" are the questions that have been worrying the humanity all along its intellectual life. They have to be answered but they cannot be answered. The very thinking over them has an extremely bigger value than any answers, since all the answers are transient but the reflections are eternal. Though, there are epochs when the reflections on general meanings and ways of human history become the ones of especially, high interest" (Lotman, 2010). Now a days, these questions are in the focus of many researchers who concentrate on the key knowledge of both the man and the mass media. The latter, since recently, have been playing the ñrucial role in the society by delivering various types of messages to quantitatively large social groups. What is more important is that the mass media has accepted the responsibility to be a "general mediator" between people and societies.

Castells (2011) emphasizes that the contemporary communication systems generates a new type of reality, a real virtuality. He states that "(…) reality itself (that is, people's material/symbolic existence) is entirely captured, fully immersed in a virtual image setting, in the world of make believe in which appearances are not just on the screen through which experience is communicated but, they become the experience".

The need for the analytical reflection on the mediatized cultural experience shaped as a research goal almost simultaneously in various sciences, from sociology and cultural studies to linguistics and philosophy. We claim that the general storyline of all the disciplinary and interdisciplinary researches of the mediatized reality is the ways of interaction between the man and mass media.

In this study, we explore the types of theoretical representations of the man in philosophical and sociological interpretations of the man and mass media co-existence. We are grounding on the assumption that the theoretical representation of the man contains the explication of his functional and role features hence, we approach to it as a kind of social representation. Theoretical representations of the man-media relations rather contribute to the self-identification of the mediatized society than to the interpretive expression of it. Moreover, the social and cultural contexts of interpretation motivate the representations of the man in the media studies.

The examinations of media, society and person issues reflect the media, social and personal (local) background

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of both a scholar and an academic community as well as their engagement attitudes and collective representations.

The goal of this study is to reveal the general representations of the man in various interpretations of man media co-existence. We believe the study would contribute to clarifying the variety of theoretical approaches to the interrelations between the social reality and the man in media studies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study grounds on both the empirical facts of the social operation of mass media and the vast corpus of the investigations of the issue. One of the basic methodological principles of this study is that of social and cultural constructive character of representations the society. According to it, the society can be described through the constructions (also theoretical representations) which it produces. The theoretical representation of the man is one of the "social mirrors" in which the society identifies and observes itself.

The research bases also on the works and ideas of Lippmann (1922) and Lasswell (1971) who focused on the social and personal effects emerging in mass media communications.

The analysis of the entrenched approaches to the mass media shows that the constraint range of theoretical representations of the man reveals the interpretations of the man media relations. Thus, the man is theoretically constructed as the agent of mass media, the object of mass media, the product of mass media and the consumer of mass media. In what follows, we are observing closer these representations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The man as the agent of mass media: Technologically supported circulation of information is one of the first-order conditions of the contemporary society existence, since it provides the efficient interaction of all social agents. The extension of social practices and the complication of social life are conductive to the need of the mass information which enroll the man to the collective contexts of life and maintain his problem solving in a certain social space. Mass media are the force that meet the demand for mass information and its circulation in the society. From this point of view, the scholars tend to interpret the dynamics of man's life, his needs and motives as a cause of mass media change, i.e., changes of their functions and the format of their social presence. The man himself shapes and develops his life

"in certain spaces (both real and virtual)... They shape the system of periodical media communication and thereby they construct a certain media space. More or less, they affect the content (or information) that mass media transmit to addresses. They emerge to be the place of manifestation of issues relevant to a certain territory or to the community, which are important from the point of the people living on the territory" (Yakhimovskij and Gavriljuk, 2015).

Consequently, the interpretation of mass media as a projection of informational needs of the man in conditions of growing increasingly complex social practices grounds for the reception of the man as the agent of mass media. It means that the man becomes able to pursue social and communicational projects according to the cultural and historical life contexts.

The man's ability for reflection, choice, and creativeness defines the subjectness of the man in accordance to mass media. Moreover, in terms of this theoretical interpretation, the man fulfils his creative potential generally in the speech activity. The key representation here is "the man of words". In terms of this theoretical tradition, the ways of information transmission, the codes of interaction, the culture and everyday life contexts determine the activity of the man as the agent of mass media. Due to the latter, the man "plunges" into both "the limitless ocean of words and phrases" and the audiovisual world. The text reality of the contemporary man is convergent and comprises dissimilar parts-verbal and non-verbal ones. "The visual man" is rather taking today the place of "the man of words". As Martinez (1986) claimed, the new technologies "make the verbal language either insufficient or useless". The visual language possesses the huge expressive potential and becomes a means of the highest demand.

The new digital informational era, where the word is more and more forced out to the edge of communication, opens the brand new stage in the man's communicational practices. It provides the unique technological ability to combine in a text previously unrelated means of communication, e.g., words, sounds, static and dynamic images (Manovich, 2002).

The man as an agent faces various difficulties while interacting with mass media. These difficulties concern the possibilities to fulfil the man's cognitive, axiological and communicational abilities, since mass media are far from constructing only comfort and intelligible conditions for it. They often restrain, confine and even deprive the man in his self-realization aspirations and ambitions.

The man as the object of mass media: What specified the media studies (especially in American sociology and

Frankfurt school of the social theory) from the 1900s to the mid-1950s is the idea of the extraordinary ability of mass media to influence the man, his views, his believes and his skills to think independently and rationally.

The researches of Lasswell and Lippmann played the decisive role in the theoretical construction of mass media as the communicational means with an exceptional force towards which the man appears as an object of the massive impact. The central research topics in Lasswell (1927)'s works were the issues of propaganda regarded as "the management of collective attitudes by manipulation of significant symbols". Propaganda focuses unconditionally on changing the man's views and ideas. From the perspective of the corpus of journalistic texts, Lippmann (1922) concluded that the man is strenghless in face of the immense potential of mass media that shape the public opinion. That is why, the man does even have to find the 'mechanism' protecting him from the mass media influence. For instance, intellectual elites deliver this protection mechanism. They are generally able to control the aggregation and distribution of information and to use the certain methodology to distinguish facts from fictions.

Within this interpretative tradition, the man is unprotected from mass media, their technologies of imposition of emotions, identities and ideologies. As Luhmann (2000) stated, "what we know about the stratosphere is the same as what Plato knows about Atlantis: we've heard tell of it. As Horatio puts it: "So have I heard and do in part believe it". On the other hand, we know so much about the mass media that we are not able to trust these sources. Our way of dealing with this is to suspect that there is manipulation at work and yet no consequences of any import ensue because knowledge acquired from the mass media merges together as if of its own accord into a self-reinforcing structure" (Luhmann, 2000).

Mass media generate the significant space that is consistent with axiologically and ideologically engaged opinions, ideas and images. They acquire the nature of socially substantial constructions that pattern interactions between people and social life as a whole. Mass media implant ideas, images and symbols into human minds and by doing so they set the severe control over them. As Baudrillard (1987) claimed, "[mass media are] no ensemble of techniques for broadcasting messages; it is the imposition of model".

Now a days, expanding in networks space, mass media obtain new capacities of influence. It is determined by the individualization of both media content consumption and the extension of operations of interaction between the man and mass media informational platforms.

This theoretical framework puts the man to the absolute dependence from mass media which make him act as an obedient marionette reacting to any mass media's stimuli. This approach to mass media creates a rather pessimistic image of the man. Paraphrasing fromm, the man is not able to be in creative relations with mass media, since he is too pliant and amenable and incapable for autonomous cognition acts.

However, such theoretical representation of the man assumes the idea that the man still has the ability to keep his worldview sovereignty, independent from mass media impact. For instance, the researches show that the mass media influence on the human mind is not necessarily affectively constructive (Lazarsfeld *et al.*, 1965; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). As a personality, the man has both the need for the creative self-realization and the reflective competences as well as the capacity to react rationally to stimuli and to resist to them.

The reduction of media's affective influence on the man results from 'the security filters' between the human mind and the mass media which provides the intellectual and emotional autonomy in the conditions of media suggestion projects. Among such filters, there are a stable worldview, deep knowledge, a steady value system and active social inclusion. As Klapper (1961) argues, "mass communication ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences".

Klapper's interpretation of the man media relations helps getting off the idea of mass media as a total power and focusing on the essence of the man as a resisting agent. Such theoretical representation serves as the development of the Decartes' notion of res cogitans.

Arguing about the influential power of mass media, we should refer to Dewey (2009)'s idea that the man can cope with various situations and protect himself from the impact of mass media if he obtains the certain knowledge and protection skills. He concludes that mass media ipse should be the educational project to enlighten the man and to address to him with social messages.

Besides, the theoretical objectivation of the man in his relations with mass media correlates with the idea that media serve not just as efficient manipulators but also as means of cultural transmissions as "archives de culture" (Derrida, 2000). Thereby, they contribute to the construction of cultural values.

Since, intellectual and emotional experience of mass media images ensures the perception of cultural values and social patterns, mass media do influence the man's style of thinking and worldview. It is no doubt that mass media are able to construct various value systems, but the

society is highly interested in contribution of informational products to the moral and intellectual enrichment of individuals.

As we see, the theoretical interpretations of mass media as a constructive and influential technology include different representations of the man. On one hand, these theories treat the man as entirely dependent from mass media and on the other hand, they regard him as the agent who resists to mass media due to his moral and intellectual potential.

The man as the product of mass media: The theoretical representation of the man as the product of mass media bases strongly on the ideas of the Frankfurt school of social theory and philosophy. The Frankfurt scholars considered the mass media to possess the powerful force of influence on the man which results in depriving him of rational thinking abilities and degrading his personality (Adorno, 1991).

These conceptions focus on the notion of mass as an impersonalized form of social agents. Mass media starts up the impersonalization and cultural and intellectual degradation, since they target the tastes and interests of the widest audiences, not the intellectual elites. The man finds himself in the net of the global social project, enacted by mass media, that aims, as Kapitsa claims, at "forcing the individuals into the corporeal conception of life and holding them in it".

The mediatized translation of averaging meanings transform the autonomous man into the mass product associated with entertaining consumption, demands for spectacular and thrilling media messages. Entertainment as a mass cultural phenomenon appeals rather to emotions and instinct than to rationalization of reality. For instance, Benjamin elaborates one of the most influential interpretations of entertainment as a negative model of social behavior (Benjamin, 2010).

Such approach addresses to the interpretation of the man as 'the entertained being' whose essence emerges in his skills of laughing, crying and getting astonished and frightened.

Moreover, mass media developed the need for news and renewal of information. Barthes, joining Valery, uses the notion neomania to express this new human quality. By this, he means the affected concentration of the mind and feelings on news.

One of the key features of the man media relations is demassification of mass media. Toffler initiated the discussion of this phenomenon long before the emergence and outspread of internet. He found the signs of demassification in the major newspapers circulations decay and the loss of printed media readers. Toffler explains it not only by the development of television communications but also by the competing capacity of short-run printing and audiovisual media for a local, thereby, demassificated audience. The process entails not only changes of the printed media but also radio and TV with audiences becoming more and more identifiable in terms of sharp attributes. How does this conception contribute to the representation of the man?

Every contemporary man has the chance to become not only the product or a consumer of media, but the author of informational products, too. Thus, according to Toffler, the emerging social group, cognitariat takes place of proletariat. This new social group is sensible to informational flows; it obtains the information due to its skills in working with informational flows and data. Emancipating the man and releasing him from the total social projects, demassificated mass media create the conditions for the free choice.

CONCLUSION

We can make several conclusions based on the analysis of the key theoretical representations of the man in media studies. The system of dynamic representations in social theories of mass media ("man as the agent of mass media", "man as the object of mass media" and "man as the product of mass media") reflects the features of the contemporary mediatized culture. The modern mass media contribute to the integrity of the society and its meaning structures and shape "the social man" by imposing identity patterns on him. Having analyzed the most consistent approaches to the man in conditions of mediatized culture as a source of mental values, we claim that the constitutive element of the theoretical representation of the man is the idea of the man's ability to resist to the impact power of mass media and to manifest the agentive mental and cultural status. The consideration of the man media relations issues funds the fuller and deeper awareness of the contemporary culture dynamics.

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