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The Media In-between Corporate and Messianic Cultural Politics

Abstract

Jurgen Habermas reminds us that the communication mind exists in its two forms... As an emancipatory communication mind, then it realizes the repair of the world and consciousness. But he can also exist as a form of his depravity, as, it fixes the world and consciousness. But he can also exist as a form of his depravity, as, therefore, a perverted communication mind that enslaves and destroys the world and consciousness. Frequent mediaization with the help of media spectacle in the area of culture, ethics, aesthetics and religion increases this distorted dimension of the communication mind of our time.

Key words: *media, communication mind, cultural policy.*

The communicative mind in its second-level dimension – the dimension of its own perversity

People can be divided into four groups:

The learned man who knows that he knows,

This is the man you follow;

The man who does not know and knows that he does not know,

Be wary of that one;

The one who knows but does not know that he knows,

This one is sleeping, wake him up;

The man who does not know and does not know that he does not know,

He is powerless, have pity on him.

(From the archives of the University of Timbuktu, the first known university in the world, founded in West Africa in the 10th century. At the time of founding the University of Bologna, the University of Timbuktu had 25,000 students)³⁴¹

In an interview for a Bosnian magazine³⁴² he gave during his stay in Sarajevo, the American philosopher **Richard Rorty** shared some obvious, though not so widely known facts on the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary U.S. politics, stressing that, “...religion has become very important (in politics) in the last 25 years, not due to Catholics, but rather, evangelical Protestants, mostly from Southern and Southwestern states. They have managed to garner great influence in the Republican Party, which is something new. This was not the case before”.

In time evangelicals achieved more significant penetration in American politics than the Catholics or the Catholic Church throughout previous decades in any American administration or political party. We can conclude with some certainty that the President **Bush** administration is influenced by evangelicals, namely the subgroup in which an important role belongs to the *San Antonio evangelical church community* whose religious and political ideas as well as extensive penetration in the public sphere, and especially their mediatization³⁴³, all require a re/valorization of their practical

341 According to the monograph Timbuktu by Mehmed Karahodžić, Bemust, Sarajevo, 2008.

342 The magazine in question is “Godišnjak” published by the Bosniak cultural society from Sarajevo, which ran an interview with this American philosopher in 2005 when he visited Sarajevo. It was titled “The imperial power of the U.S will be taken over by China”.

343 Modern societies, those with a developed civil identity, are highly prone to a *mediatization* of their important types of content, of everything that is socially relevant in any way. A special place here is reserved for television as a medium. Some authors are prepared to discuss the development of a so-called *screen ideology*, which promotes in a similar way both profane and holy topics, almost as a daily “Edelman spectacle” and the classical statement by Habermas again gains significance, that in this case *the communicative mind* is most often confirmed in its second-level dimension – the dimension of its own perversity. This type of mediatization, without being overly dramatic, can be said to promote and affirm that which is social, and not cultural, precisely in the sphere of culture and faith, of culture and religion, where the cultural should be above the social but is not. This is why it is possible to give so much attention to elec-

impacts at the social and everyday politics level in today's politics, especially foreign affairs. At a simplified level, one can identify in society the *mediatized religious right-wing party* or the rise of *religious nationalism*³⁴⁴, as this phenomenon might be renamed at the sociological level, and concur with Rorty's view that it is comprised of a "cynical, unscrupulous group of people who do not have anything in common with Christianity", because this is precisely what these people are like – cynical towards religion and unscrupulous towards power, government and money; as we shall partly prove by research presented in this text.

A short history of the media evangelical dimension

In her book "America – Religions and Religion", **Catherine L. Albanese** from the University of California (Santa Barbara) notes that already in 1948 an association of "Neo-Evangelicalism" was founded (by **Harold John Ockenga**) and gained its social role and popularity specifically through the Fuller Theological Seminary (Albanese; 1004: 419). The expansion of this association grew in the 1970s when it encouraged the increasing search for foundations and modern fundamentalism, and when the return to *biblical roots* as a philosophy and *praxis* spread somewhat quickly within the evangelical community.

A significant role in this process is reserved for *archetypal narratives* on the return to ancient Christian foundations, a return to a holy historical tradition belonging to the past, in order to be prepared for welcoming the events of the *Last Days*, such as the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the reign of the Antichrist, the battle of Armageddon and the grand victory over Satan... The increased interest in these tales, which comprise the core of *millennial predictions*, appearing within 1980s and 1990s Protestantism, can (also) be illustrated by the sales figures of a cult book dealing with these matters, "The Late Great Planet Earth" by **H. Lindsey**, of which 28 million copies were sold in early 1990s alone.

Generally speaking, the rational use of the communicative mind, later known as neo-communicative rationality, was quite prone to follow in the steps of the neo-religious fundamentalist awakening in U.S. media space. For example, "Newsweek" magazine proclaimed the year 1976 as "the Year of the Evangelical", and a similar proclamation was made by "Time" magazine in the years that followed.

tronic media as the media of the future, the types of media which are happy to promote violence and corporeality (the similar situation is true in Bosnia and Herzegovina) without a minimum of ethical revalorization, creative symbolism or historical symbolism...

344 In our region the concept of religious nationalism was most systematically defined by Dino Abazović in his book "For the nation and for God", published by "Magistrat", Editio Civitas, Sarajevo in 2006. He insists on the difference between faith and religious nationalism since faith and belief in the original sense are impossible to be evaluated in sociological categories as they belong to the sphere of the individual, while religion and religious terms connote a collective, social aspect of this phenomenon.

The media also followed the rise of evangelical fundamentalism in the 1990s, but the primacy was taken by *electronic media*. Several popular TV networks, such as FOX TV, supplanted newspapers and magazines. In discussions and dialogues with leading religious and non-religious representatives (Catholic, liberal, Protestant...), evangelicals demonstrated their superiority through television as the strongest medium, and proved to be appropriately avant-garde in their interpretation of extremely conservative and fundamentalist views we already mentioned. The main premise of their interpretation consists of explaining the authority of the Bible and biblical instructions in all the changes of modern society. Their modernized neo-biblical narrative made them so superior in the public and media arena that even presidents started proclaiming themselves as evangelicals.

The *emphatic use of TV discourse* took primacy here as the discourse of the majority, a discourse of relaxing and simplifying the holiest and most difficult themes for human existence and the future of humanity, a discourse that *charms at first sight*. The great responsibility betrayed by the leading media communicative evangelical community cannot be extenuated, since it neglected the *ecumenical dimension of its attractive narratives*, and developed its strength and suggestiveness precisely on the idea of the final victory and final defeat of one group over the other within the so-called *polemical plain* which had to come to the forefront and will continue to do so.

As public spaces for polemics and debates, the media did not invite three competent and widely known representatives (of Jewish, Christian and Muslim faith) to interpret and argue among themselves, even though they would be the ones with the technical ease to achieve this. With their method of ignoring, dividing, stigmatizing, excluding and promoting xenophobia, the media have developed the communicative civil mind in their (media) two-level dimension, *the dimension of their perversity*. (Habermas)

Particular strength is further gained from influences of the so-called *electronic church*, which continues to shape the identity, message and style of evangelical-fundamentalist practice in a modern manner, through new technologies. The electronic church already possesses the infrastructure to ease the conquer of the scene for a politics delineated in the new *Christian right*. The projected goal is to create an impression or image of an idealized past, celebrating the Bible as the final authority, completely infallible and therefore desirable, important and necessary *in its renovating role during the last days*, especially for millennial events and prophecies.

The Judeo-Christian cultural media-theological symbiosis

In this sense it is interesting to observe the new symbiosis of Judeo-Christian tradition and Judeo-Christian fundamentalism at the level of pure theology, which some American authors see in the following way: “U.S. evangelical theology takes a unique view of the role of the Jewish people in the modern world. On the one hand, evangelicals share the widespread Christian view that Christians represent the new and true children of Israel, inheritors of God’s promises to the ancient Hebrews. Yet unlike many other Christians, evangelicals also believe that the Jewish people have a continuing role in God’s plan. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, close study of biblical prophecies convinced evangelical scholars and believers that the Jews would return to the Holy Land before the triumphant return of Christ.”³⁴⁵ In his interpretation of the convergence between Jews and evangelicals in the modern U.S, the quoted author believes that the number of Jews rejecting Christianity as a religion is decreasing, but *in the tumultuous years before Jesus’ return*, described by all great religious traditions – Muslim, Christian and Jewish, a significant number of Jews will continue to reject Christianity and for this they are not judged. Modern evangelicals differ from **Martin Luther**, in that they do not expect Jews to convert to the *true faith* once they are exposed to it. Luther’s (dis)trust towards the Jews in a way led him to a kind of antisemitism, which is not the case with modern evangelicals.

Evangelicals also believe that the continuing existence of the Jewish people is in fact a strong proof for two things: 1) the existence of God and 2) God’s power throughout history. (Mead; 2006: 28) They often quote the famous line from “The Book of Genesis” (12:3), where God says to Abraham: “I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”³⁴⁶

The fact that Jewish people survived all the persecutions and sufferings in the past and returned to their ancient home is proof that God is real, that the Bible is inspired and that the Christian religion is true. Many evangelicals believe that the promise of Genesis still stands and that the God of Abraham will metaphorically – *bless the United States if the United States blesses Israel*. At the same time, they see in the weakness, defeats, and poverty of the Arab world ample evidence that God curses those who curse Israel. (Mead; 2006:31)

Criticism of Israel, the United States and their joint unprincipled politics towards the whole Middle East region, does not modify the previously stated evangelical position. This even strengthens their conviction that the world hates Israel because the “fallen man” naturally hates God and his “chosen people”. In accepting and supporting Israel, evangelicals feel that they are standing by God – and that is why they are ready to commit acts against the whole of humanity, claims Mead. He notes:

³⁴⁵ See the whole text by Walter Russell Mead in the magazine *Foreign Affairs*, on the topic of religion, titled “God’s Country” (pp. 24-32), *Religion & Foreign Policy*, October 2006.

³⁴⁶ Croatian edition: *Počeci izabranog naroda*, 1. Povijest Abrahamova, Postanak, Biblija, Stari i Novi zavjet, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2001.

John Hagee – an influential evangelical pastor of an 18,000-member evangelical church in San Antonio, Texas, and author of many *New York Times* bestsellers – writes that if Iran moves to attack, Americans must be prepared “to stop this evil enemy in its tracks”.

God’s policy toward the Jewish people”, Hagee writes “is found in Genesis” (12:3), and he goes on to quote the passage we already mentioned, about blessings and curses. “America is at the crossroads!” Hagee warns, “Will we believe and obey the Word of God concerning Israel, or will we continue to equivocate and sympathize with Israel’s enemies?”

The return of the Jews to the “Holy Land”, their extraordinary victories over larger Arab armies, and even the rising tide of hatred that threatens Jews in Israel and abroad, strengthen not only the evangelical commitment to Israel but also the position of evangelical religion in American public and political life. The story of modern Jewry reads like a book in the Bible. The Holocaust is reminiscent of the genocidal efforts of Pharaoh in the book of Exodus and of Haman in the Book of Esther. The subsequent establishment of a Jewish state reminds one of many similar victories and deliverances of the Jews in the Hebrew Scriptures. The extraordinary events of modern Jewish history are held up by evangelicals as proof that God exists and acts in history. Add to this the psychological consequences of nuclear weapons, and many evangelicals begin to feel that they are living in a world like the world of the Bible. This centers U.S. foreign policy on defending the country against the threat of mass terrorism involving, potentially, weapons of apocalyptic horror wielded by anti-Christian fanatics waging a religious war motivated by hatred of Israel, and this only reinforces the claims of evangelical religion... (Walter Russel Mead; 2004: 24.-32.)

What is the purpose of grand (media) mythic narratives?

Who needs these *grand narratives* on the world of today and of the future, and why? Is it possible to launch great *political tectonic shifts* without such narratives? Is it possible to *throw the common everyday man into the abyss of the apocalypse* and suffering if there are no such religiously-based “holy narratives”? Who actually manipulates the “holy and unholy truths”? Who manipulates *the holy through the profane* and *the profane through the holy*? In whose interest? Is this interest specific? What is its price? How much money can be gained through such a narrative? The cynics at the top of the Republican Party for example are already making huge amounts of money.

Even the use of *the atomic bomb* in this century therefore seems logical and justified in advance, which completely eschews reason, sense, any reasonable politics or government whose members possess basic discernment (*casus belli*). All holy and profane words have been operationalized, even God’s name itself. In this narrative, God – the anthropologized, politicized God – becomes usable, interchangeable and nationalized, corporatized, republicanized, evangelicalized, ideologized, *brandized* up to a most bizarre level unimaginable during the times of the mighty Pharaoh or Haman.

In this concept of “God’s Country”, *God is more than a game and less than a toy*, a bizarre wager for superficial ears and frenzied holders of power and authority, a corny word and sacrilege which can only be possible in this 21st, *simulacrized*³⁴⁷ century so the phrase “God’s Country” might suppose an “Anti-God state of affairs”, completely monstrous, blasphemous, unnatural and impossible, hyper-Satanized, Dajjal-like³⁴⁸ in its form and content; a state of affairs that will stop at absolutely nothing – not even the use of the atomic bomb which would be justified by “holy interpretations” that nothing better or wiser is possible at a particular moment... This is the core of the huge, tremendous cynicism of, among others, a few evangelicals the philosopher Rorty mentions.

Although liberalism usefully teaches us that any interpretation is possible, including the meta-Judeo-evangelical one – with a highly vulgar positioning within contexts, recognizing *eternal truths* in actual *specific people*, functions, political decisions, orders and prohibitions – it is useful to examine this one. Within the variety of neo-fascist and traditional fascist ideas and narratives, these types of narratives represent the newest phenomena with which we as a human community enter the increasingly uncertain years of the early 21st century, and which true pacifists and peacemakers such as myself never thought they would encounter. At least not so soon after the genocidal events in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Rwanda, Chechnya and Somalia.

It is clear that this text examines two *overlapping phenomena*, which at first seem to be similar and may “seduce” even a good researcher to go in the wrong, unscientific direction. Our research focuses on the *corporate* and the *messianic* U.S. narrative. A significant portion of individuals on both sides are the same people and the same interest groups. “The mental fuel” for both are millennial biblical (and generally, religious) narratives and their “timely” implementation, use and misuse in the future, for the future and towards the future. While the first, corporate one can be very easily recognized, identified and researched (and it also absorbs different media projects in this process, which is of my particular interest), the other, messianic one is almost impossible to be recognized, objectivized and rationally defined, which in fact is not our goal. Especially not a goal justified in the media sense.

All three religious narratives (Christian, Jewish, Muslim) on millennial events are more or less the same and have always existed in religious and theological circles as a strong foundation for individuals and groups, as part of dogmatics, catechesis, religious teachings, aqidah studies and general theology, thus one might say nothing new has happened in this sense. What is new, is mainly the ***media use of these narratives*** in the modern moment of existence, which then enters current events in politics, foreign affairs and global political developments. And this is true

347 Simulacrum is a term by which the late 20th century French philosopher and communicologist Jacques Baudrillard defines all forms of the real world entering the world of *fictum*, replacements, virtualization and otherworldliness – the other side of the screen, pseudovision, pseudothings and a pseudoworld.

348 According to Islamic terminology on “ahir-zeman”, a kind of equivalent to the Judeo-Christian vision of the “Last Days”, the strongest role in perverting God’s law and God’s world shall belong and belongs to Dajjal, who more than Sheitan and more than the Antichrist, denotes the final perversion of the ordered world and world of nature, before the second coming of Isa on Earth and the Final Destruction of the Earth, humanity and civilization.

to the level that electronic media, television, film and *online* media are faster and more effective in the time and space sense than traditional media such as books, newspapers and magazines.

The U.S. environment therefore provides the most suitable ground for analysing this media phenomenon. The media most directly encourage large masses, *publicus*, to believe the messianic aspect of contemporary and current politics, as if this politics has itself been written on the pages of a neo-Bible, a bible for every era and every specific decision, action, statement... Money and profit are gained by the political structure or current administration under this double umbrella opened up by the media. It could even be said that corporate power currently overpowers the messianic kind, since corporate power – although it develops out of messianic power – uses actual *media power* in order to fabricate and strengthen *imperial politics* of both corporate and messianic power. The media are merely levers here, although very powerful and useful ones³⁴⁹. Corporate power is completely ready to “turn the world upside down”, comfortable and at ease in collecting money for its *final victory*. This victory may be completely sacrilegious, profane, monetized, but is necessary as a minimal preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Isa) on Earth. Authors of this “project” are very busy and in a hurry because as soon as they prepare the Earth and Earthlings for this event – the sooner it will happen.

A good mediatization of these events, narratives or millennial assumptions might prove very useful. Only in the sense that the media would be widely open and non-discriminatory towards everyone who has something to say and show about this.

It is necessary for the so-called media mind or, more specifically, the communicative mind, to be confirmed in its originality – as an equal opportunity for everyone, a polilogue or dialogue. As a competent platform that invites and hosts all interested parties, where all parties may share their views and interpretation. Regardless of whether they are powerful or powerless. A sort of communication ecumenism is needed when discussing large subjects: the future of the world and religious narratives on this topic.

At the moment it seems there exists a limited number of competent speakers but too much money a stake and overly ambitious intentions of those who see themselves as eternally privileged because hey, time and history exist only because of them. In this sense, the *monologist interpretations* start looking like the biblical scene of the fight between David and Goliath or the Qur’an story on the fight between Talut and Jalut, the eternal narratives according to which the one who has *cunning* – wins. And everyone should have the same chances, otherwise what is the use of having the faith?

349 How much money has been invested in the last few years in order to create spectacular projects, especially in the film industry fabricating messianic narratives as side products, for example the movie “Armageddon”, “The Da Vinci Code”, “Lord of the Rings” (parts 1, 2 and 3), films like the “Matrix”, “The Passion of Christ”, “What the Bleep Do We Know” etc. or purely informative, documentary and similar projects for the media and the general public which pays for all of this and finances it, searching anew similar and more exciting narratives based on the messianic kind.

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Mediji između korporativne i mesijanske kulturne politike

Sažetak

Jurgen Habermas podsjeća nas kako komunikacijski um egzistira u svoje dvije forme, dva oblika. Kao emancipatorski komunikacijski um i tad ostvaruje popravku svijeta i svijesti. No, on može egzistirati i kao forma svoje izopačenosti, kao dakle, pervertirani komunikacijski um koji porobljava i unižava svijet i svijest. Učestala medijatizacija uz pomoć medijskog spektakla u prostoru kulture, etike, estetike te religije uvećava ovu izopačenu dimenziju komunikacijskog uma našega doba.

Ključne riječi: mediji, komunikacijski um, kulturna politika.



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