Section: Logic

**War, Massmedia and the Problems within Reference**

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*Key words: war, mass media, information, reference, self-reference, other-reference*

“Whatever we know about our society, or indeed about the world in which we live, we know through the mass media. This is true not only of our knowledge of society and history but also of our knowledge of nature” (Luhman, 2000: p. 6). On the other hand, he uderlined, that we have heard so much about the mass media that we cannot trust this source. We resist their influence, suspecting that we are being manipulated, but in essence this does not change anything, because the knowledge we received from the mass media, as if by itself, construct a closed frame, the elements of which strengthen each other.

Today, mass media have become a separate area of life with their own institutions, using their high-tech base for the production and dissemination of information. It was the distribution technique, according to Luhmann, that was of decisive importance in the isolation of the mass media system, similar to the importance that money received in relation to the economy.

One consequence of this has been that *war* has become a spectator sport, as Elin Whitney-Smith writes in her historical essay “War, Information, and History: Changing Paradigms” (E. Whitney-Smith, 1995), whose concept is also a focus of consideration. When the media show in detail the family of a war hero, the story of his rescue, his comrades, it is very difficult to oppose the war in its personalized image.

According to Whitney-Smith, who uses the “wealth and poverty” paradigm, the nature of what constitutes a threat has changed today. Usually the threat came from a foreign superior military force, its weapons and army. Now the threat may be the weakness and technical backwardness of the enemy, which, together with an inaccurate forecast, can change the course and outcome of the war. This applies to the military actions of highly developed powers. The level of human fear is increasing, provoked by our contacts with the global world, which is multiplied by the mass media. And as the gap between “what we have” and “what we don’t have” widens, both the poor and the rich are likely to be more inclined to listen to all sorts of demagogic calls to return to societies defined by traditional ethnic and religious values. The rich listen because they see it as a source of social stability, the poor - because of uncertainty and fear. All of these problems originate in the Information Revolution, on Whitney-Smith’s opinion. Because it creates an entirely new world, and if we are to function in this new world, we must understand the dynamics of *information* and *war*.

According to this conception, we are currently in the middle of information revolution. It was imagined that translation could quickly build on the great successes of computers in code breaking during World War II. On both sides of the Cold War, researchers sought to develop systems capable of translating the scientific output of other nations (Manning, 2022: p. 127). But the balance of power after World War II in terms of technology and information has shifted in favor of the most intense information culture, which was the United States at that time. Given that the essence of the computer revolution is local control, the Soviet paradigm of central control ruled out the concept of local information responsibility and blocked access to information and technology. The consequence of this was the collapse of the Soviet economy, as its production, ecological and social system went beyond the administrative limit of their information infrastructure. This collapse, created a highly competitive situation in the paradigm of group identity. Unfortunately, despite the opened access to information after the collapse of the USSR, neither in today's Russia nor in neighboring countries has there been a technological breakthrough in information technology. The power of the oligarchic clans, the lack of free competition threaten to turn another propaganda dream of Skolkovo into a Stalinist "sharashka" instead of an information technology breakthrough. The championship is still held by the United States, to which Japan and Taiwan have been added.

While accusing the mass media of manipulation, we are nevertheless forced to use the knowledge gleaned from the mass media. Analyzing information wars, we must understand the nature of the mass media phenomenon. Having created a second reality that modern man faces every second, the mass media develop dependence on their means and forms of information presentation. The solution to this problem, according to Luhmann, cannot be reduced to exposing some kind of puppeteer in the background, pulling the strings, as much as sociologists and political scientists would not like. According to Luhmann, here we are dealing with the consequences of the differentiation of modern society. In his opinion, this influence can be traced and subjected to theoretical reflection. It is about what one could say about the "own meaning" and "own behavior" of modern society. The concept of "mass media", according to Luhmann, covers all public organizations and enterprises that use technical means to disseminate messages, if mass products are made by them for yet undefined addressees.

The concept of "mass media", according to Luhmann, covers all public organizations and enterprises that use technical means to disseminate messages, if mass products are made by them for yet undefined addressees. Despite some schematic and artificial nature of such definitions, the main idea is that only the machine production of any product as a communication medium, and not writing as such, leads to the isolation of the mass media system. At the very least, it is decisive that between the sender and the addressee (unlike some types of writing) there can be no direct interaction. M. Mamardashvili notes as a very important theme of Proust's psychology - the theme of "the impossibility of direct communication or the impossibility of direct consciously controlled communication" (Mamardashvili, 1995: p. 34). Interaction is excluded, thanks to the mediation of technology. Exceptions are possible (although never with all recipients), but they can be in the form of dramatization, which we can see in television and radio studios. As a result of the technically conditioned necessity of interrupting contacts, a relatively high degree of communicative freedom is provided, and an excess of communicative possibilities arises. This process can be further controlled only internally, that is, through the self-organization of the system and its own constructions of reality.

N. Luhmann adheres to the starting point that the mass media - as observing systems - are forced to distinguish between *self-reference* and *other-reference*. Otherwise they cannot. Mass media cannot accept themselves as truth, and this, above all, is their guarantee against manipulation. They must construct some kind of reality, another reality, different from themselves. At first glance, this idea may seem trivial, if such a variant of "constructivism" did not cause a negative reaction from the mass media themselves. However, if any kind of cognition should be based on the distinction between self-reference and other-reference, this at the same time means that cognition (and, consequently, any kind of reality) is a construction, concludes N. Luhmann. Because this distinction between self-reference and other-reference cannot exist in the external world of the system (otherwise what these “self” and “other” would be), but be realized only in the system itself.

The operational constructivism professed by N. Luhmann in no way denies the existence of the external world. He simply sees the world not as an object, but phenomenologically - as a horizon, that is, as inaccessible. And therefore, the only possibility remains - to construct reality and simultaneously observe observers, how they construct reality. For this reason, what is understood by "reality", according to Luhmann, can only be an internal correlate of system operations, as it happens in the operational memory of a computer, but by no means a property inherent in objects of knowledge, with the exception of those that are distinguished by their kind and view. Reality is therefore only an indicator to test the coherence and consistency in the system. Reality is produced within the system by giving it a meaning (N. Luhmann suggests an English word: sensemaking). According to N. Luhmann, the more complex the system, the more it is irritated, the more variability it achieves compared to the real world.

Our question takes the following form: how do mass media construct reality? Or more difficult: how can we describe the reality of mass media constructions of reality? One could formulate the question of how the mass media distort reality in their way of presenting it. But then it would provide for an objectively accessible reality, which in this case is impossible. Scientists, according to W.V.O. Quine, can be absolutely sure that they know reality better than it is portrayed in the mass media, doomed to engage in "popularization". But this means just comparing your own construction with some other. This can be done thanks to the public attitude, since the society accepts scientific descriptions as authentic knowledge of reality. However, this does not negate the possibility of somehow re-raising the question: how do mass media construct reality?

Mass media studies in the science of communications, which are described not only by Luhmann, should have answered this question. To answer these and various other questions, it would be necessary to proceed not only from the recognition of the growing influence of the mass media in recent decades, no matter how striken we are, for example, that economic enterprises are no longer related to society only through their products, but also, under the influence of mass media, through "philosophy", "culture", "ethics". According to Luhmann, we need to expand the era of historical observation of the mass media, which we actually tried to do through the paradigms of information revolutions.

However, this double meaning of reality - in the form of an actually ongoing, that is, an observed operation, and thus a generated construction - clearly shows that the concepts of operative closure, autonomy and construction that characterize the mass media do not at all exclude outside influence.

This can be illustrated very well by the example of military censorship of news reports, first during the Gulf War and the second time during the war in Iraq. Censorship acted only according to the rules of the mass media: it should have contributed to the creation of the necessary structures and excluded independent information. Because these wars were staged in the same way as media events, and the parallel filming or interpretation of data served both military and information purposes, their splitting would entail a complete information collapse. Little was required of censorship other than to satiate the chronic need for news to keep broadcasting going. Therefore, they demonstrated, mainly, the technique. The fact that this side of the war that concerned human casualties was obscured as a result (although this could not be avoided in the second war) caused great criticism. But perhaps, according to N. Luhmann, this happened because it completely contradicted the ideas built by the mass media themselves about how a war should look like.

Similarly, some other events can be analyzed from the point of view of mass media staging, namely, the Russian-Georgian military conflict and the Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict. With regard to the latter, it was well known that Ukraine could not shut off the gas pipeline, thereby depriving consumers in Europe of gas fuel, due to the fact that there was no gas valve on the territory of Ukraine. But the information campaign was built in such a way that even after this fact was announced, the rhetoric on the Russian side remained the same, and on the Ukrainian side no one dared to bring the showdown to the end. Reconciliation was achieved by other means. And the majority in Ukraine remained misled about this media product and the event itself.

But nothing could be compared with current invasion of russia army to Ukraine. How it prepared with the help and by means of mass media the wide public in russia itself, imposing a completely false picture of the country, which russia was going to subjugate to its goals.

We have to make a conclusion that war always has wrong reference to false objects and the role of media borders with the weapon of mass destruction. And only a liberation war for the native land and in defense of its own people and values has a clear goal and a real reference that no mass media can distort.

When comparing various types of speech activity: personal letters, messages, reports, political and other manifestos, fiction and scientific literature, their dialogic character, ability and suitability for reusable interpretation, regardless of era, time and technical means, are revealed. As for the mass media, a paradoxical quality emerges - the absence of a dialogic character, despite the fact that the system is declared interactive. And if, in particular, scientific writing tends to the so-called always true sentences, includes a memorization mechanism, the mass media reality is interested in forgetting and manipulating with the help of news not only emotions, but also our memory and current understanding.

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