

MEDIA AND TRUTH IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PRACTICE AND LIFE FORM OF THE MODERN “HOMO MEDIALIS”

Sabína GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ

ABSTRACT:

The author of the article speaks about epistemological relevancy or rather correctness of media-offered contents, trying to understand the nature of media ‘truth’. She bases her viewpoint on the assumption that these qualities are influenced by the general practice and ways of media production. Essentially, she identifies two forms of practice – the one applied by media professionals and the one typical for amateurs and common people using the Internet. These approaches differ in the ways media content is created and the truth criteria are applied. They represent two different media worlds, each one with its own ‘rules of the game’ and ‘truth regime’. Finally, the author examines what kind of “homo medialis” is required by these pluralist media worlds – or, in other words, how this “homo medialis” should interact with various versions and structures of media reality and truth. The author believes people should employ ‘transversal’ rationality. Homo medialis should then be a person with free will; their *ars vivendi* should incorporate and nourish certain ‘counter-actions’ that would fight a rather spontaneous tendency to automatically believe mediated information and thus accept the totalitarian claim offered by (one of) incomplete images and associations, i.e. fight against claims that the presented media truth is the absolute and unquestionable one. The author believes that this *ars* requires constant questioning of what the (media) truth is.

KEY WORDS:

common people, homo medialis, information, media and society, media practice, media professionals, media reality, media truth, news

Introduction

Media have always been an important source of information, knowledge and news. It is generally accepted that content communicated through media helps us make sense of our everyday life. It is therefore



PhDr. Sabína Gáliková Tolnaiová, PhD.
Faculty of Mass Media Communication
University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
Námestie Jozefa Herdu 2
917 01 Trnava
Slovak Republic
sabina.galikova.tolnaiova@ucm.sk

The author’s scientific research, publishing activities and pedagogical work at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava are focused on several theoretical issues. She specialises in the philosophical, ethical and axiological aspects of communication and the media and their interdisciplinary nature, putting emphasis on the field of philosophy of education. She is the author and co-author of several domestic and foreign scientific monographs, studies and articles, co-founder of successful scientific projects, member of scientific societies, conference committees, and member of editorial boards of several scholarly journals. Currently she works as a secretary of the Committee of the Slovak Philosophical Association of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

quite normal that we expect media – especially the well-established news services – to provide us with trustworthy and truthful information and news that may be valuable, important and much needed. In the following text, we want to examine epistemological relevancy of the media content, its truthfulness, but also the question of nature of media truth and its understanding, which also opens an issue of a “homo medialis” and their standpoint in the context of various media sources.

We suppose that epistemological relevancy is shaped by specific media practice – searching for information, processing information, storing information or disseminating (presenting) information. We can generally speak about two basic forms of this practice: the practice incorporated by professionals working for media organisations, primarily journalists, opposed by media amateurs, civic journalists and common people that mainly concentrate on the Internet.¹ These two approaches differ in the ways media content is created; especially regarding the ways they claim the truth.

Furthermore, we believe that the nature of media truth can be based on the idea that “each medium comes with its own and characteristic metaphysics and view of the world,”² and similarly – view of the truth. Here, we present a relevant reasoning which implies that the definitions of the truth are – at least to a certain extent – “derived from the nature of communication media.”³ Finally, we believe that given the context of media plurality, “homo medialis” is also required to understand plurality of media worlds and adopt their non-reducing layout. Along with accepting various ‘regimes’ of the truth, “homo medialis” needs to become familiar with a necessity of free movement in between these worlds, which directs to the importance of freedom of (as Welsch would say) “transversal rationality.”⁴

The Practice of Media Professionals and Right to (Know) the Truth in Relation to Media Content

Media-distributed news and information is a social product prepared by professionals – journalists. Journalists are responsible for providing news or other kinds of information they publish while trying to maintain their cultural authority as spokespersons that cover public affairs.⁵ Here, however, we need to mention that we should presently be speaking about both ‘traditional’ journalists that use the old types of media such as newspapers, radio or television and journalists that work with digital media based on the Internet, where information disseminated through words, images and sounds converges in a specific manner.⁶ In this context, we have to discuss online journalists or digital reporting that we understand, as J. Višňovský explains, as publishing multimedia news content in various forms on the Internet.⁷

We think it is obvious that professional practice is similar throughout various media, both ‘traditional’ and digital. However, it is not identical since the nature of media that communicate news and information differs, too. In fact, ‘informatization’ or application of new information and communication technologies triggers changes and unavoidable shifts in the formal structures of media content or journalistic product. And yet J. Višňovský points out that even though ‘informatization’ introduces certain changes, the very nature of journalistic work such as searching, gathering and transforming information into complex journalistic

products still remains the same. Many other media scholars have expressed similar views as well.⁸ If we look inside the work practices of media professionals – especially journalists – we have to realise that the creation and distribution of media contents is subject to various legal frameworks and norms. Certain content and formal requirements are applied. We may state that professional journalists have to respect the requirements that are set for any editorial work. In this context, we can further discuss the question of professional competence and social role journalists possess. A professional journalist is obliged to inform truthfully, objectively, independently, without any bias and in a balanced manner. As A. Sámelová points out, this is a normative requirement and obligation to exercise principles of neutralism – to seek the ‘neutral truth’ that has also become an instrument to measure objectivity, impartiality, independency and last but not least truthfulness of media content.⁹ In this respect, both the creators and recipients see ‘objective’ and ‘truthful’¹⁰ informing as an important quality of news services or other creative activities that are involved. L. Šefčák notices that credibility of news should be a coherent feature rather than a random occurrence.¹¹

Here we can speak about the right to (know) the truth, or about truthful media content, as this still exists despite all the changes in media or journalistic practice. In a broader sense, this generally means social expectancy¹² and requirement for media products to bring credible content instead of misleading and false information.¹³ In other words, the public expects media to provide relevant information and news that cover different situations truthfully. We, the recipients of media products and contents, expect and require not to be given false and distorted information on TV or radio, in newspapers, by news services or through journalism, because we want to use this information and act accordingly. We can really get angry when we find out that we have been misled by information that is simply untrue, false, information that does not respect reality, information that we cannot rely on.¹⁴ However, what are we talking about when we discuss the truth in media content or correctness of information and news?

It is perhaps appropriate to notice that the very problem of the truth (or truthfulness) is complicated and can be described by multiple concepts that take into consideration various theories based on diverse interdisciplinary approaches. The correspondence theory of truth is a ‘traditional’ concept in which the truth

1 To distinguish this better, see: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávných médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2016.

2 DEUZE, M.: *Media Life. Život v médiách*. Prague: Karolinum, 2015, p. 167.

3 POSTMAN, N.: *Ubažiť se k smrti. Veřejná komunikace ve věku zbabav*. Prague: Mladá fronta, 2010, p. 33.

4 See more on “transversal rationality” in: WELSCH, W.: *Naše postmoderní/moderna*. Prague: Zvon, 1994.

5 See and compare: SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125; GARCÍA AVILÉS, J. A.: Online Newsrooms as Communities of Practice: Exploring Digital Journalists’ Applied Ethics. In *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality*, 2014, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 259; HERMIDA, A.: Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a Discipline of Collaborative Verification. In *Journalism Practice*, 2012, Vol. 6, No. 5, p. 3-4. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263119113_Tweets_and_Truth_Journalism_as_a_discipline_of_collaborative_verification>.

6 See also: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávných médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2016.

7 See: VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Aktuálne otázky teórie a praxe žurnalistiky v ére internetu*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2015, p. 52.

8 See: VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Aktuálne otázky teórie a praxe žurnalistiky v ére internetu*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2015, p. 61. See also: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Moc a pravda v podmienkach Rozhlasu a televízie Slovenska*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2018, p. 112-115; GARCÍA AVILÉS, J. A.: Online Newsrooms as Communities of Practice: Exploring Digital Journalists’ Applied Ethics. In *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality*, 2014, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 258-272; HERMIDA, A.: Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a Discipline of Collaborative Verification. In *Journalism Practice*, 2012, Vol. 6, No. 5, p. 1-14. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263119113_Tweets_and_Truth_Journalism_as_a_discipline_of_collaborative_verification>.

9 We live in late modern times that ask for media neutrality, especially in the case of public service media. See: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávných médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2016, p. 82-83.

10 To find out more about a personalistic perspective, see: MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: The Personalistic Aspect of Truth and Dialog in the Context of Karol Wojtyła’s Philosophy: John Paul II.’s Ethics of Media. In *Communication Today*, 2016, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 4-16.

11 See: ŠEFČÁK, L.: O pravdivosti v novinárstve (otázka etiky alebo práva). In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 1997, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 25.

12 See: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Moc a pravda v podmienkach Rozhlasu a televízie Slovenska*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2018, p. 27.

13 As G. Graham states, information is an epistemologically normative term: the information that we acquired results in the fact that we know now what we did not know before. Similarly, Modrzejewski points out that information is defined as something that is intentionally truthful. False information then means disinformation. However, as N. Postman warns, disinformation does not mean totally incorrect information, but misleading information, information that is used wrongly, something that is irrelevant, incomplete, shallow and imprecise. Such information only brings an illusion that we know something while in reality it only leads us away from knowing. J. Foght Mikkelsen talks about the difference between unintentional misinformation and deliberate mistake (incorrect information). As A. Sámelová mentions, deliberate, intentional, false information can also be called “fake news”. See: GRAHAM, G.: *The Internet: A Philosophical Inquiry*. London, New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 89; MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: Deficit of Truth in Mass Media and Its Consequence for Political and International Sphere. In PETRANOVA, D., MAGÁL, S. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media. Media Farm – Totems and Taboo. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2015, p. 105; POSTMAN, N.: *Ubažiť se k smrti. Veřejná komunikace ve věku zbabav*. Prague: Mladá fronta, 2010, p. 125-126; FOGHT MIKKELSEN, J.: Communication Ethics and the Receiver. Contribution to an Ethic of Strategic Mass Communication. In *MediaKultur. Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 2017, Vol. 33, No. 63, p. 93; SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Moc a pravda v podmienkach Rozhlasu a televízie Slovenska*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2018, p. 74. See more on “fake news” in: ZARYAN, S.: *Truth and Trust: How Audiences Are Making Sense of Fake News*. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=8906886&fileId=8917210>>.

14 Various media offer us inconsistent information in large numbers in parallel. The time for their perception, evaluation of their relevance and truthfulness, is significantly shortened. We have to say that the great question is related to the way of their successful perception and processing (and our ability to do so). The multitasking strategy we put forward in this context presents some risks and problems, particularly in the field of knowledge and education. See more: RANKOV, P.: Media Multitasking as Perception Strategy. In *Communication Today*, 2013, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 23-30; 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. 5-15; GÁLIK, S.: Influence of Cyberspace on Changes in Contemporary Education. In *Communication Today*, 2017, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 31-38.

epistemologically requires to be corresponding with reality. In this perspective, any description of a matter should ‘mirror’ reality, represent the real conditions.¹⁵ A. Modrzejewski states that the correspondence theory of truth accepts that the objective truth does indeed exist. In relation to this truth, the theory also describes two terms that are sometimes wrongly understood to be synonyms – “incorrectness” and “falsity”. The theory in question incorporates a constant search for the (universal, absolute) truth. Our key (intellectual) ambition is to come close to the truth, to find it. This approach is open to criticism, based on the ability to verify our own ideas and readiness to change them if they are proven false.¹⁶ Naïve realism is then based on a simple and absolute distinction between the truth and incorrectness, or the truth and lie.¹⁷

There are also other related terms to mention here; for example, “integration”, “objectivity”, “fiction” and, of course, “fact”. Talking about “fact”, by definition it represents all that is happening – reality. As N. Vrabec explains, facts represent the state of affairs guaranteed by empirical knowledge or evidence.¹⁸ Exact scientific and research rationality defines that we believe something is a fact until it is discovered as a false statement. Facts are understood to be truthful until they are proven to be false or ‘defeated’ (*bruta facta*).¹⁹ However, we need to add that any fact, especially one that spreads throughout society, also involves a moment of interpretation. A fact, as L. Šefčák remarks, is not a matter for itself, but something that can be an object of closer inspection. It is a reflection of what is really happening. However, our brain does not interpret this event in its original, pure form.²⁰ We can state that we employ a constructive approach here as we try to process and absorb it,²¹ but we also need to clarify that such reflections are not simple copies, fragments of reality or subjective constructs that are independent from extra linguistic reality, even though they are somehow linked to this reality.²²

Without a further look into the correspondence approach to what is true, we state that this approach is related to the ‘traditional’ journalistic understanding of the truth, i.e. the media truth that media professionals, especially journalists, offer on a daily basis. Let us have a closer look at the nature of this truth in the context of media professionals – journalists – and their work routines.

On the Nature of the Truth in the Context of Knowledge and Practice of Media Professionals

To inform truthfully,²³ in a reality-correspondent manner, means for professional journalists, regardless of their different affiliations with the old and new media forms, to simply reflect reality. The best scenario is to

make sure that news or reported information describes a given situation adequately. For media professionals, journalists, the correct way of doing this is by referring to objective facts. When we speak of the media content, then we speak about social facts that need to be correct. L. Šefčák and M. Hysko point out that the importance of truthfulness in media coverage is a principal requirement.²⁴ In order for journalism to inform correctly, it should not forget the delicate process of searching for facts and their consequent verification.

In the professional world of journalism, correctness of media products (contents) is closely bound with fact verification based on at least two independent information sources.²⁵ It is a general rule in professional journalism that information quality (or truthfulness and objectivity of information and news) can be and needs to be proven empirically – if possible. Journalists thus verify facts and information by doing ‘fieldwork’; we should mention here that digital media have introduced certain differences in journalistic fieldwork, too.

Given the previous statements, it seems that the journalistic practice follows traditional requirements associated with scientific knowledge and that correctness in journalism is similar or even identical with scientific truth, the more so if we speak about the principal condition – verification.²⁶ B. Seilerová and V. Seiler, along with P. M. Lings, a renowned journalist writing for Austrian newspapers, say that every proper journalist follows Popper’s principle of falsification.²⁷ Yet, does the world of journalists, media professionals, incorporate the sort of truth that is brought by traditional scientific or epistemological rationality?

Do notice here that even with extremely laborious effort of journalists, the truth is and always will be subjective.²⁸ A journalist, just like any other common person, is influenced by their own experience and knowledge. ‘Learning the truth’ is inevitably subjective, because it is bound by subjective testimony of senses and subjective power of common sense.²⁹ Furthermore, a journalist, in fact, creates the truth, constructs it by judging. Every time we comment a fact, we also interpret it.³⁰ Therefore, the journalistic truth does not establish a simple link between a situation and corresponding words. In a broader context, the journalistic truth implies an interpretation effort that has, according to A. Sámelová, as many shapes as many people are employed plus combinations and variations of the number.³¹ The so-called facts serve to inform to a certain degree, which, as it seems, depends on the situation and state of recipients. They inform relatively independently from the informer or from their choice of words and often do not respect their goals and needs – sometimes they even work against the informer and their goals. They therefore act objectively, as L. Šefčák and M. Hysko observe.³² This does not really mean they are not independent from the way they are interpreted and presented by journalists. A. Hermida follows Brennen and points out that it is actually difficult to determine whether something is a fact as it (often) depends on how it is to be understood.³³ Then the journalistic truth, together with its varying interpretation character, will be characterised also by disharmony and conflict of opinions: What is true for one person might be untrue or even a lie for another person.³⁴ Let us not forget here

15 As A. J. Clark explains, this way of defining the truth reminds us that “there is a relation between what we say about the world and some reality”. See: CLARK, J. A.: Digital Diversity and Education: Some Philosophical Problems. In *Computers in New Zealand Schools: Learning, Teaching, Technology*, 2011, Vol. 23, No. 2, p. 119.

16 See: MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: Deficit of Truth in Mass Media and Its Consequence for Political and International Sphere. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MAGÁL, S. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media. Media Farm – Totems and Taboo. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2015, p. 99.

17 As the author notices, the so-called correspondence theory of truth has ethical implications. Truth is both an epistemological and ethical category, error is exclusively epistemological and lie is an ethical category. The term “error” is ethically neutral, but can cause a moral consequence. Lie is a moral wrongdoing since it means conscious spreading of incorrect information. See: MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: Deficit of Truth in Mass Media and Its Consequence for Political and International Sphere. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MAGÁL, S. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media. Media Farm – Totems and Taboo. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2015, p. 99.

18 See: VRABEC, N.: Rozlišovanie faktov a názorov v kontexte rozvoja mediálnej gramotnosti. In PETRANOVÁ, D., SOLÍK, M., RADOŠINSKÁ, J. (eds.): *Megatrendy a médiá. Kritika v médiách, kritika médií I. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2016, p. 201.

19 See: BROŽ, P.: Dynamická konštrukcia duchovného subjektu. In BYSTRICKÝ, J. (ed.) et al.: *Mediální moderna. Studie k soudobým formám de-abstrakce a mediality*. Červený Kostelec : Pavel Mervart, 2014, p. 80-81.

20 See: ŠEFČÁK, L.: O pravdivosti v novinárstve (otázka etiky alebo práva). In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 1997, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 25.

21 As V. Černík points out, a great deal of misunderstanding has been caused by inadequate distinguishing between perceiver and object; naïve realism has been built upon it. See: ČERNÍK, V.: Formovanie teórie spoločenského faktu. In *Filozofia*, 2008, Vol. 63, No. 8, p. 674.

22 V. Černík sees the solution in the fact theory, which distinguishes a constructive momentum to specify it, but also emphasises that facts are rooted in extra-linguistic reality. E. Zelenák considers this as a very attractive and generally acceptable viewpoint that takes into account the role of social scientists in research, but does not turn them into creators of fiction. Compare and see for more details: ČERNÍK, V.: Formovanie teórie spoločenského faktu. In *Filozofia*, 2008, Vol. 63, No. 8, p. 679; ZELEŇÁK, E.: Historický fakt, realizmus a konštruktivizmus. In *Filozofia*, 2009, Vol. 64, No. 7, p. 625.

23 See, for example, in a personalistic perspective: MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: The Personalistic Aspect of Truth and Dialog in the Context of Karol Wojtyła’s Philosophy: John Paul II.’s Ethics of Media. In *Communication Today*, 2016, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 4-16.

24 As Šefčák states, Hysko believes that informing through incorrect fact assessment is better than mystification of the facts. See: ŠEFČÁK, L.: O pravdivosti v novinárstve (otázka etiky alebo práva). In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 1997, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 25.

25 VRABEC, N.: Rozlišovanie faktov a názorov v kontexte rozvoja mediálnej gramotnosti. In PETRANOVÁ, D., SOLÍK, M., RADOŠINSKÁ, J. (eds.): *Megatrendy a médiá. Kritika v médiách, kritika médií I. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2016, p. 202.

26 See more on condition or procedure verification (concerning social media, especially Twitter) in, for example: HERMIDA, A.: Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a Discipline of Collaborative Verification. In *Journalism Practice*, 2012, Vol. 6, No. 5, p. 1-14. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263119113_Tweets_and_Truth_Journalism_as_a_discipline_of_collaborative_verification>.

27 See: SEILEROVÁ, B., SEILER, V.: *Človek, masmédiá, realita. K filozofickému media turn*. Bratislava : Iris, 2008, p. 24.

28 Many social scientists who study media deal with the concept of objectivity. How and to what extent can media grasp objective reality? The problem is, as J. P. Shoemaker, D. S. Reese and other authors explain, that an objective spectator does not exist; we all use our experience, personality and knowledge to interpret what we see, hear or read. See: SHOEMAKER, J. P., REESE, D. S.: *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content*. New York : Longman, 1996, p. 4.

29 See: ŠEFČÁK, L.: O pravdivosti v novinárstve (otázka etiky alebo práva). In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 1997, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 25.

30 See: ŠEFČÁK, L.: O pravdivosti v novinárstve (otázka etiky alebo práva). In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 1997, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 24.

31 See: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávných médií. (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava : Comenius University, 2016, p. 84.

32 See: ŠEFČÁK, L.: O pravdivosti v novinárstve (otázka etiky alebo práva). In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 1997, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 24, 25, 32.

33 See: HERMIDA, A.: Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a Discipline of Collaborative Verification. In *Journalism Practice*, 2012, Vol. 6, No. 5, p. 8. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263119113_Tweets_and_Truth_Journalism_as_a_discipline_of_collaborative_verification>.

34 See and compare: ŠEFČÁK, L.: O pravdivosti v novinárstve (otázka etiky alebo práva). In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 1997, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 23, 27, 32; SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávných médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava : Comenius University, 2016, p. 84.

that the process of distinguishing what a fact or journalistic truth is, has traditionally been determined inside editorial offices. If there is information that is in conflict with something else, it is the journalists who decide what will be published.³⁵ The journalistic truth is therefore intersubjective and collective. It becomes a matter of mutual agreement in the newsroom (internal point of view) and broader social consensus.³⁶

As A. V. Pereira and J. C. Correia note, journalistic informing is (given its structural nature) a narrative and reflects the world. Journalists articulate what they see in the social sphere, referring to the stable system of social values and norms.³⁷ Thus, they bring to the spotlight what society feels, or rather what people want to feel, hear, see, etc. Information that is published as factual is, in fact, a media representation of what recipients want to understand.³⁸ The truth in mass media is therefore influenced by what society allows journalists to say; it consists of what we put in it and what we accept. This truth is then given a variety of contemporary qualifiers that reflect society's current viewpoint of what is understood to be objective, independent, unbiased and balanced.³⁹ We certainly need to mention that the journalistic truth is purely a social construct that has its own commercial objectives. Certain information or news might be manipulated to serve a specific purpose or interest, including the financial one. Such information may as well be a commercial product – for example, a shocking piece of information may be more beneficial in terms of media business than truthful.⁴⁰

In the context of what we have already said, it is obvious that the published journalistic truth or media truth is not based on precise and objective facts; it is not unbiased and independent. It is always influenced by interpretation, as A. Sámelová points out.⁴¹ It is shaped by various interests, including those associated with economic imperatives. A reporter does not offer indisputable reality that is based on facts; news programmes are not independent carriers of objective information. Even though journalists, as they say, refer to facts or validity of facts, mediated information and news – a professional journalistic output – is not based on objective facts that reflect reality which cannot be questioned. A. Modrzejewski even finds it surprising that recipients of mediated news take this news as objective truth.⁴² V. Semir also notices that many people normally understand newspapers, radio and television to be 'fountains of truth' and think that their existence is independent;⁴³ they believe that if something has been published, advertised or announced, it is fully objective. News

35 See: HERMIDA, A.: Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a Discipline of Collaborative Verification. In *Journalism Practice*, 2012, Vol. 6, No. 5, p. 8. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263119113_Tweets_and_Truth_Journalism_as_a_discipline_of_collaborative_verification>.

36 It is perhaps possible for journalists to come close to the truth similarly to what we can see in social practice – through constant confrontation of varying opinions, as Šefčák points out. Moreover, Modrzejewski believes we talk about reduction of objectivity (and objective truth) to intersubjectivity. On the other hand, we need to add that an editorial office's standpoint is a determining factor that will not accept different views. It is the value ladder of a given social system that intervenes. See: ŠEFČÁK, L.: O pravdivosti v novinárstve (otázka etiky alebo práva). In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 1997, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 25-26, 32; MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: Deficit of Truth in Mass Media and Its Consequence for Political and International Sphere. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MAGÁL, S. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media. Media Farm – Totems and Taboo. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2015, p. 105. For more details, see also: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávnych médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava : Comenius University, 2016, p. 84, 122; SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Moc a pravda v podmienkach Rozhlasu a televízie Slovenska*. Bratislava : Comenius University, 2018, p. 52-57.

37 For more details, see: PEREIRA, A. V., CORREIA, J. C.: Between Facts and News: Journalism, Common Sense Knowledge and Public Sphere. In *Estudos em Comunicação*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 313, 315. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://www.ec.ubi.pt/ec/01/pdfs/correia-joao-vizeu-alfredo-between-facts-and-news.pdf>>.

38 See and compare: GÁLIK, S.: Média a pravda. K epistemologickému problému mediálneho informovania. In GÁLIKOVÁ, S., MARCHEVSKÝ, O., ŠPIRKO, D. (eds.): *Pravda. Teoretické a praktické kontexty*. Bratislava : SFZ pri SAV, 2018, p. 165-166; SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125.

39 See: ŠEFČÁK, L.: O pravdivosti v novinárstve (otázka etiky alebo práva). In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 1997, Vol. 40, No. 1, p. 25-26, 32; SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávnych médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava : Comenius University, 2016, p. 84, 122. For more details on the journalistic truth as a contemporary discourse, see: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Moc a pravda v podmienkach Rozhlasu a televízie Slovenska*. Bratislava : Comenius University, 2018, p. 123-133.

40 See and compare: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávnych médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava : Comenius University, 2016, p. 84, 122; SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125; MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: Deficit of Truth in Mass Media and Its Consequence for Political and International Sphere. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MAGÁL, S. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media. Media Farm – Totems and Taboo. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2015, p. 105-106.

41 See: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávnych médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava : Comenius University, 2016, p. 82, 84, 122.

42 MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: Deficit of Truth in Mass Media and Its Consequence for Political and International Sphere. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MAGÁL, S. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media. Media Farm – Totems and Taboo. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2015, p. 105-106.

43 See: SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125.

and information such a person receives is taken as objective and true.⁴⁴ However, journalists themselves are prone to believe that what they publish is objectively true. Given this fact, we need to comment here that 'telling the truth' always means that people believe what they are saying is true. Adopting this perspective, T. H. Bivins, referring to M. Midgley, explains that all the experts, media professionals, need to believe in fundamental truthfulness of their announcements and correctness of information, but this commitment does not mean they are unshakeable. Awareness of the fact that there still is a possibility that something might be proven untrue is – or should be – inseparable from this commitment.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, why do we even feel that once some information is published, this exact information is to be taken as the absolute truth?

As V. Semir explains, the published media truth is 'black and white', simple and easy. This is the nature of the autonomous world of media. Media communicate sets of simple truths; for instance, via news headlines. It is necessary to say that if they are to introduce information or news, they require absolute truthfulness even though the truth that is being communicated is perhaps not as conclusive as it may seem.⁴⁶ The purpose here is to deliver news and information fast, or even instantly and in a comprehensible manner. The problem is that the media truth is supposed to serve the public; it needs to be straightforward and simple to understand.⁴⁷ We can therefore say that as recipients we believe (or tend to trust) information that is published, because this information is communicated in a simple, comprehensible, convincing way. Then we believe something like this is absolutely true and indisputable.

We presume that the tendency to trust information and news to be objective and truthful is cultivated by accepting the traditional social and cultural roles of journalists – to be spokespersons and 'guardians' of the truth in terms of public life in the society, to have control over social reality. People simply expect journalists to offer news and information (or other media content) which is truthful – journalists are (or at least used to be) public authorities. Most people take published information and news as guaranteed, approved and verified through trustworthy fact-checking procedures. Looking from the other side, at the same time we can speak of our own need to feel secure, and it seems this is something media can satisfy. As, for example, A. V. Pereira and J. C. Correia explain, it appears that media's key role is to offer something we all need – a safe space in life.⁴⁸

In terms of the media's sociocultural role and public expectations related to them, we can say that uncertainty and doubt do not constitute a solid basis for mediated news and information. Here we can notice an important difference between the nature of published journalistic information – i.e. mediated news – and the scientific truth: Doubt or uncertainty is normal in long-term scientific research and scholarly knowledge, speaking about correctness in science. Getting 'closer to the truth' is more important here than the absolute, objective truth itself. Any accepted scientific 'truth' is taken as a 'draft version' that serves as a starting point for possible new stages of research or gaining knowledge. It needs to be (and has been) constantly revised within the whole concept of continuous scientific exploration. The media-promoted truth, a promptly published black-and-white version of the truth, is completely different; it is not the same product.⁴⁹ It may seem to look similar at the given moment, but each and every time it is a product of a different 'game'. It is unrealistic to expect mediated news to be similar to science or to anticipate science-like rationality in journalism.

44 See: SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125.

45 BIVINS, H. T.: *Mixed Media: Moral Distinctions in Advertising, Public Relations, and Journalism*. Mahwah : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://pages.uoregon.edu/tbivins/stratcomweb/readings/truth-excerpt.pdf>>.

46 See SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125.

47 See and compare: SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125; PEREIRA, A. V., CORREIA, J. C.: Between Facts and News: Journalism, Common Sense Knowledge and Public Sphere. In *Estudos em Comunicação*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 315. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://www.ec.ubi.pt/ec/01/pdfs/correia-joao-vizeu-alfredo-between-facts-and-news.pdf>>.

48 See: PEREIRA, A. V., CORREIA, J. C.: Between Facts and News: Journalism, Common Sense Knowledge and Public Sphere. In *Estudos em Comunicação*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 309. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://www.ec.ubi.pt/ec/01/pdfs/correia-joao-vizeu-alfredo-between-facts-and-news.pdf>>.

49 For example, scientific information is meant to be for experts in a certain field – it is esoteric, while media-provided information is meant to be for the general public – it is exoteric. See and compare: SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125-126; PEREIRA, A. V., CORREIA, J. C.: Between Facts and News: Journalism, Common Sense Knowledge and Public Sphere. In *Estudos em Comunicação*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 313. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://www.ec.ubi.pt/ec/01/pdfs/correia-joao-vizeu-alfredo-between-facts-and-news.pdf>>.

We may state here that epistemological or scientific precision is not accepted in media; it cannot be.⁵⁰ We should not approach truthful information disseminated by mass media epistemologically, but preferably pragmatically, as an affirmation of social order, accepted social behaviour, understanding of values, norms and symbols present in a given culture. The role of media – and journalism in particular – is to describe, stabilise and protect social system along with all its values and norms, explain social life didactically and create a safe space for us.⁵¹ S. Gálik remarks that media-provided information that corresponds with belief in certain values pragmatically serves this purpose. It is more important to inform than to inform truthfully in a strictly epistemological manner. Mediated information is simply true if it explains what is (consensually) needed and beneficial for society, so it is primarily not directed to be valuable epistemologically (with a 100 per cent truth-value).⁵²

Media-disseminated information is not representative; mass media do not represent reality and they certainly do not reflect reality. They do not offer a mirror image of reality. Media simply do not communicate reality, they rather create it. They make their own versions of reality rather than inform about objective reality, communicating constructed truths.⁵³ A media reality is an internal correlate of system operations, explains N. Luhmann: “*It is printed and broadcast. It is read. It is received...*”⁵⁴ It is clear, however, that media reality depends not only on the nature of media themselves, but also on routines that are common in these media. V. Semir explains that “*the media world sets its own norms, images, language, and truths*”.⁵⁵ It corresponds with personal rationality; we are speaking about a specific ‘regime’, i.e. about a ‘game’.

In our everyday life, we commonly ask whether what media communicate is true or not.⁵⁶ It is relevant to say that mass media and their world and habits with specific ‘rules of the game’ can offer only more or less lifelike images of everyday reality, but not its objective and complete descriptions.⁵⁷ Together with M. Charvát, we can point out that even though their reality and truth is broadcast live or offers latest information, it still creates just an illusion of our full immersion. These images neutralise our unique world full of events and replace it with a multitude of versions of the media worlds that are homogeneous and linked to each other.⁵⁸ As the professional practice and truth of mass media do not represent the one and only media world, we will concentrate on the media world and media truths related to digital media, in other words to the Internet and the ways common people approach it in terms of information dissemination.⁵⁹

50 See: SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125.

51 As Pereira and Corcía point out in this context, media construct a mutual view of meaning and consensual structure of society, or consensus that allows certain conflicts without dismantling the central system of values. See: PEREIRA, A. V., CORREIA, J. C.: Between Facts and News: Journalism, Common Sense Knowledge and Public Sphere. In *Estudos em Comunicação*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 309. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://www.ec.ubi.pt/ec/01/pdfs/correia-joao-vizeu-alfredo-between-facts-and-news.pdf>>.

52 See and compare: GÁLIK, S.: Média a pravda. K epistemologickému problému mediálneho informovania. In GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S., MARCHEVSKÝ, O., ŠPIRKO, D. (eds.): *Pravda. Teoretické a praktické kontexty*. Bratislava: SFZ pri SAV, 2018, p. 165-166; GÁLIK, S.: On Ontological Definition of Media Truth and the Role of Media. In *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 2019, Vol. 15, No. 1, p. 1-8.

53 See and compare: MODRZEJEWSKI, A.: Deficit of Truth in Mass Media and Its Consequence for Political and International Sphere. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MACÁL, S. (eds.): *Megatrends and Media. Media Farm – Totems and Taboo. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2015, p. 106; PEREIRA, A. V., CORREIA, J. C.: Between Facts and News: Journalism, Common Sense Knowledge and Public Sphere. In *Estudos em Comunicação*, 2007, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 312, 316. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://www.ec.ubi.pt/ec/01/pdfs/correia-joao-vizeu-alfredo-between-facts-and-news.pdf>>; SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125; LUHMANN, N.: Vydělení jako zdvojení reality. In BYSTRICKÝ, J. (ed.) et al.: *Mediální moderna. Studie k soudobým formám de-abstrakce a mediality*. Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2014, p. 139-150.

54 LUHMANN, N.: Vydělení jako zdvojení reality. In BYSTRICKÝ, J. (ed.) et al.: *Mediální moderna. Studie k soudobým formám de-abstrakce a mediality*. Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2014, p. 142, 147.

55 SEMIR, V.: Scientific Journalism: Problems and Perspectives. In *International Microbiology*, 2000, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 125.

56 See and compare: LUHMANN, N.: Vydělení jako zdvojení reality. In BYSTRICKÝ, J. (ed.) et al.: *Mediální moderna. Studie k soudobým formám de-abstrakce a mediality*. Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2014, p. 144.

57 See: ZARYAN, S.: *Truth and Trust: How Audiences Are Making Sense of Fake News*. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=8906886&fileId=8917210>>.

58 See: CHARVÁT, M.: *O nových médiích, modularitě a simulaci*. Prague: Togga, 2017, p. 167-168.

59 We have spoken about the truth in the context of new media (or the Internet) also in other articles. In this article, we partially continue in these critical discussions. See: GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Nové médiá a pravda (K vybraným aspektom problému pravdy v kontexte mediácie a mediatickej nášho života). In GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S., MARCHEVSKÝ, O., ŠPIRKO, D. (eds.): *Pravda. Teoretické a praktické kontexty*. Bratislava: SFZ pri SAV, 2018, p. 174-180; GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Nové médiá, pravda a realita. In BUČKOVÁ, Z., RUSŇÁKOVÁ, L., RYBANSKÝ, R., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrendy a médiá. Realita & mediálne bubliny. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2018, p. 6-17.

The Truth on the Internet in the Context of Communication Practices of Media Amateurs, Civic Journalists and Common People

It is valid to say that new media, especially the Internet, are becoming more and more important. Without them, our social and personal life would be unimaginable, as well as many aspects of our contemporary culture. The Internet helps us fulfil our information and communication needs. As J. Višňovský emphasises, technologies associated with digital media bring new forms of (mass) communication; they introduce various platforms for publishing information, searching for information, processing information and information storage.⁶⁰

Regarding mediated news or information available on the Internet, it is continuously created by professional online journalists,⁶¹ as well as other users – those who use social networks, bloggers and different authors. In the Internet ‘ecosystem’, they distribute information via *Facebook*, *Twitter*, specialised weblogs or other communication channels.⁶² Anybody who can access the Internet can also become an author, editor or distributor of not only articles that may or may not be their own, but also sounds and images – both static and moving. These multimedia forms have become a proper source of information on the Internet. The majority of these authors are not professional journalists, but rather amateur journalists, bloggers, vloggers and ‘netizens’, even people with no previous experience related to systematic information dissemination.⁶³

We can notice that the Internet is full of constantly emerging information that cannot be controlled by anybody or anything. Amateur journalists and common people are absolutely free to publish whatever they want and whenever they want; they can be biased, they may inform disproportionately, they can say things that are partially untrue, and they can even lie.⁶⁴ While professional journalists try to present the current events following some strictly given rules and hierarchy, *Twitter* and other social media platforms are shared media services where news and unrelated messages often merge without any given layout or organisation pattern. We can say that they represent raw, unrefined journalism that professionals and recipients cannot influence, at least not directly. Thus, we can be confronted with contradicting news, assumptions, speculations that need to be verified through interactions in a reduced cycle.⁶⁵

It is obvious that Internet communication can spread false information and fake news, but also trustworthy information. It can be used to publish trivial information or lies, but it can also help reveal reality, inform about something important that has not been discussed properly, at least not yet.⁶⁶ The nature of digital information does not automatically include its correctness.⁶⁷ J. A. Clark is right to warn us, pointing out that the Internet surely offers almost infinite sources of topics generated by the *Google* search engine,

60 See: VIŠŇOVSKÝ, J.: *Aktuálne otázky teórie a praxe žurnalistiky v ére internetu*. Trnava: FMK UCM, 2015, p. 34.

61 See, for example: MUDRA, I. M.: Blogs as a Possibility to Express Yourself for Journalist. In *Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie)*, 2018, Vol. 58, No. 4, p. 119-129.

62 See: GARCÍA AVILÉS, J. A.: Online Newsrooms as Communities of Practice: Exploring Digital Journalists’ Applied Ethics. In *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality*, 2014, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 258.

63 It is obvious that if amateurs and common people take part in publishing media content, creating, storing and spreading texts, sounds and images is no more a privilege possessed only by professional journalists. Furthermore, it is difficult to say who is a journalist or a media professional in the context of the Internet. See: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávných médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2016, p. 114-115; We can say that the Internet is a digital public sphere. More about the possibilities and problems of the Internet media as a public sphere can be found in: PARNES, J.: Internet Media as the Digital Public Sphere: Possibilities and Problems. In *Central European Journal of Communication*, 2016, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 90-103.

64 See: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávných médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2016, p. 113, 115.

65 See: HERMIDA, A.: Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a Discipline of Collaborative Verification. In *Journalism Practice*, 2012, Vol. 6, No. 5, p. 8-9. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263119113_Tweets_and_Truth_Journalism_as_a_discipline_of_collaborative_verification>.

66 See: GRAHAM, G.: *The Internet: A Philosophical Inquiry*. London, New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 94.

67 As Graham points out, “digital information” can be misleading but also “truthful”. See: GRAHAM, G.: *The Internet: A Philosophical Inquiry*. London, New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 89.

but it does not deal with their correctness and reliability. The well-known saying “Buyer, be aware!” seems to be really universal here.⁶⁸ In this context G. Graham notes that we know enough about the Internet to doubt its information value.⁶⁹ It seems to be a vague and insufficient platform to be used as a source of correct information or a publishing platform carrying such information.⁷⁰

It appears that collective and intersubjective communication practices placed in the context of specific features of the Internet (or the technological possibilities of the Internet itself) influence the epistemological relevance and truthfulness of media content available online. If we are unsatisfied with the state of the Internet content – the more so if we are looking for the truth on the Internet –, we may find it promising to know that there is some effort to find a mechanism to improve the Internet’s credibility or truthfulness of its multimedia content. As we can see in K. Frost Arnold’s work, the proposed solutions are both strict mechanisms, which will ensure responsibility, and pro-socially oriented mechanisms that will hopefully bring better results.⁷¹ However, P. Rankov points out that the effort to ensure relevant and high quality information on the Internet is practically fruitless as the general criteria are very vague and any endeavour to apply them feels almost like a frustrated attempt to impose censorship.⁷²

In relation to what has already been said, we may find out that as the Internet offers a possibility for non-professionals to participate in public information dissemination, work and sociocultural roles of media professionals (especially those working for ‘traditional’ media organisations) are greatly influenced as well – moreover, they are openly questioned. A. García Avilés notices that this participation of non-professionals challenges the traditional sociocultural justification of journalistic processing, screening, filtering and distribution of media content.⁷³ The fundamental problem here seems to lie in the fact that shared social media platforms are in a direct conflict with what can be identified as “*signification, symbols and symbol systems, ideologies, rituals and customs that help journalists preserve their cultural authority as public affair commentators*”, as B. Zelizer and A. Hermida note. A. Hermida also points out that it is obvious that with journalism switching to digital media and the Internet comes also tension.⁷⁴ In addition, A. García Avilés speaks about the tension amongst ‘traditional’ (professional) journalists who are aware of the fact that their monopoly for commenting social events and disseminating news is in danger.⁷⁵ It seems the new kinds of media, websites, blogs and vlogs have started the process of de-journalism of journalism,⁷⁶ and can therefore change the social role of journalists.⁷⁷

We need to conclude here that questioning the work routines and sociocultural role of media professionals inevitably challenges the traditional understanding of the truth in media or the truth in journalism. As D. Bebić and M. Volarević say, “*EBU Media Intelligence Service 2018 report confirms the allegation that the truth is becoming more and more difficult to define and that it is increasingly more difficult to achieve trust in the new media environment.*”⁷⁸ Similarly, A. Sámelová believes that with general accessibility

of the Internet and therefore Internet-based services comes multiplication of explanations of what the truth in media is, how to understand it, define it and find it.⁷⁹ It seems that the (public) intersubjective activities on the Internet, especially the new collective communication practices of social media users, generate a different view of the truth in the context of media (Internet) reality.

It appears that the Internet (or any shared social media platform available online) determines a new and specific *modus* of the media truth. But what kind of *modus* exactly? A. Sámelová speaks of the ‘online’ truth. As she states, this ‘truth’, published and updated online (for example, blogs, social networks and similar contents), is spread within space and time in a seemingly attractive, but opaque pile of chronologies, topics and statuses. It does not offer a coherent story; it is diversified into chaotic fragments, often with no context, which constantly emerge and vanish without any conclusion. It is an event with no clear beginning or end; it is not something that can, at a given time, be ‘truthfully’ informed about. Instead, it is ‘fluid’ and elusive. It cannot be verified and it is impossible to say how many people believe or do not believe it, but the ‘likes and dislikes’ given by Internet users can indicate how people perceive it. This ‘truth’ embodies a new phenomenon of mass communication in the fluid present time that cannot be grasped, shaped or balanced because there are no clues as to what needs to be balanced, when and where. Moreover, this Internet-disseminated mass is impossible to silence via traditional tools, procedures and communication techniques. Having this property, it presents a certain danger – a possible social collapse.⁸⁰

Looking back to the epistemological aspect, we can, together with C. Lankshear et al., speak of a “new truth mode” that is constructed online by Internet users. In the context of Internet media reality, the truth is produced – it is a matter of how efficient the very procedure of production or dissemination of information (based on various sources) is.⁸¹ Our practice in the context of our activity on the Internet therefore does not mean ‘revealing’ the truth, but permanently constructing it. The hyperreal Internet world does not possess the truth that could be looked for, uncovered or learnt.⁸² However, this does not testify that the truth or knowledge of something that circulates as information does not exist. It might only mean that in this case we cannot speak of the truth in the traditional sense of the word.⁸³

Notice here that the Internet is a colourful world of contradicting information where each fragment links towards another fragment and where we are only shown what we need (and decide) to see or learn. This Internet reality is always freshly constructed and tuned to fit our understanding, and repeatedly. It comes as if it was ordered to be in harmony with our point of view, our will and choice. However, by choosing some options, we suppress or exclude other possibilities. In this context our sense of reality is degraded, our contact with reality is efficiently eliminated.⁸⁴ Without this, the traditional distinctions between truth and lie, truth and illusion, truth and fiction are weakened. We may state here that under the influence of our communication practices and the power of processes that introduce this routine, these two opposing sides cancel each other and confusion takes place.

What we have said above has a radical influence on the existing understanding of truth, objectivity, knowledge of what is a lie, illusion or fiction. Digital media influence our understanding of the media truth and

68 See: CLARK, J. A.: Digital Diversity and Education: Some Philosophical Problems. In *Computers in New Zealand Schools: Learning, Teaching, Technology*, 2011, Vol. 23, No. 2, p. 118-120.

69 See: GRAHAM, G.: *The Internet: A Philosophical Inquiry*. London, New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 94.

70 See: FROST ARNOLD, K.: *Trustworthiness and Truth: The Epistemic Pitfalls of Internet Accountability*. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e2cb/be9b74d262e1aaef846f58f55c0ca4b4a183.pdf>>.

71 See: FROST ARNOLD, K.: *Trustworthiness and Truth: The Epistemic Pitfalls of Internet Accountability*. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e2cb/be9b74d262e1aaef846f58f55c0ca4b4a183.pdf>>.

72 See: RANKOV, P.: *Informačná spoločnosť – Perspektívy, problémy, paradoxy*. Levice: LCA Publisher Group, 2006, p. 143.

73 See: GARCÍA AVILÉS, J. A.: Online Newsrooms as Communities of Practice: Exploring Digital Journalists’ Applied Ethics. In *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality*, 2014, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 258-259.

74 See: HERMIDA, A.: Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a Discipline of Collaborative Verification. In *Journalism Practice*, 2012, Vol. 6, No. 5, p. 8. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263119113_Tweets_and_Truth_Journalism_as_a_discipline_of_collaborative_verification>.

75 See: GARCÍA AVILÉS, J. A.: Online Newsrooms as Communities of Practice: Exploring Digital Journalists’ Applied Ethics. In *Journal of Mass Media Ethics: Exploring Questions of Media Morality*, 2014, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 259.

76 See: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávných médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2016, p. 113.

77 See: HERMIDA, A.: Tweets and Truth: Journalism as a Discipline of Collaborative Verification. In *Journalism Practice*, 2012, Vol. 6, No. 5, p. 9. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263119113_Tweets_and_Truth_Journalism_as_a_discipline_of_collaborative_verification>.

78 BEBIĆ, D., VOLAREVIĆ, M.: New Problems, Old Solutions? A Critical Look on the Report of High Level Expert Group on Fake News and On-line Disinformation. In *Medijske studije (Media Studies)*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 17, p. 109.

79 See: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávných médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2016, p. 112. To find out more on “de-journalism”, see: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Moc a pravda v podmienkach Rozhlasu a televízie Slovenska*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2018, p. 27.

80 See in more detail: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávných médií (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2016, p. 112-113, 115-116; SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Moc a pravda v podmienkach Rozhlasu a televízie Slovenska*. Bratislava: Comenius University, 2018, p. 110-111.

81 See: LANKSHEAR, C., PETERS, M., KNOBEL, M.: Information, Knowledge and Learning: Some Issues Facing Epistemology and Education in a Digital Age. In *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 2000, Vol. 34, No. 1, p. 35-36. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-9752.00153>>.

82 The Internet simulates the truth and reality. See more on this: BAUDRILLARD, J.: „Praecessio Simulacrorum“. In *Host*, 1996, Vol. 12, No. 6, p. 3-28. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<http://www.egs.edu/faculty/ baudrillard/ baudrillard-simulacra-and-simulations.html>>.

83 See: LANKSHEAR, C., PETERS, M., KNOBEL, M.: Information, Knowledge and Learning: Some Issues Facing Epistemology and Education in a Digital Age. In *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 2000, Vol. 34, No. 1, p. 26. [online]. [2018-04-20]. Available at: <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-9752.00153>>.

84 See and compare: TOMAŠOVIČOVÁ, J.: Človek veku techniky. In *Filozofia*, 2004, Vol. 59, No. 8, p. 583; PAVLIČÍKOVÁ, H.: Komunikace v globalizačných procesech a mediální gramotnost. In MIHÁLIKOVÁ, I. (ed.): *Fyzika a etika VI. Komunikácia v globalizačných procesoch a zmeny v kvalite života*. Nitra: FF UKF, 2012, p. 107.

'traditional' journalistic work that strives to observe and reproduce objective reality as thoroughly as possible. All of this is being questioned in this context. The 'traditional' media truth can be rejected or given up. We agree with M. Deuze who, regarding the Internet world, states that no one has a constant and consensually approved control over reality that is, though definitely truthful, also quite alive.⁸⁵ Not even journalists who fight hard in order not to lose their prominent sociocultural role.

At this point, we wish to note that it is not just the world of the Internet (and media practices brought with it) that shape the life of late modern "homo medialis." It is also the world of 'traditional' media, in which, as T. Zasepa and P. Olekšák point out, knowing the truth ceases to be the basic or most important category. It is no longer important to know the truth; it is the information that is important for us, the very state of 'being informed'.⁸⁶ In today's information society and digital media period based on information proliferation that comes with vast choice of sources, we lose the ability to understand what it means to be well-informed in the first place.⁸⁷ Due to unhealthy information consuming, without the ability to distinguish quality of information, we become 'information consumers' that are exposed to 'information obesity'.⁸⁸ This overabundance of information usually comes hand in hand with 'info-consumerism'. Our 'info-greediness' is related to the state of being enchanted by the glamour of media. However, the images of the world that they bring are distorted. This makes a human being confused and unfree.

Is this 'info-greediness' the only quality of late modern "homo medialis" that is presently determined by the two media worlds that we can identify? We believe it is not the case. We think it is necessary to ask about a different perspective or alternative for a late modern "homo medialis", especially in terms of the media truths we experience today. The question could go like this: What standpoint does this "homo medialis" take or should take to face different versions and forms of the media truth?

Conclusions

The Internet has brought uncontrollable diffusion of our information sources, but without actually destroying its predecessors – newspapers, magazines, radio or television programmes.⁸⁹ Today, we enjoy a media world merging the 'traditional' media universe as well as the digital media environment, especially the Internet; both of these 'worlds' use their own practice to deal with information processing. As we have already mentioned, mass media are typically open to media professionals and their specific ways of disseminating information. It is a clearly defined regime, a 'game' that relates to the whole pluralistic practice of media-provided information or communication. However, the Internet, or rather its media reality, is based on the development of diverse and very specific practice established by its users and co-creators; here we speak about common people predominantly. These practices basically have their own rules and 'regimes' associated with 'telling the truth'. In this context, we can ask what standpoint does a "homo medialis" take or should take when facing different versions and forms of the media truth. What standpoints do these pluralistically shaped media worlds presently expect?

First of all, we believe that "homo medialis" needs to accept this plurality, which requires a 'non-reducing' attitude towards different media realities. This approach reflects and adopts autonomous values in various versions and shapes of media reality and truth. The standpoint of "homo medialis" then needs to accept a complex, complementary linking – a non-reducing approach to plurality of various, often contradictory versions of media reality and truth. This, we believe, requires accepting "transversal rationality"⁹⁰ that offers free movement amongst these realities.

We are convinced that it is important for "homo medialis" to be a free human being that is not prone to

85 See: DEUZE, M.: *Media Life. Život v médiách*. Prague : Karolinum, 2015, p. 46.

86 See: ZASEPA, T., OLEKŠÁK, P.: *Mediálna výchova*. Ružomberok : FF KU, 2008, p. 177.

87 See and compare: POSTMAN, N.: *Ubavit se k smrti. Veřejná komunikace ve věku zábavy*. Prague : Mladá fronta, 2010, p. 126.

88 See: DEUZE, M.: *Media Life. Život v médiách*. Prague : Karolinum, 2015, p. 180, 182.

89 See: SÁMELOVÁ, A.: *Normatívna regulácia verejnoprávnych médií. (Mravy, cenzúra a editovanie v Rozhlase a televízii Slovenska)*. Bratislava : Comenius University, 2016, p. 116.

90 See more on "transversal rationality" in: WELSCH, W.: *Naše postmoderní moderna*. Prague : Zvon 1994, p. 135-159.

rather spontaneous tendency to believe anything media claim; a person who does not accept any totalitarian version of non-complete descriptions of different matters and ideas. These usually come hand in hand with 'info-greediness', i.e. the life strategy that describes unhealthy attitude to information. The way "homo medialis" lives and seeks information represents the lost sense of what it means to be well-informed, i.e. the disability to evaluate information critically, the tendency to trust the media-communicated truth and take it as absolute and indisputable. *Ars vivendi* of the late modern "homo medialis" should, as we believe, contain and nourish certain 'counter-actions' in relation to the already mentioned tendency and weakness. These 'counter-actions' could incorporate such means as keeping distance and certain mistrust, healthy scepticism, abstinence in relation to media or information itself.⁹¹ The *ethos* of this *ars* – keeping distance – requires our continuous effort to answer the question of what the truth really is.⁹²

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91 See and compare: GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: "Modus vivendi" v kontexte digitálnych médií ako filozofický problém. In BUČKOVÁ, Z., RUSŇÁKOVÁ, L., RYBANSKÝ, R., SOLÍK, M. (eds.): *Megatrendy a médiá. Realita & mediálne bubliny. Conference Proceedings*. Trnava : FMK UCM, 2018, p. 224-246.

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