

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Theoretical and Methodological Challenges in Media Ethics and Religion

With the media playing a crucial role in how we communicate with each other and how we perceive the world, other people, and ourselves, consideration of the ethics of media practices is both necessary and valuable. This issue will focus on the interface of media ethics and religion. Religious actors are producers and consumers of media, but vice versa too, religious symbols, worldviews, and narratives are omnipresent in the media.

Ethical questions are raised whenever groups or individuals interact. Transferred to the context of the media, that tension dictates that ethical questions are located where people interact within the space of the media. Just as ethics deal with systems of norms and corresponding practices in a specific cultural context, media ethics engage with media practices, their normative regulations, values, and moral concepts within the media-specific spaces of production, representation, distribution, and consumption. Media ethics consider the characteristics, pragmatics, and effectiveness of media practices. They also reflect critically on normative systems that refer to specific practices as morally correct or objectionable.

Responsibility is undoubtedly a useful heuristic category for an exploration of morally correct actions. We can deploy the lens of responsibility in examining the key players and others concerned, concrete acts and the consequences of those acts, and finally why and to whom individuals or groups have responsibility. In an increasingly mediatized, digitalized, and globalized society, it becomes challenging to distinguish agents from those affected or to evaluate which authority is in control, to estimate the consequences of actions, and last but not least to understand what role norms and values play or should play. These questions are paradigmatic in the digital age, where the roles of producers and consumers often intersect with the space of rep-

resentation and where attribution of responsibility becomes increasingly complex.

We are looking for contributions that deal with the topic of media ethics and religion in a broad sense: case studies, historical and contemporary, that discuss media-ethical questions regarding religion are welcome, as are meta discourses about approaches to media ethics and methodological questions in media ethics.

The contributions may deal with, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- Which images of religion receive more attention, become iconic, and why? And why are they referred to more often and distributed more broadly than other images?
- What moral criteria govern the dissemination of specific images of religion? What is the role of governmental and other (e.g. religious) control in this context?
- Are there good (idealized) or bad (defaming) images of religion or religious agents/actors in the media? How might we define good and bad images of religion or religious agents/actors? What guidelines do these moral judgements follow?

We are seeking innovative scholarly discussion within a broad spectrum of case studies that includes media productions such as documentaries, fiction films, short films, drama series, and reality shows as well as material from distribution channels such as streaming platforms, webpages, and social media. Contributions from the perspective of media practitioners and professionals are also welcome.

The issue also includes an open section for articles on other topics linked to the profile of JRFM. The deadline for all submissions is 15 August 2021. Contributions of 6,000-8,000 words (including notes) should be submitted for double-blind peer review through the journal homepage www.jrfm.eu. We kindly ask authors to register and consider the instructions for submitting contributions, especially the stylesheet. Publication is scheduled for May 2022. For questions regarding this call for papers or the submission and publication process, please contact the editors of the issue, Natalie Fritz (natalie.fritz@kath.ch), Marie-Therese Mäder (Maeder@evtheol.uni-muenchen.de) or Baldassare Scolari (baldassare.scolari@icloud.com)