

Religion, media and ethics



Media is increasingly becoming instrumental in reaching out to the public. It has become a part of the social system. The power of media to influence people has been confirmed through times. The fact that many of the people's movements across the world have been triggered and catalysed by media, points towards its strength in influencing people. Taking this into account, the ethical aspect of media content becomes of high relevance. Ethics is basically an accepted tradition which determines what to be done and what not to be (Bertand, 1997). Some other terms which are used in parallel with media ethics are morality and quality control. Media ethics as such is a complex subject, as it is formulated on the basis of the concurrent culture, economy and national policies.

It has been observed by a number of researchers that the media symbolizes societal values. Slinger (1983) has mentioned a number of examples in which media comes up with advertisements which prompts the views to connect the product being advertised to societal values specific to the viewers. One important value that a person relates to is his personal beliefs and religious beliefs. It's generally considered that the popular programs in the secular media do not have religious intentions. Considering the recent development of secularizing of religious broadcasting sponsored by religious organizations, the identification of religiously persuading content becomes difficult. Programs and specifically labeled content dealt by religious media are the ones which are bracketed as of the ones which influence the public religiously. However, there are arguments that this is not the case. Mark Pinsky (2001, p. 5) observes that he ' found God, faith and spirituality in abundance on The Simpsons'. Jana Reiss (2004, p. xii) claims that Buffy the Vampire Slayer and its spin-off Angel ' are two of the most religious

programs on network TV'. These arguments suggest that cartoon programs and other popular programs may also be considered as religious.

I agree with this argument. The earlier argument that only religious media can contain religious content is based on the assumption that religion is associated with religious institutions and organizations. Schultze (1990) has argued that being religious does not mean belonging to a religion but it's a way of life with its own world view. Anything which would influence this world view thus must be considered religious persuasion. Thus there is no wonder in Pinsky finding spirituality and god in the cartoon series Simpson. My argument is that as media has the tendency to connect popular icons and media elements with societal values, the values that these icons suggests, will influence the viewer. Thus it is obvious that the world views and way of life of the viewer will get influenced by these secular programs. Connecting with the fact that religion is ones world view and way of life, it can be concluded that media and its program does religious persuasion.

References

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