YOUNG PEOPLE ATTITUDES CONCERNING THE ROMANIAN PUBLIC LIFE AND MEDIA

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Abstract: In this article, we intend to analyse the attitude that the Romanian youth has in regard to the public space and the mass media of contemporary Romania. The analysis is separated into two main parts which are dealt with comparatively for two different categories of questionnaire respondents. The first category is formed by theologians, both high school and university students, who have answered the same questionnaire that has been subsequently addressed to young people of the same age, while they were on their holiday in Costinesti, and who were studying in other fields. The results indicate that the youth, irrespective of their educational background, have the same views on the country's current politics. However, as far as the Romanian media is concerned, it was mainly the theologians, not the students of other disciplines, who considered that this is more inclined towards manipulating the masses and promoting violence and vulgarity.

Keywords: mass media, word, public space, political life

Word, communication, communion

Referring to the role of the word in man's life means going beyond its significance, by ananlysing the way in which it preserves throughout the years the meaning of the Latin *convenio, -ire, -veni, -ventum*, which was at its origin. *To come together, to get together, to reunite, to agree, to concord*[1] represent the multitude of facets which reflect partly and altogether, the resaon why man was endowed with the gift to utter words: *"The Holy Fathers of the ecumenical Church considered that man is made - by his Maker – capable of eternal life, through the fact that he is created as a speaking creature"*[2].

A thorough analysis of the origins of words is to be found in the writings of Saint Basil the Great (IVth century), who presents the difference between the word which is uttered and the one which is spoken: *"There is one word which is uttered with the help of the voice and which, after it was pronounced vanishes in the air; and there is a different inner word, which exist in our hearts, the conceptual word"*[3]. This concept is essential in psychology, it was developed in the XXIst century, and according to it man thinks through words and images, so that the universe of thinking at a personal level is given by the number of known words and by the number of images stored in memory.

Human communication is constructed by exploiting two types of relations: direct relations (interpersonal communication) and indirect relations (mediated communication). Initiated in the XVth century, through the appearance of printing, mediated communication

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[1] online Latin-Romanian dictionnary, www.limbalatina.ro
[2] Nicolae Dura, *Propovăduirea cuvântului şi Sfintele Taine. Valoarea lor în lucrarea de mântuire*, Bucureşti, Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Publishing House, 1998, p.24.
[3] St. Basilthe Great, *Omilia a XVI-a. La cuvintele: La început era Cuvântul*, in "Scrieri", first part, translated by D. Fecioru, Bucureşti, Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Publishing House, 1986, p.516.

was encouraged by the progress of science and technology, and this determined the appearance of mass media, whose main purpose was to broadcast information[4].

Beyond the information received through words, there is also the energy which is transmitted, positive or negative, which has the capacity to move the inner sources of the human person. Hence, there exists man's need for the word, firstly for the one which brings eternal life, but also for words which have the energy to bind people and to change communication into communion.

The Youth's relation to the romanian public space and mass-media

Even if in the context of the development of the social network websites there has been a deflation of the youth's interest in using the means of communication generically called mass-media, these remain the main source of information and entertainment for most of the high school and university students, but also a source of models with strong influences at a cognitive, affective and behaviour level.

From an educational point of view, the influence of mass-media on personality cannot be eluded. When the passage is made from the stage of conscious acceptance of the influence of a message to that of assumption and assimilation of values/nonvalues promoted by it, through the dispersal in the values of one's own person, we refer to the affectation of the human personality by mass-media[5].

The capacity to change convictions, feelings and behaviours makes these media an important educational factor, especially in the period of formation of students'personality. This is the main reason for doing this research on a sample of high school and university theological students. In choosing this sample, we started from the urge addressed by St. Basil the Great to the youth to receive in a critical way and with discernment the information coming from other sources of information than the Revelation: *" after the manner of bees must we use these writings, for the bees do not visit all the flowers without discrimination, nor indeed do they seek to carry away entire those upon which they light, but rather, having taken so much as is adapted to their needs, they let the rest go. So we, if wise, shall take from heathen books whatever befits us and is allied to the truth, and shall pass over the rest. And just as in culling roses we avoid the thorns, from such writings as these we will gather everything useful, and guard against the noxious"*[6].

The sample we questionned is made of 315 young people who study in the theological schools in the county of Alba Iulia: "Saint Simion Ştefan" Orthodox Theological High School, theology and philology classes (51, 4%), respectively the Orthodox Theology Faculty in Alba Iulia (48, 6%). The distribution according to gender is in favour of the boys (54%), compared to the girls (46%), given the fact that the theological university studies for the pastoral theology specialty are attended mainly by boys and last for 4 years, whereas at the social work specialty the majority is represented by girls and these studies last only 3 years. Out of the whole sample, 41, 6% of the respondents live in the rural area, and 58, 1%

[4] Monica Opriş, *Educaţia morală şi educaţia religioasă în şcoală*, Cluj-Napoca, Eikon Publishing House, 2011, pp.199-202.
[5] Mihai Coman, *Introducere în sistemul mass-media*, Iaşi, Polirom Publishing House, 1999.
[6] St. Basil the Great, *Omilia către tineri*, in *Scrieri*, part I, Bucureşti, Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Publishing House, 1986, pp.569-570.

in the urban area. These data are not representative at a national level for the distribution according to place of residence, but are representative for theological schools, especially the high school level, where the philology specialty is attended by a greater percentage of students from the urban area than students from the rural area.

In the present study we will analyse two items taken over from the questionnaire administered by the Association Euro<26 Romania in the summer of 2009, to a sample of 5000 young people below 26 who were on holiday at the seaside in Costineşti.

The first item was the question: "How do you find the Romanian public space and media?" and it contained seven options for answers, out of which the respondents could choose only one. The data were presented synthetically in table 1 for the two samples, and the ranking of answers was done according to the percentages of the high school and university theological students.

Tabelul 1: Answers to the question "How do you find the Romanian public space and media?"

Choices of answer	Theological students	Cercetarea Euro<26
Romanian media is full of tabloid journalism, based on lying, manipulation, violence, ribaldry.	39,7	22,1
A normal public space, with good and bad.	23,8	24,8
A public space where impostors and thieves are encouraged.	13,7	15,2
A normal press with pluses and minuses.	10,2	10
I am not interested in the Romanian media or public space.	8,3	10,3
A public space with debates based on values and principles.	2,2	5,9
A civilised and objective media.	2,2	3,4
NR	0	8,3

Starting from the data in table 1 we put forward several analyses. Three of the choices of answers refer to the public space, three refer to mass-media and one suggests a neutral answer, which highlights the lack of interest towards the two aspects. If we sum the percentages obtained for each of the two, this results in the difference for the two samples presented in figure 1.
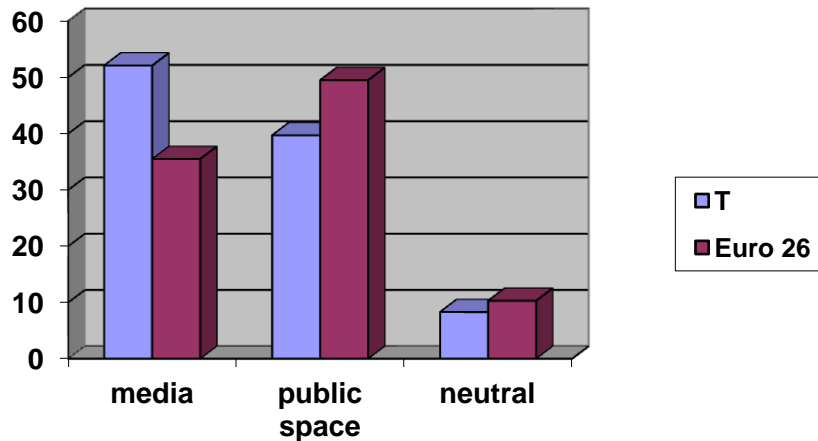
Fig.1. Diagrams of comparison for the two samples regarding the preference for one of the two aspects: Romanian media, respectively public space

On the basis of the data and of the diagrams of comparison we can affirm that the respondents in the theological milieu preferred to a greater extent to choose an answer regarding mass-media (52,1%) than the youth on holiday at the seaside (39,7%), the difference being one of over 10 percentage points. We find the same difference for the choices regarding the public space, this time in favour of the second sample. These results can be explained through the percentage of almost 40% obtained by the variant referring to Romanian media (39,7%), placed the first in the case of the theological sample, almost 15 percentage points more than the first in the Costineşti sample, referring to the Romanian public space (24,8%).

The range of percentage values for the choices is greater in the case of the sample in theological schools (a = 39, 7% − 2, 2% = 37, 5%), compared to the other sample (a = 24, 8% − 3, 4% = 21, 4%).These values reflect a greater variation of answers in the case of the theological sample.

For each of these two aspects, the item presents three choices of answer, in which the characterisation of the media and of the public space is attributed a positive and negative value, as well as a neutral answer.

In the case of the answers in the theological milieu, most of the choices regarded the negative aspects of Romanian mass-media, considered full of tabloid journalism, based on lying, manipulation, violence and ribaldry. The answers of the Costineşti sample placed first the option reflecting the existence of a normal public space with good and bad. The differences appear in three aspects: the type of choice, the type of characterisation and the percentage values.

In both samples, the two choices presented before are placed as the first two, in a reversed way, being the only ones in the list of seven which received more than 20 percentage points. Two choices which debase the public space, respectively which consider the Romanian media a normal one with good and bad, are situated between 10 and 20%. Consequently, out of the four choices, two relate in an equidistant way to the media and public space, whereas the other two debase them. The answers which attribute value to the two factors with educational influences received choices under 3%.

In the case of the sample in the theological milieu, we will make a few analyses according to the varibles chosen for the first four options, the differences according to gender being insignificant from a statistical point of view, with values under 5%: option 1) $d_{b-f} = 38,82\% - 40,68\% = -1,86\%$; option 2) $d_{b-f} = 24,11\% - 23,44\% = 0,67\%$; option 3) $d_{b-f} = 15,29\% - 11,72\% = 3,57\%$, respectively option 4) $d_{b-f} = 8,23\% - 12,41\% = -4,18\%$. The data for the first four choices of answer, according to the place of residence of students are included in table 2.

Tabelul 2: Percentage values for the first four choices of answer according to the place of residence of respondents in the theological milieu

Choices of answer	Rural	Urban	D_{r-u}
Romanian media is full of tabloid journalism, based on lying, manipulation, violence, ribaldry.	32,06	45,35	− 13,29
A normal public space, with good and bad.	29	19,67	9,33
A public space where impostors and thieves are encouraged.	15,26	12,56	2,7
A normal press with pluses and minuses.	10,2	10	− 0,46

For the first two choices of answer there are significant differences from a statistical point of view, the respondents in the urban area being more aggressive towards the Romanian media than their colleagues in the rural area. One of the explanations might be that in the urban area the interest in the analysis of the mass-media information is greater than in the rural area. The students in the rural area consider that the Romanian public space is a normal one to a greater extent than their colleagues in the urban area. Besides, the differences in the case of the theological sample from the rural area for the first two choices of answer are not significant from a statistical point of view: $d_{1-2} = 32,06\% - 29\% = 3,06\%$.

The data distributed in the two categories of respondents in the theological milieu for the first four choices of answer are in table 3.

Tabelul 3: Percentage values for the first four choices of answer
according to the category of respondents in the theological milieu

Choices of answer	Students	University students	D_{e-s}
Romanian media is full of tabloid journalism, based on lying, manipulation, violence, ribaldry.	33,95	45,75	− 11,8
A normal public space, with good and bad.	27,16	20,66	6,9
A public space where impostors and thieves are encouraged.	9,87	17,64	− 7,77
A normal press with pluses and minuses.	12,96	7,18	5,78

The results in table 3 reflect differences which are significant from a statistical point of view for all the four choices of answer. The differences in favour of high school students are to be found in the characterisation of the Romanian mass-media and public space as normal, with good and bad / with pluses and minuses, and the differences in favour of high school students (higher as percentage values) are to be found in the choices of answer which disavow the two institutions. These results reveal the development of the critical spirit over the years, the increase of the capacity to analyse, of the capacity to relate to values, to make value judgments better supported with arguments.

Another aspect in relation to the Romanian mass-media and public space has to do with the way in which the two samples characterised Romanian political life. The item presents five choices of answer, as shown in table 4.

Tabelul 4: Answers to the question "What do you think of the Romanian political life?"

Variante de răspuns	Studenți teologi	Cercetarea Euro<26
□ Corrupt, promoting non-values and lying.	51,1	47,8
□ I am not interested at all.	27	23,2
□ I am totally disappointed and I do not see any way out.	18,4	12,2
□ Normal, dynamic, progressive.	2,9	5,1
□ I am involved in a certain way in Romanian politics.	0,6	4,7
NR	0	6,9

The data in table 4 show insignificant differences from a statistical point of view in the four choices of answer between the two samples of subjects. Approximately half of the respondents consider political life to be a corrupt one, which promotes non-values and lying, and a quarter of them are not at all interested in political life. Differences greater than 5% are to be found in the case of the answer "I am totally disappointed and I do not see any way out." in favour of the sample in the theological milieu. A small percentage of respondents consider the political life a normal, dynamic and progressive one. The choice of answer referring to the involvement in political life was chosen only by two students in the theological milieu.

We will analyse the data corresponding to the three choices of answer for the sample in the theological schools, according to the place of residence (table 5), respectively according to the study level of the respondents.

Tabelul 5: Percentage values for the first three choices of answer concerning the characterisation of political life, according to the place of residence of the respondents in the theological milieu

Choices of answer	Rural	Urban	D_{r-u}
□ Corrupt, promoting non-values and lying.	44,27	55,73	− 11,46
□ I am not interested at all.	33,58	22,40	9,18

□ I am totally disappointed and I do not see any way out.	18,32	18,57	0,25

The data in table 4 reflect significant differences between the two categories of respondents in the theological milieu, for the first two choices of answer. The respondents in the urban area have a negative opinion of Romanian political life in a greater percentage (55, 73%) than their colleagues in the rural area (44, 27%). These results can be compared to the ones for the previous item in aspects related to the negative opinion of Romanian mass-media. The lack of interest for political life is greater in the case of the respondents in the rural area.

The data distributed in the two categories of respondents in the theological milieu for the three first choices of answer are presented in table 6.

Tabelul 6: Percentage values for the first four choices of answer, according to the category of respondents in the theological milieu

Choice of answer	Students	University students	D_{e-s}
□ Corrupt, promoting non-values and lying.	43,20	59,47	− 16,27
□ I am not interested at all.	34,56	18,95	15,61
□ I am totally disappointed and I do not see any way out.	19,13	17,64	1,49

The data in table 6 reflect differences over 15 percentage points between the two categories of respondents in the theological milieu, for the first two choices of answer. The difference as concerns the negative opinion of the Romanian political life is in favour of the university students and as concerns the lack of interest in it, the difference is in favour of high school students.

Conclusions

Romanian media exerts a growing influence in the public space, the effects of the promoted models being felt negatively or regarded with reserve by adolescents or young people. For high school and university students in the theological milieu, lying, manipulation, violence or ribaldry represent arguments to avoid media channels.

Compared to the sample questionned in the research Euro<26, theologians have similar opinions as concerns the way in which impostors and thieves are encouraged in the public space. As for the place of residence, the theologians in the rural area manifest more leniency towards the negative aspects mentioned earlier, than their colleagues in the urban area.

One notices that traditional models, which support a distance from the new realities in the public space, are well preserved in the community. This aspect is more obvious in the case of high school students, which leads us to the conclusion that the new generations prove to be more and more selective in consuming Romanian media products and in their expectations from the political class.

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