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Images of Reality

The contemporary world is a reality of a market of pieces of information which operate parallel to each other, and are bound by nothing. Different sources mediate different types of information about the shape of social reality, thus they create different images of this reality, their truth or falsity being essentially unverifiable. The assumption that media create images of "parallel realities" is the starting point for the reflections made in the following article. At the same time the media fact, understood as a creation of reality, translates into social fact, understood as an event. The decisions made by the individuals – which relate to their actions – are formed in reaction to these events. Can this assumption be justified in scholarly theory and experience? What are the mechanisms of reality-shaping used by the media? And, finally, what are the determinants that decide which sources of information we consider trustworthy? These issues are discussed in "Images of Reality."

Krystyna Skarżyńska

Between the Need to Be Informed and Aspirations to Independent Judgment

Individual cognitive representation of social reality is constructed by media news content, as well as by direct interpersonal contacts. The media impact on people's perception and social attitudes is associated with a psychological motivation to be "like the others," the need of social validation. On the other hand, people believe that media have a greater effect on other people's attitudes and behaviors than on their own (the third-person effect). In the article three explanations for that effect are shown: self-enhancement explanation, situational attribution for one's own behavior, and perception of others as less attentive to the credibility of media messages. In addition, examples of research on the social perception of consistent one-sided media bias (i.e. the phenomenon of hostile-media and its predictors) are also presented. The role of others' (political opponents in particular) negative perception, social distrust and a certain level of ego-involvement seem to be the most important predictors of the hostile-media effect. In the end of the article the positive role of media in the creation of people's cognitive awareness and openness is discussed.

Grażyna Woroniecka

From Rational Debate to Political Mimesis: Contemporary Politics in the Eyes of Sociological Theories

Sociological reflection on politics seems partly unanimous only about one issue: that politics have escaped the influence of social actors, including those representing the state, and have become a field of effect of not always clear macro-processes, ruled by chance or by contingencies (Luhmann). The elimination of individuals and rational discourse from the sphere of political agency is nonetheless accompanied by a rhetoric of their agency role, the influence of their voice and opinions on key political issues. The efforts to expose and explain this phenomenon invoke different phraseologies, from the diagnosis that the "power elite" manipulates the masses, unnoticeably and consistently taking over legislative power at the same time (Mills); through various modifications of politics becoming independent and of their auto-creativity (Lash and Urry); or their autopoiesis (Luhmann); institutional reflectiveness and expert systems (Giddens); to the concept of

“seduction” (Baudrillard)—a gentle but ruthlessly consistent strategy of seduction which the masses give in to without losing the (illusory) sense of subjectivity.

The answer to these processes given “in the name of the subject” may be a slip of subjective activity into the sphere of sub-politics (Beck). It is an activity which is non-instrumental, non-executive and indescribable in terminology, far from purposive rationality (e.g. a strike or traffic jam), but which nonetheless once again brings in the subject to social institutions “abandoned” by politics. Another answer offered by sociology is locating subjectivity, pushed out of social communication, in “new communities” (Giddens) created around different modes of information use. As a consequence of these processes political communication transforms from a domain of discourse (which has changed its social location) to a domain of mimesis: depictions using associations and affective models of reaction.

In light of the indicated transformations the role of the sociological theory of politics is changing as well. By custom it has established itself as the voice speaking in the interest of the rational subject. Its aim is to identify and strengthen the voices of resistance against political mimesis. Moreover, its aim is to reinforce the desire to find space in which the form of the rational subject would regain its *raison d’être*.

Marek Zaleski

A Fortunate Mistake

According to numerous philosophers, psychoanalysts and anthropologists, the conditions for the formation of individual and group identity include the addiction to the exteriorized evil. It is embodied by the baleful Other, one who causes fear and disgust. In addition, they include a penchant for symbolic violence and creation of the illusion of baleful otherness, a tendency which is permanently embedded in our language. The aim of the article is to answer the question if, when and how is the elimination of so understood hate speech from public discourse possible. In this perspective a study of literature as the betrayal of all permanent forms of identity may prove helpful.

Michał Głowiński

Three Days

The article presents an analysis of “Nasz Dziennik” from June 15-17, 2009. The daily is connected with Radio Maryja and represents the ideology promoted there. Its discourse is distinctive because it eliminates all forms of pluralism, does not show opinions other than its own, and in most cases the differing opinions are directly negatively assessed. As was in the case of the official language of Communism, axiology dominates semantics. Dichotomous divisions form the basis; those who are not “us” are enemies. This includes neighbors, especially the Germans and the Russians, the European Union, homosexuals, and all those whose views differ from the views presented in “Nasz Dziennik.” The enemy, regardless of what he actually represents, is a threat “to us,” to Poles-Catholics, to true faith, family, pro-life supporters, and opponents of the murdering of the unborn children. The vocabulary is highly ideologized, e.g. as a rule “life” refers to abortion and is not connected with the attitude toward the death penalty. Radical anti-empathy applies both to the arguments about enemy groups as well as to certain qualified figures. Within this discourse the arguments of the enemy are not probed, he is worthy only of one thing, and that is damnation. All

of the topics presented in "Nasz Dziennik's" feature columns are filled with excess interpretation, and their main task is to evoke in the readers a sense of threat in all possible fields. It is about the universal world order, the place of religion, and, above all, it is about the brave, noble and devout Poland, faithful to the Church, constantly punished by everyone. Still, the reality of everyday life, including economic issues, is also included.

Kajetan Mojsak

Between Polemics and Paranoia. Contemporary Anti-Semitic Discourse, Its Variations and Linguistic Indicators

The article focuses on the contemporary anti-Semitic discourse, its variations, as well as its linguistic indicators. Discussed are the key elements of anti-Semitic discourse as such (essentializing evil in the character of the Jew-enemy; using conspiracy theory to explain reality; concealments and presuppositions; "anti-dialogism" of sorts which is manifest on the level of linguistic formulation of texts; and others). Furthermore, the characteristic features of contemporary variations of the anti-Semitic discourse are mentioned, including, among others, the religious and racial criteria which have been playing a lesser role than before; the increasing separation from the real social context; as well as the almost purely phantasmic character and unique form of self-reference (i.e. clearly or indirectly anti-Semitic statements made during debates on anti-Semitism). The article draws attention to the new and unique environment in which anti-Semitic language is being developed: the internet (with the formation of virtual communities connected through a shared perception of the world; "democratization" and ease of publishing, lowered linguistic and stylistic standards, as well as a lack of moral censorship). In reference to Gavin Langmuir's categorization of stereotypes and prejudices – realistic, xenophobic and chimerical – a basic classification of anti-Semitic language is made, although the result is rather a continuum than a clear division.

Hanna Świda-Ziemba

Analysis of Demagogy in Democratic Poland

Clever propaganda efforts made during the Peoples' Republic of Poland have led to the deformation of individuals' cognitive structure. This is also one of the reasons why the formation of civic society has been so difficult. The mission of the intelligentsia in democratic Poland would be to warp this deformation. Meanwhile the current, often demagogic messages sent by politicians and feature writers can only deepen this state of deformation. The article presents different forms of such demagogic messages, showing each form's harmful consequences to the citizens' intellectual perception of reality.

Marek Tabin

Performance of Rejected Messages

In the article the author argues that when a particular ideological formation ends its rule, the political propaganda created by that formation does not cease to exist in the public sphere. The article points out this regularity using four examples. The first one focuses on the lasting conviction that a proper organization of the economy and of public life is an infinitely more important factor of the state's development than the motivations and actions of the individuals. The two subsequent

examples are: the faith in the power of the slogan and treating terms taken from political science or ideology as political goals. The fourth example concerns the permanence of the culture of exclusion, which was created and justified in terms of propaganda in the socialist period, and is currently being developed, gaining new dimensions. In sum the article shows how propaganda creates a certain image of the world above and beyond the direct content of the propaganda message. This remains the case even when the political propaganda message is rejected.

Jacek Wasilewski

From Buzek to Tusk

Exposés contain certain narrative structures used by the Prime Ministers in their narrations on Poland. This article reconstructs them and describes the relations which link them with the image of Poland as a brand publicly presented by the Prime Ministers. The reconstruction of the narratives includes a three-level analysis: firstly, the Prime Minister's presentation of his aims and means as a description of the government's vision and mission; secondly, the description of the community and the identity of the audience; and thirdly, the structure of the narrative on Poland.

Repairing Poland has been the mission of the vast majority of the governments. This concerns not just the economy, but also the overall decay and moral disorder. The vision has been to introduce Poland to the Western structures. Consecutive thresholds are set, and after they are reached everything will be fine: Poland will become a valued and recognized member of the West. Another type of vision is one about building a house for all. There is only space for the community, not for individuals. Moreover, you build for the community – rather distant in time – than for yourself.

In most of the cases in his exposé the Prime Minister presents a narrative which includes a hero—the Prime Minister who will repair Poland (or defend her). Within the narrative Poland is a subject which, thanks to the Prime Minister's efforts (his mission) will change its status. When the Prime Minister's vision becomes reality Poland will become, alongside the Poles or the grandchildren, the beneficiary of his actions. This narrative can be analyzed using Greimas's model which includes the functions of the hero (pointed out by Propp) in a magical fairy tale.

On the other hand, you can look at the Prime Ministers' exposé narratives from the point of view of Poland as the hero. Poland which will be introduced, repaired and transformed. We find a repair-type narrative, a narrative about a company and a narrative about a house. The latter describes Poland's changing of status. We are faced with a narrative about Cinderella who will come to the European ball. It is also a narrative about a princess freed from the hands of the dragon; when this is achieved she will finally be free. In both cases Poland is a victim, either of fate, or of her enemies. The presented stories on Poland are an amalgam of our complexes, dreams, aspirations, but also a sign of the times. One can ask if using this type of story can lead to effective management of Poland as a brand.

Tomasz Olczyk

Frames and Framing in Election Debates: Sociology of Persuasion Forms. An Essay.

The aim of the article is to describe the frames – patterns of selection, amplification and structuralization – used by the leaders of the three biggest political parties in the three debates which took place before the 2007 Polish parliamentary elections. The frames were used as tools to form a persuasive image of reality for the voters. The article presents the general premises of

frame theory and suggests the central categories for the processes of framing in persuasive political messages. The subsequent part shows a narrative-rhetorical model of creating images of reality in political persuasion. The model is then compared to the patterns visible in the statements of the participants of the debates. The analysis shows that in their statements Donald Tusk and Jarosław Kaczyński used "clean," non-alternative patterns of constructing reality, with a clear "us-them" division, and explicitly pointed out those responsible for both positive and negative "states of the world" (Arcadias and Dystopias). Aleksander Kwaśniewski formulated a less non-alternative and explicit image. The common usage of modeled frame patterns in messages both persuasive (such as debates and political advertisement on television) and informative, as a result creates two opposing types of "virtual audiences". It is probable that the common usage of frame patterns will remain in a self-reinforcing relation with the growing polarization of the political scene.