

# Notes de recherche et parutions



## Notes de recherche

Notes on power of religions on the media

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**Abstract:** Mediatisation of religions responds to a human and social need. These research notes aims to present a set of working hypothesis on the power of religions on media as taking a part in education, politics and economy. We may believe that this position is extreme, but today any information passing by digital mediatisation is used as a power of communication. We think that the power of education is able to create a new world full of peace, although economic and social powers are ruling the world and have become a huge weight on everyone's shoulders. Mediatisation of religions have an impact on changing values in education and society. Media may influence positively or negatively. Violence and electronic games are changing the habits of young generations as well as social media and religious videos are having an impact on wars and extremism. This kind of mediatisation is used as a means to contribute in amplifying the impact of this phenomenon often furthered by more and more

curiosity of people stimulated by social media and its habits.

**Keywords:** mediatisation, religion, impact, extremism, influence

## Introduction

Religions are in a perpetual change and organizing a worldwide resurgence because they use different new technologies. The digital image has an important effect on the young generations and the new religious movements operate through Internet. This is the case of aggressive religious movements reflecting positive or negative content.

Radical Islam for example has become familiar on You-tube for many. "This use of the video as a major medium of self-presentation among different religious movements is a relatively new phenomenon" (Groys, 2009). Groys adds that : « ... Theology has been replaced by philosophy, an orientation toward the past by an orientation toward the future, traditional teachings by subjective evidence, fidelity to origins by innovation. » (*ibid*). Professor Dr. Birgit Meyer in her article<sup>1</sup> declares that : « whether we like it or not, religion appears to be utmost importance in the early 21st. Century. The idea that the public relevance of religion would decline with modernization and development, yielding a disenchanted world, is contradicted by actual developments, from the manifestation of so-called political Islam to the rise of Pentecosta-charismatic movements propagating the

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<sup>1</sup> See more : B. Meyer *why Media, Aesthetics and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion*, dare.ubvu.vu.nl

Gospel of Prosperity. ... It is clear that religion has become a matter of concern and a topic of public debate even for those who defend a secular social order, a rational outlook or even as advocated by Slavoj Žižek in the latest issue of *Lettre Internationale* (2006), reappraise atheism » (Meyer, 2006).

Some industrial countries afraid of such phenomenon have just decided to intervene in social media related to these movements and forbid using such media for violent means and extremism.

There is no power more powerful than the one that dwell in each human being, but this same power is used to influence our societies. It is true that there is, only theoretically, a capital interest in human power. The practical idea about human's power is wealth. Wealth legitimizes the structure of richness in all fields to impose decisions, success and egoism like for example, Saudi Arabia, which considers that it can lounge wars and intervene in the affairs and system of values of neighbour countries thanks to its richness. The option of being powerful is limited to very small fraction of individuals 1% of who rule the world and focus their efforts on ego, wealth and competition.

For long time, our brain has been programmed to be competitive to become powerful in any field, such as at home, at work and even with friends. Religious and life coaches, a new profession is born on the Internet and everywhere to help those who can pay, to become more powerful and rich. It is a transformative education and is constantly coaching thousands of persons on streaming in the fields of Philosophy, Meditation, religion or scientific teaching. This new phenomenon will change the whole system of values

and education. We see sometimes on line invitations to follow groups or a known coach, specialists use all their know-how and power to catch the attention first by advertising their powerful teaching and then by guarantying success by filmed conferences, where digital becomes the principle medium in the whole Curriculum. New vogues of learning are born. As mentioned sometimes in their advertisement: "There's one key difference between those who spend their lives simply managing their suffering and those who thrive, and when you attend this powerful online event, you will experience a newfound understanding of a greater truth that will allow you to live fearlessly, love unconditionally, and be happy... no matter what happens in your life" (J. Houston, 2018).

This is the slogan for the world known J. Houston's teaching in *The 3 Keys to unlocking your Quantum Powers*: to overcome your limitations, to accelerate your evolution and have a greater impact on the world. The truth about power is not to be a king, president or dictator, but about having the knowledge of using the force of inner power and to put it in the service of others and the world. What is interesting here is to watch the power of such teachings and how they influence the experiences of the transcendental and bring them to the instant moment and how they transform the usual religious habits into new visions of religions.

### **Religion on social media**

Unfortunately some use religion for political purposes and use this strategy to obtain the power in the society. People are afraid of their real power. Regarding this issue, Marianne Williamson, an

American spiritual teacher, leads with an inner power of convincing a thriving community of thousands of people throughout the world. Every Tuesday, she has 18,000 followers on the net. She declared, in her book *A return to love* (1992) and on her site that: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us". Why does our light frighten us? Is it because we are ignorant of our real strength?

There are courses on the web for each religion and they are all present on digital media, mystically they claim that the light comes from the salvation of our souls by their holy books or their teachings. Every teaching claims that the light could be so great in each one if restructured in contentment and love. All communities that follow these new vogues of religion proclaim that they are the only ones who have found the way for salvation in their own teaching. All of them are convinced that they are the best and that they have the power to give salvation. In the west, religion and violence are generally associated with the sacred; each teaching has its own beliefs and practices.

The Internet has given strength and power not only to good teachings, but also to evil deeds, like with terrorists who attest by videos on You Tube that they are acting and killing in the name of God. That's how they recruit their disciples. This fact shows the danger of the use of an objective tool like Internet for evil actions.

Many conferences exist on the net, which are held by, for example, Politicians, Priests, Imams or *Masters from the East*. Each one gives miraculous solutions to

solve all Humanity problems. There is a big danger for the new generations to choose wisely. The choice is big and the power of positive or negative information is becoming huge. Weber (in Meyer, 2006) announced that: "Protestantism had played the role of midwife for the emergence of modern capitalism, but its spirit, once upon a time able to overwhelm believers and generate the particular pious attitude and work ethic necessary for the rise of capitalism, had died off." Weber's thinking was heavily influenced by work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, who addressed the emotional and experiential dimension of religion, and in so doing articulated a basic aspect of modern Protestant religiosity" (in Roodenberg, 2004).

What do we expect from the new teachings on the media? Will this phenomenon create new needs and new religious attitudes? Or are we witnessing new vogues of power and new theories?

### **A new form of Temples and Churches**

There are also courses that affirm un-religious teachings and they offer philosophical or therapeutic coaching without any dogma as they claim. ACIM (A Course in Miracles) offers a daily course that helps the disciple to be grounded, where there are more than 53 ACIM Facebook groups and more than 190.000 members. The course is translated into 23 different languages and there are more than 2000 study groups all over the world. They practice the abundance of the false pretence of other religions by which the ego seeks to prove its arrogance. They are clear in their teaching and reassure their followers that "the decision is always their own and that

they have to accept themselves as they are. They should recognise themselves as the sons of God and that they have the power to change the world". This course is open up to disciples to receive the support that everybody needs from teachers to make the greatest difference with their gifts. Those who find the course electronically can study and practice daily lessons on the site. They have the possibility to create an inner power that helps them in their daily life. What are the specific objectives of such courses?

The power of such teaching is that it is a kind of a church without walls, open to all believers who put their arrogance aside, and all beliefs that people are sinners, guilty and afraid. They ask the believers: "Not to feel ashamed of what they are and to lift their hearts in true humility in the presence of God who has created them from his essence and very like to himself in power and love" (ACIM, 1975).

Is it the answer to the final profile of the disciple? This is a step into a vision for a lifetime that inspires all, because it is open to anyone of any religious beliefs, i.e. Jewish, Christian, Muslim or Atheist. This teaching breaks through the inner patterns of each that stand in the way of creating a new life full of light, joy and love. Is this the force of A Course in miracles? It proclaims that the human being is: "A spirit living in a physical body" (Judith Skutch, 1975)<sup>2</sup> and that there is a

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<sup>2</sup> In 1975 Judith Skutch signed with Dr. Helen Schucman (a clinical psychologist), and Dr. William Thetford (professor of medical Psychology at Columbia University), the authors who scribed the Course in Miracles, which is the Foundation for Inner Peace by psychotherapy and was established as trustee and publisher of the Course.

great concern of the human being. We can notice a wide spread commercial vague around this curriculum, although many courses are offered for free.

Power of religion in the digital sphere is a daily confrontation about the role that the representatives should play. Judith Butler explores the potential of religious perspectives for renewing cultural and political criticism. She declares that: "In a world of darkness, we need to quickly connect with our intuition to make important decisions and to have the access and the tools to manifest something big in our lives" (Butler, 2016).

We must find a way to the light and love and to find inner peace through forgiveness. This power enables any man or woman to have the ability to master the challenges of life and society. Jürgen Habermas (2008) thinks through the ambiguous legacy of the concept of "the political" in contemporary society where the human power should help to seek, and move beyond the fears and anxiety of this world. It has to give the possibility to be co-creative and to move our planet into a better place. So many threats and challenges are facing us collectively, humans, animals and nature.

#### **Secularism and contribution in action: a case study**

There is a need for a new thinking, new awareness and new programming. Carry in his optimism mentions that: "The warm rains of new thoughts will fall gently on the soul of human consciousness" (Carey, 1991)

The Rector of UMONS, professor Conti, decided to create a program, three years ago to welcome student-refugees in the

aim to coach them and to help them with their integration in a new society. This was a first calculated action to create for them a new environment open to first of all study the language of the hosted country and then to be able to register as a regular student at the UMONS. It was a very courageous decision because UMONS was the first university to take such decision. This program headed by two professors Gillis and Safar with some volunteers, have been working with the different departments of the UMONS to create an educational environment for refugees and to motivate them. They reached to many of them by social media and a new profession is born in our society, which is called social mediator, who helps the refugee to communicate and to obtain his equivalences and his residence card. This action wouldn't have occurred without the force of mediatisation and the social media. In Brussels many families opened their houses to welcome refugees and created groups to communicate and to organize their action. They are not religious communities, there are may be some among them, but they were related by only one power which is Humanitarian action. The crisis was such that every person could help. I remember when we started to receive and host the refugees from Tournai Camp, UMONS paid their train tickets and the university helped them to find rooms at the dorms immediately after their registration as regular students. UMONS students helped in bringing useful objects for them. They worked by messages on Facebook and very quickly the social media have created a group that helped in every concern. Even the parents of our students helped also. It is a transformative education and is constantly implicating

hundreds of persons socially and creating a welcoming positive environment. Digitalizing such actions would help greatly to permit a beneficial integration for both the refugee and the hosting society.

Unfortunately some use extremism for political purposes and use the media and its strategy to obtain a political power in the society. Usually people are afraid of any change and also from the unknown. When they follow the news and they see the flow of refugees, they seem to get scared from them. They forget that they are humans and they have suffered enormously before arriving to a peaceful country.

M. Williamson in her Lectures helps to change the beliefs and the mind-set in regard to life and psychological blocks as spirituality, politics and relationships. She organises conferences on the Web everywhere in the world and special workshops to explain particular challenges (Williamson, *Miracles and Intimacy*, 2016) like hurt, fear, and different patterns<sup>3</sup> in more depth.

Charles Taylor (s.d.) and many others argue for a radical redefinition of secularism, they defend civil disobedience as an act of citizenship, to defend a rejected refugee and help him not to be sent to his home country, to meet death, because they are treated as traitors when they return back. It is inhuman to accept such treatment. "The demand for recognition in these cases is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where

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<sup>3</sup> M. Williamson ran for Congress in 2014. She founded the Peace Alliance, supporting legislation currently before Congress to establish a United States Department of Peace.

'identity' designates something like understanding of who we are, of our fundamental defining characteristics as human beings. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (Taylor, s.d.).

Secularism nearly became a sort of religion with its own dogma and rules and radicalism (Berger, 1999). That's why some philosophers decided to encourage secularism to stay moderate, tolerant and open-minded as its original values, to accept freedom of thinking and beliefs of all.

#### **A system of education and religion**

It is the time to make a shift in society, for example by giving education its real role. For example in Belgium, the Officials in the Ministry of Education are changing the courses of religion to courses in citizenship and philosophy. It would be very new to include, for example, through a set-up of courses a course like the one of "philosophy for children" by (Lipman, 2010). This methodology presents the foundation of the free will to children, proposed through a system of values based on collaboration and communication between children and their trainer and between each other. One of the salient differences between proponents of philosophy for children is in their choice of stimuli - starting points for discussions on different subjects, Mathew Lipman called "the most influential figure" in helping young students to develop philosophical thinking and to be able to communicate their sufferings. Such method could be used with the children refugees for example who were victims of

many experiences of violence like selling organs or slavery etc. Such courses help tremendously in the field of communication and democracy and could be beneficial on the media. These courses might be offered like interactive electronic games with a virtual trainer. If such teaching is included to the curriculum of education and on line, this might improve open-mindedness in all children and later create an adult that will experience a state of free expression, respect of other's beliefs and opinions, far from jealousy and egoism.

When we think of education, it is not very likely to think about electronic games, which has entered to every European society in power. Games also are used to influence teen-agers by all means. Computer games have become more important on the Planet market than films. They are used by religious currents too to integrate the religious values unconsciously, where for example a "forced baptism" is included in the computer game called *BioShock Infinite*, an award-winning<sup>2</sup> opus developed by *Irrational Games*<sup>4</sup>. There is a story line in the beginning of the game, which by reason of religious references in the narratives and the "game aesthetics"<sup>5</sup> influence in an indirect way and keep the teen-ager in an interactive fictive world. This interactivity is so powerful and might become very dangerous because the followers might become addicted. As a translator myself I know that this market is getting a great power on localisation

<sup>4</sup> And also published by 2K Games in March 2013.

<sup>5</sup> You tube video clip<sup>3</sup> of the audio-visuel account of the scene.



and media and is changing all habits of people, programmers and translators. Alt said in an interview that: "As a game translator you have to be prepared to deal with materials in a nonlinear fashion. Sometimes this is due to certain parts of the game being completed faster than others. Other times, it is due to the grouping of text strings by types" (Jayemanne, 2009).

The electronic games could be used positively, for example with children who suffer from cancer or other vital sicknesses. As the electronic games are interactive and that they can play with other children anywhere in the world virtually, this experience might help them to live in a fictive life full of adventures, in awaiting their healing and to forget their sufferings.

Unfortunately another application of the electronic games might be very dangerous and powerful is when used to train on violence and killing operated by terrorists. Terrorists are using You Tube to influence and to recruit new disciples by the introduction of such games.

### Conclusion

The power of religion on media is very present in our western societies; sometimes it creates an environment of fear and sometimes opens the hearts to a tolerant attitude full of love and harmony.

Our European society needs a new vision and new values, which will help to appreciate more and open up to creating true prosperity and happiness. The young generations need a new curriculum of education open to new technologies and to the mentioned values. Without any mechanism of objective control of this

strategy, chaos will continue to increase and danger will be amplified. A new system that might help an awakening from the illusion of living disconnected from others. The work on education philosophically and inter-culturally helps to connect people and to push them into a new vision, which means working in collaboration to obtain the power of change and to help everyone take on focused and fulfilling actions. This curriculum content will enable the new generations to defend values and find allies among those who are involved in the same battle of peace.

We should focus our efforts, in order to work towards a specific goal, and unite them. This could therefore lead to a planetary transition and awakening and to protect the future generations of new forms of despotism and manipulation.

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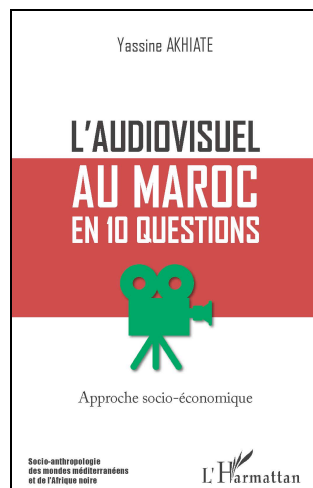
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## Note de lecture



Yassine Akhiate, *L'audiovisuel au Maroc en 10 questions*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2018, 200 p.

Dans son ouvrage d'approche socio-économique paru aux éditions L'Harmattan, Yassine Akhiate, professeur associé en économie des médias, et sciences des langues, de l'information et de la communication à l'Université Mohammed V de Rabat tente de répondre à une dizaine de questions pertinentes sur l'impact tant sociologique qu'économique de l'audiovisuel sur le quotidien des marocains.

Après une contextualisation historique et situationnelle introductive, dans le prolongement de sa thèse, le chercheur expose la problématique du secteur audiovisuel au Maroc à travers ses acteurs, son fonctionnement et ses spécificités. Pour ce faire, il commence par traiter le rôle qui joue la dimension économique, la place qu'a le financement public et l'importance du secteur public

dans sa dynamique avant d'analyser la possibilité de son développement par des formes de financement indirect et l'impact de la couverture publicitaire en passant par la particularité du mois de Ramadan pour son économie. Ce faisant, il étudie la question du passage à la diffusion en TNT, de la convergence technologique et de son ampleur, des réseaux sociaux comme outils de développement et de la libéralisation comme levier pour promouvoir la citoyenneté, la diversité culturelle et territoriale.

Cet ouvrage tout en apportant un éclairage sur la situation actuelle de l'audiovisuel au Maroc, tend à approfondir la compréhension de ce phénomène complexe. Relevant des dimensions médiatiques telles que la convergence technologique, l'économie audiovisuelle, la programmation et l'audience, que l'auteur expose succinctement avant d'approfondir, dans un objectif de vulgarisation, le plus clairement et simplement possible afin d'être accessible au plus grand nombre. Cet ouvrage qui se veut interdisciplinaire, à la jonction des sciences économiques et de l'information et de la communication, s'adresse autant aux chercheurs et néophytes qu'aux étudiants et au grand public intéressés par ce secteur à la croisée des chemins.

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