

# Ethics Reflections on Media Entertainment

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**ABSTRACT.** *Media entertainment plays an important role in the development and progress of society with its unique communication characteristics and functions. While satisfying the leisure needs, consumption needs and public life needs of the masses, the media ethics anomie phenomenon also appears in the media entertainment, which is not only related to the moral construction of the media itself, but also directly affects major issues such as the current social moral construction in China.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Media entertainment, Ethic moral, Ethical principle*

## 1. Introduction

Media entertainment is an expansion of mass media entertainment function from recessive to explicit and from the lack of awareness to consciousness under the joint action of many elements such as politics, culture, and economy. It makes the media more and more close to an entertainment tool or entertainment means compared with its historical stage, and even makes entertainment the main purpose of media communication, this trend of the media is a kind of media entertainment. The moral problem in media entertainment, that is, the moral anomie, refers to the negative effect that the media brings to its surrounding environment, humans and society that is contrary to certain moral principles and moral norms. In general, the moral issues in media entertainment can be divided into the following three types: The alienation of media entertainment, the influence of media entertainment on values, and the influence of media entertainment on public moral evaluation standards.

## 2. The Alienation of Media Entertainment

Alienation refers to the fact that the subject splits its opposite at a certain stage of development and becomes an external alien force. Specifically, human beings are controlled and enslaved by their own creations and become a kind of alien force. In the process of alienation, human's subjective consciousness begins to be lost, but to be filled with the material and spiritual powers that are originally created by themselves but now become aliens. In the book 1844 Years Economic-Philosophy Draft Manuscript, Marx makes a comprehensive and profound analysis of the alienation phenomenon in the process of capitalist social labor, and puts forward two concepts: "alienation of things" and "self-alienation". Marx argues that the labor of

the workers, as a kind of alien thing, does not depend on him but exists outside him and becomes an independent force opposed to him, meaning that the life he gives to the object is opposed to him as a hostile and alien thing. □ □ □ The “Modern Chinese Dictionary” published by the Commercial Press has made a specific explanation of the term “alienation”, “Philosophically, it refers to converting one’s own quality or power into something that opposes and dominates oneself”.

Here, the author uses Marx’s alienation theory to refer to all these phenomena as the alienation of media entertainment, and from this perspective, it is specifically positioned as “the alienation of media entertainment”, it refers that in the process of engaging in various social activities, the media, for its own and external reasons, has separated these activities from their original purpose and become a negative, passive, and even destructive negative force. One of the more common phenomena is that media organizations with corporate attributes and market requirements blindly surrender to the market and flatter the audience when they carry out “economic activities” driven by economic interests, leading the social responsibility that the media should bear is weakened by excessive “proximity” to market interests, thus causing the media to fall into a secular situation. □ □ □

## ***2.1 The Alienation of Media***

The mass media is the information system of the society and performs extremely important social functions: environmental surveillance, social heritage inheritance function, social coordination function, aesthetic and entertainment function, these functions not only contribute to people’s better understanding of society, at the same time, it affects the political, economic and cultural development of society. History always moves forward in the antinomy, and it cannot be denied that the Chinese mass media has gradually emerged a tendency of alienation. The alienation of media entertainment is mainly manifested in the proliferation of vulgarization and homogenization, these alienation tendencies are not conducive to the benign development of the social system and the self-improvement of the individual.

### ***2.1.1 The Proliferation of Vulgarization***

The media’s tendency towards vulgarization is driven by its own interests. According to Freud’s theory of “Self”, “Ego” and “Superego”, the human nature is “Self” and happiness is the highest principle. In this state of self, the individual likes and wants to know more than anything else is in the curious state of human nature. The media does not use due social responsibility to guide the audience to pay attention to social reality. Instead, it uses an idea of quick success in economic interests to cater to the audience’s vulgar preferences. In the long run, the process of media entertainment alienation is also the process of media losing faith in the audience. In this process, the media develops around the sensory stimuli of the audience, but ignores its social responsibilities. The real purpose of entertainment is to allow people to obtain healthy and diverse aesthetic enjoyment at the material, spiritual, and cultural levels.

### ***2.1.2 The Proliferation of Homogenization***

Homogenization refers to the fact that different brands of goods in the same category imitate each other in terms of performance, appearance, and even marketing methods, resulting in gradual convergence. The homogenization of media entertainment shows that the media field is roughly the same in terms of program type, production means, production process, and transmission content. The mass media includes the operation of television stations, newspapers, radio stations, and online media. Every day, certain news content is needed to enrich the media's time and layout, and the number of news facts that occur every day is certain which has led to the homogenization of a large amount of content in the media.

### ***2.2 The Alienation of Human***

With the all-round prosperity of mass communication brought about by the technological revolution, people increasingly use the media to understand the situation of the outside world. The “virtual world” created by the media has become a new alienation force in the real sense. The present generation living in the “media environment” has become far away from real life and has lost its critical spirit and transcendental dimension. While bringing joy and reconciliation to people, media entertainment is alienating people's spiritual world, and media and their products are restricting the development of human subjectivity. Fragmented media information and colorful media products make people accustomed to soft “surface entertainment” instead of pursuing “deep meaning”.

With the audience's entertainment consumption psychology becoming more and more prominent, people's understanding of the news and entertainment function has gradually deepened, entertainment information not only occupies a greater proportion in the specific layout and specific time of the mass media, but also the media entertainment function has begun to cover the media information function. Whether it is news, radio or the Internet, it is increasingly entertaining and earthliness. Nowadays, the media entertainment has been like the air around people, people are inseparable from it from both the material and spiritual level. People are increasingly losing their independence, criticality and transcendence and becoming “one-dimensional people”.

#### ***2.2.1 The Ablation of Criticalness***

The alienation tendency of media entertainment is also reflected in the weakening of the independent consciousness and critical consciousness of the media. According to Jurgen Habermas, technology and science today are not just productivity, but ideological productivity. As productive forces, they have achieved domination over nature, and as ideology, they have achieved domination over people. He says: “In my opinion, what is more important is that the proposition of technocracy as an invisible ideology can even penetrate into the consciousness of a large number of non-politicized residents, and can make the power of legitimacy develop”. □ □ □ The radical Frankfurt faction believes that the media is not only a

tool for state rights, but also assumes the role of social instruments, safeguarding the will of the ruling class, conveying social ideology, and fulfilling the function of ideological social control. The advance of technology has enabled society to control people through television, radio, film and radio networks and other media to invade people's free time and occupy their private space. It not only immerses the audience in the psychedelic "mimicry environment", but even thinking can be forgotten and stopped. Media entertainment can penetrate into the psychological structure of people, change the way of thinking and values, make people completely lose their inner independence and freedom, and voluntarily and happily accept this kind of manipulation and control.

### **2.2.2 Loss of Social Responsibility**

Marshall McLuhan believes that "the medium is an extension of human beings". In the same way, people also expand their range of activities by extending symbols. Text and printing are extensions of human visual ability, broadcasting is an extension of human hearing, and television is a comprehensive extension of visual, hearing, and tactile abilities, the whole world has become a world of symbols shaped by the media.

In 1976, Melvin L. DeFleur, an American scholar, proposes the theory of "media dependence", arguing that people and the mass media form an interdependent relationship, and that the dominant party is the medium, and the audience is constrained by the content of the media, so that people expect to receive useful information, and their dependence will become stronger as long as they are not disappointed. □ □ □ When people have to complete all their daily life and spiritual contacts through the media, the media begins to become a tool for ruling and enslaving people, causing people to lose the freedom and initiative of communication, and people gradually become an extension of the media. People have become dependent on the media, and they are less and less willing to express themselves in public. Instead, they prefer to become passive and lonely viewers, and thus lose their feelings about the real life of society and their own social responsibilities.

### **3. Media Entertainment and Values**

In the middle and late 1990s, with the reform and opening up and the in-depth development of the market economy, the variety of goods in the market becomes more and more abundant, and driving domestic demand becomes a matter of public concern. The higher people's desire to buy, the more demand for consumer information will increase. In order to meet the audience's demand for various consumer information, the media has increased many types of consumer information. It can be seen that the mass media are increasingly focused on leisure, fashion, beauty, fitness, pets, tourism, food and so on. Objectively, media entertainment plays the role of consumer demonstration and the inducement and stimulation of consumer desire, and induces and guides people to create a new understanding of the meaning

and value of life while enjoying material.

### ***3.1 Media Entertainment Leads to the Consumerism Value***

The value of Consumerism is a value that pursues and admires excessive material possession or regards consumption as a purpose of a better life and life. In addition to considering material goods as “material”, Consumerism value regards goods more as a symbol, a symbol of identity or status. In the process of media entertainment, the mass media has emerged a variety of cultural forms that promote consumption ideas and lifestyles, and at the same time, the media carriers that reflect Consumerism appeals have become more abundant.

The media uses entertainment as a means to create special consumer goods so that the audience can pastime and enjoy. The rise of movies and TV series is one of the symbols of Consumerism culture. In China, watching TV series is the main choice of daily leisure activities for many families. The media induces people's desire for the goods and lifestyles in luxury houses, beautiful clothes, luxury consumption, etc., and finally puts them into consumer action. The Consumerism value brought about by media entertainment is the deviation and loss of reasonable consumption ethics. A person's moral cultivation is realized through various channels such as family, school, and society. The mass media, as a window for people to understand society, has played a subtle role in a person's moral cultivation. In our country, the mass media has been given the function of moral cultivation and has become an important means to promote people's moral cultivation. The value of consumerism advocates and pursues excessive possession and consumption, and at the same time regards this as the value orientation of life's goal, and regards consumption as a means for people to achieve happiness. There are two forms of “excessive consumption”: One of them is that their own ability has not yet reached but to reluctantly ahead of consumption; The other is that it already has the ability to consume, but constantly pursue luxury consumption, resulting in some unnecessary waste. The media entertainment continuously transmits Consumerism value to people, cannot reasonably guide people to form a reasonable consumer ethics, and highlights the lack of social responsibility of the mass media.

### ***3.2 Media Entertainment Triggers the Hedonism Value***

The hedonism value regards pleasure as the ultimate value and purpose that human beings pursue, happiness is the measure of the value of all things. It belittles the spiritual life and attaches importance to the material pursuit, and believes that the abundance of material life is the pursuit of life. The managers and literati of traditional society use various methods to prevent, limit and supervise the wanton expansion of people's desires, and try their best to instill the moral ideas of abstinence and restraint into people's thoughts. The hedonism in traditional society is only the privilege of a few people, and the public is not qualified to enjoy it. In Chinese traditional culture, Lao Tzu regards “Seeing the enemy and being less selfish” as a moral goal; Chuang Tzu believes that “He who has a deeper desire has

a shallower chance” and desire is harmful to the understanding of truth; Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher, says: “The sensual pleasure of eating, drinking, and so on is like a heavy burden, beating them from the birth of these evil men, and dragging them down, focusing the vision of their minds on the lower world”□ □ □ .

In an increasingly open modern society, the media, represented by television, movies and computers, have shown a new picture of the world to people, not only promoting the complete liberation of people's ideas, but also fundamentally reversing the lasting impact of traditional culture. Media entertainment makes the media change from an enlightenment type to a service type, from a previously educated and serious image to a civilian, gracious face, moving from being unattainable to living and popularizing. The concept of “customer is God” emphasizes the importance of the audience. From the perspective of people's needs, the media pays attention to the minimum cost and maximum interests of the audience in terms of content and form. Through the impact of the media and full of inflammatory media stimulation, the entertainment of the media seeps into every field of daily life, unknowingly changing people's values, and gradually loosens the nerves of people's high control over desires.

Media entertainment has spread to all areas of the media. The media first considers the audience's interest rather than what the audience should know. Newspapers, radio, and television have begun to “soften”. The news has settled on the people's livelihood from the past political news, “Citizen News” has brought the media closer to the masses. In the social background of national entertainment, news storytelling has gradually become one of the new reporting models popular with the people. What media entertainment provides to the audience is an unlimited pursuit of “false demand” and gives the audience a false model of “good life”. Some people not only confuse the reasonable boundary between “need” and “desire”, but also pursue “no rules, only choices” as a new trend.□ □ □ The abstinence and temperance ethics advocated by the traditional rationalist culture are replaced by the comprehensive indulgence and visual revelry of the new era. People regard self-satisfaction and personal liberation as a new cultural pursuit, which contributes to the outbreak of hedonistic values.

#### **4. The Influence of Media Entertainment on Public Moral Evaluation Standards**

In the information age, mass media has had a great influence on human society. In terms of communication forms, news communication, entertainment communication, and advertising communication are changing people's lives in different ways; In terms of communication tools, radio, newspapers, television, and the Internet have penetrated all aspects of people's lives. All these have played a significant role in people's value judgment, cultural understanding, and commodity consumption, and at the same time have influenced people's ideology. China is in the transition period of socialism, there is a great conflict between social reality and people's social values, so when people face moral confusion, the guidance of the media is crucial to the establishment of people's moral values. Therefore, the views

and attitudes of the media and media opinion on social events, as well as the moral values formed by its moral evaluation, play a crucial role for the public.

#### ***4.1 Transformation of Public Moral Evaluation Standard***

Since the reform and opening up, many changes have taken place in the way of social moral evaluation in China. With the looseness and dispersion of the social structure, the evaluation of the moral behavior of the members of the social organizations and the mutual comments between the neighbors have been replaced by the moral evaluation of the media. Morality is the way of judging the behavior of other people and their own, and moral evaluation is the subject's judgment on whether he and himself meet certain moral purposes and moral "Sollen", and is based on certain moral evaluation standard. The moral evaluation standard are based on certain moral principles and norms advocated by certain positions. At the same time, people's standards for evaluating themselves and others should be the same. The standards for judging moral behavior directly quoted in each era are the moral principles and norms that are prevailing or advocated in that era or period. The moral evaluation standard can only be moral principles and norms derived from social or class interests that are consistent with historical inevitability. □ □ □

The public moral evaluation is subjective, and it is a standard which is constructed, approved and applied by the evaluation subject. First of all, different evaluation subjects have different moral evaluation standards, which stems from the differences between the needs of the subject and the interests of the subject. The moral evaluation standards used by different moral subjects are often different. Although there are various moral norms in social life, not all moral subjects will take the existing moral norms as their own evaluation standards. The public moral evaluation standard is always closely related to the value ideal and the value criterion of the evaluation subject. When people make different behaviors, they will present different values and meanings in front of different subjects, because the moral evaluation standards of different subjects are different. Secondly, there will be consistent standards of moral evaluation among the different subjects of evaluation, and there is an objective unity of reality and history among them, and there are common needs and interests at different levels and ranges, thus deciding that different moral subjects always have their relatively unified moral values. Although different subjects have different views on what kind of media behavior is moral and what kind of behavior is immoral, it cannot be denied that there is a relatively unified understanding and evaluation among different moral subjects. There are moral standards and moral evaluation standards that are commonly recognized by different moral subjects. This is also an important condition for maintaining unity and order in the entire society and certain social activities.

#### ***4.2 Media Entertainment Promotes Diversity in Moral Evaluation Standards***

The diversification of moral evaluation standards is fundamentally the expression of historical materialism in the field of morality. The social moral

environment has changed greatly with the social transformation and the development of media entertainment. The transmission of unified meta-values has been changed, values have shown a diversified trend, and various moral evaluation standards and values conflict with each other. Under the influence of media entertainment, the ethics-centered value conflict brings the standard of moral evaluation into a complicated situation. Chinese Virtues, such as diligent and thrifty, are no longer recognized by most people. People begin to advocate consumerism and hedonism, and regard excessive possession and consumption of material materials as the goal of life. The diversity of moral value evaluation standards inevitably leads to confusion in moral choices and disorientation in value orientation. For example, any one of people's choices can be supported by one kind of value standard, and at the same time it will be negated by another value standard. The contradictions and conflicts of this moral choice have permeated all levels of social structure. In an era when moral evaluation standards are unified and clear, people's actions are generally accepted and recognized by most people. However, in an environment where the moral standards are diversified, people have certain moral standards to support whatever they do, and the reverse standard can be found behind any one standard, which also has the rationality of existence. This kind of abnormal moral evaluation inevitably leads to the confusion of moral choice and the disorientation of value orientation.

#### ***4.3 Demonstrations of Diversity in Moral Evaluation Standards***

First, the conflict between reason and interests, the relationship between reason and interests is a hot issue that has been debated since the pre-Qin period. In the history of Chinese ethics, the debate on the relationship between reason and interests has always been very popular. How to evaluate the relationship between reason and interests affects the moral value orientation of the people in modern society. In traditional Chinese culture, the Confucian point of view of “spiritual integrity should outweigh monetary consideration” is the mainstream of the relationship between reason and interests.□ □ □ The Confucian doctrines of “Interests Guided by Reasons” and “righteousness and then taking” believe that doing things only needs to take into account whether the behavior is moral or not, and there is no need to worry about personal interests. The interests roughly refer to private interests, that is, those who meet the needs of a person's survival and then endanger the interests of others, are for private interests. At the time of the formation of socialist market economy, people are right to pursue economic interests. Since the traditional concept of reason and interests is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, the conflict between reason and interests has a certain reaction in the media in China. For example, the market economy requires that people should get rid of administrative and blood relations and adhere to the contractual relationship between people in material interests, which is traditionally considered to be moral “evil”, it is the performance of “not to recognize his own closest relatives”.

Second, the confusion between collectivism and individualism. Before the reform and opening up, the media emphasizes the code of conduct of “forgetting

private interests” and “put public interests before private ones”. When individual interests and collective interests conflict, collective interests must be regarded as the starting point, even the reasonable pursuit of personal interests will be criticized as wrong. However, after China enters the market economy, some people abandon the original value norms and moral principles, move from one extreme to the other, advocate individualism and hedonism, and ignore the collective interests.

The ethical reflection of media entertainment is an extremely urgent topic in the current academic circles and should be paid enough attention. Chinese society has become an unavoidable trend in the era of media entertainment, but the ethical review of the moral deviations expressed in media entertainment must be carried out to regulate the media entertainment market. The moral review of media entertainment can help improve social cultural literacy and ensure cultural quality. Media entertainment is the need of the times and the symbol of social progress. How to let media entertainment release moral conscience in the face of huge economic interests and establish a correct entertainment aesthetic goal is a relatively difficult task. At the same time, how to purify the entertainment environment and let the pure entertainment atmosphere guide the public's reasonable entertainment is an important issue that must be considered and urgently resolved.

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