

Peace journalism as ideology or peace journalism as a semiotic act of world and life view?

ABSTRACT

In this article it is argued that in the context of critical media and cultural studies' emphasis on ideology, the accent in understanding peace journalism frequently falls on peace journalism as advocacy journalism and on peace journalism as an ideological manipulation of the representation of war, conflict, terrorism, protest and violence. For an alternative understanding of peace journalism, and in the light of renewed academic interest in the understanding of world and life view as a comprehensive set of values underlying cognition and representation, this article suggests a focus on the description and analyses of the *a priori* values underlying a journalist's world and life view and demonstrates how such values may or may not be rooted in a fundamental world and life view predisposed to peace versus violence and war as a solution to conflict. Given world and life view's emphasis on meaning and meaning-making, the article then suggests an understanding of peace journalism and an understanding among journalists of their work, as a semiotic act and as such signifying and representing the values of world and life views in rhetorical and dialogical ways. Such an understanding and consciousness may lead to heightened journalistic sensitivity regarding how war, violence, conflict and hate are reported. This article deals in consecutive parts with the topics peace journalism, world and life view as a construct and its possible application in the field of peace journalism, and journalism as a semiotic act, characterised by signification, representation, rhetoric and dialogue as four of the main building blocks of journalistic communication, including peace journalism.

INTRODUCTION

In this article, the concept *world and life view* is investigated as an alternative to ideology in the understanding of peace journalism. The main argument is that in the context of critical media and cultural studies' emphasis on ideology, peace journalism is often seen to be advocacy journalism and, as such, as an ideological manipulation of reality through the intentional and manipulative representation of war, conflict and violence towards what is believed to be peace.

Whereas ideology is closely associated with politics, 'false consciousness' and the production and dissemination of 'false consciousness', 'world and life view'¹, on the other hand, places the emphasis on human processes of meaning-making towards the development and use of a coherent and comprehensive set of values. Such values underlie and direct (that is, form a schemata) a person's understanding of the world, of life, of his/her place and value in the world and in life, and his/her destiny in the world and in life, and beyond. Although these values are culturally, socially, educationally and religiously determined and open to change, they nevertheless form part of a person's cognitive structure and make-up.

Given world and life view's close association with meaning-making, and from the perspective of media semiotics, the argument is then expanded to include a view of journalism as a semiotic construct in and through which world and life views are expressed and represented. It is argued that being acutely aware of their work as being semiotic will ultimately contribute to a heightened ethical awareness among journalists of how their work represents world and life views that may underlie war and conflict (or peace). Seen in this way, peace journalism can then be understood as a specific way in which the world is presented and represented and how such a representation depends on the journalist's world and life view.

Based on the above premise it is thus argued that instead of subjecting peace journalism to ideological criticism, peace journalism could be characterised and understood as a kind of journalism informed by a world and life view in which peace and respect for human dignity are central.

Again taking into consideration world and life views' relationship to meaning-making and meaning-giving, the emphasis in such an approach to peace journalism may also fix the attention not, as in the case of ideological criticism, on the structures and the (manipulative) techniques of peace journalism (for example, to focus deliberately on 'balanced' reporting), but on the processes of meaning-making (signification and representation). Again, if journalists could be made acutely aware of these processes, it may sensitise them to the kind of world and life views they represent and how they may be war-, violence- or peace-inclined.

¹ The study of 'world and life view' as a comprehensive set of values underlying people's beliefs has regained academic interest since World War II and has increasingly been researched since 2000 as an alternative to 'ideology' with its strong political, economic, cultural-political and intentionally manipulative associations (cf. e.g. Carroll, 2010; Wolters, 1989).

An additional significant introductory point is that in linking peace journalism to semiotics and semiotics to world and life view, it can be argued that ideology as a construct is prescriptive. Therefore, from an ideological perspective, peace journalism can easily be seen as a prescription of how the world should be reported and specifically of how war and conflict should be reported. On the other hand, semiotics emphasises not prescription but a *description* and an awareness of the *processes* of meaning-making and thus of the processes whereby the world is signified, and more specifically how war and conflict are signified. Again, it can be argued that an awareness of this may sensitise the journalist's (and the analyst's) sensitivity about the world and life view being communicated in and through both war and conflict reporting.

In essence then, this article is an argument for shifting the emphasis in the theorisation, criticism and analysis² of peace journalism from the view that peace journalism is a form of advocacy journalism (and as such politically ideological) to peace journalism as a semiotic representation of a world and life view about war, conflict and violence, but also about peace.

Formulated differently: for journalists to promote peace they would need to be made deeply aware of how they inherently convey an underlying world and life view. Such a world and life view could accommodate and be supportive of peace or of conflict and hate; it could communicate a humanitarian world and life view or an anarchistic and radical world and life view. Underlying this premise is an understanding and view of journalism as a semiotic act (emphasising signification, the phenomenological nature of representation and the rhetorical and dialogical nature of contemporary mediated communication), and, as being one of the most important, if not the dominant, public symbolic forms of expression and signifying systems in contemporary society.

With this as the essential argument, the article begins with the question: What is peace journalism? This is followed by an explanation of what is meant with 'world and life view'. The article concludes with a description of how signification, representation, dialogue and rhetoric constitute the semiotic nature and character of journalism as a semiotic act and thus as an act of representing and interpreting the values of a world and life view that may or may not be indicative of peace (cf. Fourie, 2010a; 2011c).

Before continuing, some clarification around the concept *peace journalism* is necessary. In the context of peace journalism, *peace* can be understood as described by Lederach (1995: 13), namely a kind of journalism that may contribute to 'justice', a 'balance of power', a 'legitimation of the concerns of the less powerful', and as part of a process of getting to understand the problems of the powerless; to almost disrupt a culture of contentment (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). *Peace* can thus be seen as a state of greater equality, acceptance and tolerance among people in a more equal and impartial society. In the context of Galtung's definition of 'peace' (1969), peace journalism can be seen as part of the struggle against structural violence and thus the struggle against social injustice (this struggle is not necessarily harmonious): "It may entail disrupting the

² For recent literature on peace journalism theory, criticism and analysis, see. e.g. Ashuri, 2012; Borah, 2011; Neumann & Fahmy, 2012

apparent harmony of a discursive order (e.g. political discourses) that routinely conceals and naturalises ongoing injustice(s)” (Anonymous reviewer, July 2012).

1. PEACE JOURNALISM

The articles in this issue of *Communicare* deal in some way or another with a definition of peace journalism, which often also goes under different names such as *conflict solution journalism*, *conflict sensitive journalism*, and *constructive conflict coverage* (cf. Howard, 2010). Describing what peace journalism is, its origin, its nature as a journalistic genre, its history, research related to it, etcetera is not the purpose of this article. As formulated above, the purpose is rather to view peace journalism as a semiotic act through which the values of a world and life view conducive to peace is represented.

For the purposes of this article it is thus sufficient to say that the concept or idea of ‘peace journalism’ was first conceptualised by the Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung (1986), also known for his work in the field of news values and news frameworks (see Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Inter alia, Galtung viewed war journalism and peace journalism as “competing frames” in the journalistic coverage of wars and conflicts (Neumann & Fahmy, 2012: 169).

Since Galtung’s ground-breaking work it has been possible to distinguish different research streams in peace journalism, such as research focusing on

- The operationalisation of Galtung’s peace journalism model, content analyses and the development of criteria for content analysis (cf. e.g. Dente Ross and Tehranian, 2008; Hyde-Clarke, 2011b; Lee & Maslog, 2005)
- Framing and the role of framing in war journalism and the reporting of terrorism, protests and conflict (with a dominant hypothesis that journalism is an effective tool for articulating ideological messages) (cf. e.g. Entman, 1991; Messaris & Abraham, 2001)
- Normative issues about the role of journalism in conflict solution, problem-solving as part of journalism, whether journalism’s depiction of violence and conflict promote an escalation of violence, conflict and war, the fundamental role and function of newswires in war, etcetera (cf. e.g. Neumann & Fahmy, 2012).

Historically, the idea of peace journalism can be traced back to the two world wars when critics, social scientists and propaganda specialists became overtly aware of the nature of war reporting and that such reporting tended to naturalise violence. It depicted war as being inescapable (natural) in the process of conflict solution. The need for a kind of journalism that would also contextualise and historicise the different reasons and motivations for conflict and further also highlight peace efforts and processes towards conflict solution was increasingly acknowledged.³

³ See, the history of the study of news as propaganda in the seminal works of Lippmann (1949), Stephens (1989), Mattelart (1974) and more recently in Mak’s (2004) general history of Europe in the 20th Century. See also the numerous contemporary works on the crisis of journalism in relation to objectivity, authenticity and reliability as referred to in, for example, Allan, 2005; Fourie, 2011a; Löffelholz, Weaver & Schwarz, 2008.

The period after World War II also saw the origin of (modern) attacks on the gate-keeping, framing and subjective nature of (mainstream) media and journalism and on how the media are rooted in capitalist and multicorporate political economies.⁴

From this follows critical media, journalism and cultural studies' criticism that peace journalism is prone to be seen as a form of advocacy journalism and as ideologically enthused reporting. As such, it cannot claim adherence to the ethics and codes of professional journalism, this being, as is likewise expected of peace journalism, to tell the truth in an objective, wide-ranging, and in-depth way. At the same time, however, mainstream journalism's claims to objectivity, comprehensiveness, authenticity, etcetera, are also questioned and often seen to be the essence of the so-called crisis of contemporary journalism (cf. e.g. Allan, 2005; Löffelholz, Weaver & Schwarz, 2008).

In addition to this view, there is a newly evolving argument that, given the diversity and interactive, multimodal, omnipresent and pervasive nature of the media and of journalism (media culture), the media and journalism in any case offer a wide range of opinions and perspectives, also of war, violence and conflict (cf. e.g. Couldry, 2004; McNair, 2005, 2009).

A counter-argument is that although there may be greater diversity in the modern media landscape, journalism's emphasis still needs to be on war and conflict and not on peace. However, if the semiotic nature of the *mediasphere* (cf. Fourie, 2009; 2010a) is taken into account, such a claim is difficult to substantiate. There is an abundance of examples of how mainstream and alternative news media (including the new social media) provide us with interpretative and contextualised representations and interpretations of violence, conflict and war (cf. e.g. Kress, 2010).

With the emphasis in media and journalism analysis and criticism moving away from ideology to diversity, their impact on the nature of the *mediasphere* as the dominant signifying system in modern society, and the complexity of describing and analysing the *mediasphere*, questions related to the ideological nature of peace journalism and/or its proneness to ideology can move to questions about what values of a world and life view conducive to peace are represented in peace journalism and about how such values are represented. A theory and method to this end could be semiotics.

⁴ See Fourie, 2011b and 2012 for a more in-depth overview of criticism against journalism. Fourie claims that contemporary criticism against journalism can be traced back to Ancient Greece, the Middle Ages, the critique of Enlightenment philosophers, the Frankfurt School, the political-economic criticism of Marx, the ideological criticism of Foucault, Althusser, Gramsci and others, and the profound criticism in political, sociological, cultural and critical media studies. The ideological paradigm is (was) dominant in such criticism and thus gave rise to a view of the media (and journalism) as an ideological instrument. Fourie specifically deals with the criticism of scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu and his views related to the *structural limitations* of journalism and the role of *habitus* in journalism practice, Kenneth Minogue's view about the *corrupting devices* of journalism, and Frans Aerts views about the *banality* and *intellectual bankruptcy* of journalism.

It was maintained earlier in the article that ideological criticism focuses on the techniques of *producing journalism* (including peace journalism), whereas a focus on world and life view would highlight the *processes of meaning-making and meaning-giving* in journalism. Such processes would be embedded in the world and life views (values) about war and conflict, peace and human dignity underlying and directing a journalist's (and a news organisation's) representations of war, conflict, protests, terrorism, etcetera. Whereas the arguments for and against peace journalism have reached an impasse and are framed in a series of oppositions and paradoxes similar to the debates about journalistic objectivity, cohesiveness, truth, etcetera, the question may be whether the focus should not rather be on how (peace) journalism signifies an *a priori* world and life view that may be distinct from peace and from human dignity and from how journalists (through teaching and research) could be made acutely aware of how their work is embedded in and represents the values of world and life views.

In the rest of the article it is argued that this can be done by emphasising (in teaching and in research) journalism as a semiotic act. Such an emphasis could highlight the journalistic world and life view. The emphasis is thus on journalism as signification, representation, rhetoric and dialogue. But first, what is 'world and life view'?

2. WORLD AND LIFE VIEW

The concept of and an understanding of what a world and life view is can be approached from theological, philosophical, historical and various other perspectives. For an understanding of journalism as a world and life view the most appropriate perspective is, in all probability, from the social sciences perspectives of psychology and sociology. For this, the article relies on Naugle's description (2002: 209-249) of how 'world and life view' was dealt with in early psychology and sociology, including the sociology of knowledge.⁵

2.1 Psychology and the concept of 'world and life view'

In psychology, Freud⁶ believed that the concepts and construct of 'world and life view' provide the human being with trust, security and peace of mind to deal with life in practical ways. With that as a point of departure, Freud was not concerned with defining and describing world and life view as a phenomenon, but rather with the epistemological question, namely whether or

⁵ This article relies on an in-depth study of Naugle's work *Worldview: the history of a concept* (2002). This work and the rediscovery of the study of 'world and life view' as a construct may provide new paradigmatic direction to critical media and cultural studies with its emphasis on ideology and contribute to a more nuanced comprehension of the cognitive nature, workings and complexity of an omnipresent and invasive *mediasphere*.

⁶ Freud, S. (1962). The question of *Weltanschauung* in *New introductory lectures on psycho-analysis and other works*, Vol. 22. In *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (pp. 158-82). London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.

not psychoanalysis in itself constitutes a specific world and life view. Freud was of the opinion that an emphasis on the subconscious and the workings of the unconscious as the deep structure of human behaviour is in itself a way of thinking about the world and about life.

Jung⁷, however, was deeply concerned about the true and phenomenological meaning of world and life view (*Weltanschauung*). He began to acknowledge the importance of both the therapist and the patient's world and life view in any treatment. He claimed "that an effective treatment aimed at the care of the soul (*cura animarum*) must take into consideration the deeper issues and questions about the meaning of a person and the world as a whole ..." (Naugle, 2002: 218). As Naugle (op cit) points out, Jung laid claim to the concept of *wholeness*. To him *wholeness* meant the *total person*. He saw the person's world and life view as being central in this wholeness.

Relating this to journalism (and peace journalism as an expression and reflection of a journalist's world and life view) an important question is how much of the research and theorisation about journalism and journalists take into account the 'wholeness' (including the world and life view) of the journalist? Jung's concept of *wholeness* and how it may find expression in a journalist's work (and even in journalism as an expression of *wholeness*) especially from the semiotic perspective on the media as a semiosphere of meaning (or the mediashpere) (cf. Fourie, 2010(a)) may be a rewarding angle both for future journalism research and peace journalism research.

According to Jung (cf. Naugle, 2002: 218-222), world and life view is probably one of the most complex psychic structures in a human being. It constitutes the antithesis of the physiologically conditioned psyche and ultimately determines the latter's fate. *Convictions* (about anything) are the realisation and tangible form of a world and life view. A conviction may from time to time be shattered, but being cognitively deeply rooted in the human psyche, it repeatedly emerges as an index and as the context for thinking and behaviour. The strength of a world and life view and how it becomes conscious in the form of convictions depend on the flexibility and elasticity of a world and life view and its capacity to adapt to changing times and circumstances.

The following are some of the more specific characteristics of world and life view described by Jung. These may have a bearing on an understanding of peace journalism as a representation of the values of a world and life view:

A world and life view:

- Determines the holder's view regarding destiny
- Guides the holder's understanding of the world and its people

⁷ Jung, C.G. (1966). Psychotherapy and a philosophy of life. In *The practice of psychotherapy: essays on the Psychology of the transference and other subjects* (pp. 76-83). New York: Pantheon Books.

- Claims to be objective, but is essentially subjective because it is based on a person's own culture, history and education
- May change from time to time but will survive and even thrive as a result of having been tested
- Can harden into rigidity.

As far as journalism is concerned, it can be inferred from the above that both journalists' way of thinking about the world, people and life, and how this is reflected or expressed in their work, are based on their own, intrinsic individual and psychologically deeply rooted world and life views. Such world and life views are the result of the journalists' own historical, religious, cultural and educational inheritances, backgrounds and their growth.

2.2 Sociology and the concept of 'world and life view'

The seminal sociologist, Karl Mannheim⁸ (Naugle, 2002: 222-227), saw *world and life view* as *a priori* to any social theory or theory of society. He also regarded it as being similar to *Zeitgeist*. The analysis of world and life view is only possible through an analysis of the different cultural parts that make up the specific *Zeitgeist* of a particular era or epoch. For Mannheim, world and life view was the social totality constituting the primary substance of thought.⁹

In trying to understand journalism, it can be deduced from Mannheim's work (also his later analyses of *Zeitgeist(s)*) that cultural artefacts such as the media are documentary evidence of a world and life view and that such artefacts can only be fully understood as being both the result and part of a world and life view. Journalism expresses and reflects a world and life view that is, for Mannheim, an *a priori*, primal or primordial consciousness of a society's fundamental values about and attitudes towards the world (cf. Mannheim, 1971).

Two later sociologists whose work on world and life view is also important towards coming to an understanding of journalism (and of peace journalism) are Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) (cf. Naugle, 227-233).

Having accepted the *a priori* or atheoretical nature of world and life view, Berger and Luckmann were, unlike Freud and Mannheim, not so much interested in the phenomenological and epistemological nature of world and life view, but rather in how world and life views are generated, distributed and maintained in social groups in general and embraced by individuals within a society.

⁸ Mannheim, K. (1971). On the interpretation of *Weltanschauung*. In K.H. Wolff (Ed.), *From Karl Mannheim* pp. 8-58. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁹ Mannheim's thinking about world and life view as being *a priori* and thus as preceding theory and analysis, forms the foundation of the seminal Calvinist theologian and philosopher, Abraham Kuyper, for whom the *a priori* was the Christian God (Naugle, 2002: 225-227).

Berger and Luckmann arrive at an understanding of world and life view as being possible only through an understanding (description, analysis and interpretation) of the ordinary person's *lifeworld* (life and objects). Under the influence of Alfred Schutz they argue, inter alia, that the significance of the historical sociocultural life world (*Lebenswelt*) of common people is the primary source of understanding world and life view as the *a priori* foundation of cognitive awareness. In their work, *The Social construction of reality* (1966: 3), they emphasise the importance of acknowledging ordinary people's (common) knowledge and experience of their world as being not only based on but also constituting the antecedents (*a priori* foundations) of their world and life views. They emphasise that the sociology of knowledge must seek to understand the process(es) by which knowledge is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations in such a way that knowledge becomes a taken-for-granted 'reality' for the person in the street.

From this it can be argued that, in a media-dominated and media-saturated world (the *media sphere*), journalism, as the flagship genre of the media, plays a central role not only in producing and conveying knowledge and understandings of the world and of human behaviour but also in positioning such knowledge as being 'natural', taken for granted and part of the media user's processes of *individuation*.

Berger furthermore develops what he calls the concept of a 'sacred canopy', which one can understand as being synonymous with world and life view or as representing another understanding of the concept world and life view. By this, he means a "shield of beliefs to protect humans from what would otherwise be an alienating and meaningless cosmos" (Naugle, 2002: 232).

Berger (1967) goes on to explain 'canopy' or 'shield' as a comprehensive system of law and order based on and justified by the values of a world and life view, its purpose being to protect people from spiritual, psychological and physical harm, to protect them from what Camus and Sartre elsewhere describe as the state of the "hopelessness" and "futility" of life for Camus a "plague", for Sartre an "experience of unmitigated 'nausea'" (cf. Berger, 1967: 23-24).

An important question arising from the above, and one that can be central in the discussion of journalism (including peace journalism) is: What is the role of journalism and the journalist's representations and interpretations of inter alia conflict, violence, terrorism and war in creating the 'ordinary' person's world and life view? Secondly, how does journalism, in its variety and diversity of forms, expose, represent and interpret the values of a world and life view epitomising violence and hate instead of a world and life view seeking peace? Does journalism, through the values of the world and life views it communicates, provide a 'shell' against war, violence and conflict and, if so, how and what? These questions can be addressed through various quantitative and qualitative content and discourse analyses with the purpose of exposing the values of the world and life views of journalists. Different kinds of analyses can expose how the values of journalists' world and life views are, for example, embedded in their use of language, images and various production codes (cf. Fourie, 2011a).

From the above it is evident that the essence of journalism ethics and professional conduct should emanate from an acute awareness that representation and interpretation are precisely what journalism is doing, also in its reflection on conflict, violence, terrorism and war and that a life and world view about this is inherent in journalism and always latently present. This is where the need for journalism's responsibility and ethics comes in: in producing representations and interpretations of violence, conflict and war that would signify an underlying world and life view in support of peace and which, accordingly, acknowledges human dignity.

Finally, a discussion of sociology's treatment of world and life view is incomplete without reference to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's ideas about world and life view. Their ideas are important in the sense that they primarily viewed world and life view as *ideology* and focussed on the materialistic and economic domain of world and life view (cf. Naugle, 2002: 233-238.) Marx (and before him Engels)¹⁰, made it clear that ideology is world and life view deliberately being used as a weapon for social and political interest and for the *creation and distribution of false beliefs*.

Whereas, up to Marx, it was argued that false beliefs in society were the result of intellectual limitations and the rhetoric of propagandists, Marx was the first to liken world and life view to false belief, and false belief to class distinction and division in society, with the economically dominant class "requiring the existence of false beliefs for its continued dominance" (cf. Bhiku, 1982; Naugle, 2002: 236).

With his emphasis on ideology (as being equivalent to world and life view) Marx was not intrigued by the *a priori* nature or ontology of world and life view. For him the *a priori* nature of world and life view was clear and could be explained by the dynamics of cultural deception and domination. He considered world and life view as not to have been preceded by an *a priori* belief, condition, emotion and feeling, but as the direct result of material productivity and the kind of social relations thus created. World and life view is the purposeful and calculated instrument of power serving the interests of the stronger party as a "mystifying interpretation of the order of things" (Naugle, 2002: 238). Ideology is world and life view to ensure the hegemony of the dominant economic class.

Marx's view, as explained by Naugle, can be used to explain how the political economy of the (Western) mainstream and capitalist media expresses and distributes a capitalist life and world view through its commercialist predisposition. As is well known in critical media studies, this mediated capitalist (power) ideology is criticised from various perspectives.¹¹ However, underlying this ideology is a world and life view more fundamental than a mere commercialist

¹⁰ Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1947). *The German ideology*. (R. Pascal, Ed.). New York: International Publishers.

¹¹ See footnote 5

and capitalist predisposition. It involves all the values that allow and permeate a materialist world and life view.

2.3 A semiotic world and life view

The above is a brief overview of some of the important social-scientific views about what constitutes a world and life view. In addition, contemporary research identifies semiotics as a world and life view. This view emphasises the understanding of world and life view as a semiotic phenomenon and act.¹²

Semiotics describes the human act of producing, interpreting and understanding signs and symbols. In terms of semiotics, producing, using and understanding signs and codes form the basic cognitive structure of the human being. Naugle (2002), as one of the eminent scholars in the field of world and life view, builds his theory of semiotics as a world and life view on the work of one of the founding fathers of semiotics, namely Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce maintained that *all* human thought, cognition and behaviour were semiotic (consisted of signs, codes, processes of signification, and the attachment of meaning and interpretation to signs and codes) (cf. Peirce, 1958).

With this as point of departure, it can be reasoned that semiotics as a world and life view entails that the holder of such a world and life view is acutely aware of the use of signs and codes and how they signify the meanings s/he attaches to the world and to life, of how signs and codes are preconditions for meaning (or how meaning is preconditioned by signs and codes), of how the world and life are preconditioned by signs and codes, and of the contextual and relativistic nature of all meaning.

Of specific relevance to an understanding of journalism as a semiotic world and life view and/or journalism as a semiotic act, is the inherent nature of a semiotic world and life view as a narrative. In this regard, Naugle (op cit) reasons that the internal structure of all signs and codes is that of a narrative. All signs and codes tell stories and are formulated and interpreted as a set of narratives or stories that establish a particular perspective on life. A world and life view as a semiotic structure consists primarily of a network of narrative signs that offers an interpretation of reality and establish an overarching framework for life in a narrative fashion.

Since people are storytelling creatures who define themselves and the cosmos in a narrative fashion, the content of a worldview seems best associated with the most relevant activity of human nature. A worldview as a semiotic system of world-interpreting stories also provides a foundation or governing platform upon or by which people think and interpret [the world and their realities –PJF] (Naugle, 2002: 291).

¹² For an explanation of semiotics (the science of signs and codes and/or the science of meaning) see, for example, Fourie, 2009; 2010a, 2012

Applying this to the media (and journalism), media semiotics emphasises the narrative nature and character of the media as consisting of numerous small narratives. The narrative nature of the media finds expression in, for example, journalists referring to their own work as 'stories'. How do the media, as a semiotic construct, tell their stories and through these stories convey world and life views? This happens, as is discussed in the next section, through processes of signification, representation, rhetoric and dialogue.

3. THE MEDIA AS A SEMIOTIC CONSTRUCT

Given the nature of the semiotic world and life view (and of life and the world as a process of *semiosis*), and given the nature of the new media landscape and the new postmodern society and how it bears on contemporary media production, practice and eventually the content and form of the media¹³, it is not too difficult to perceive, understand and describe the media as a semiotic construct and act.¹⁴

From this follows that the work and profession of the journalist is semiotic in nature and as such a semiotic carrier and conveyer of world and life views. It can then be argued that instead of 'producing' a genre called 'peace journalism' (which may, as already noted, be seen to be advocacy journalism and as such 'journalistic ideology'), one would rather expect journalists to display a sharp ethical awareness of the nature of their work as being a semiotic carrier and conveyor of *a priori* world and life views. The question journalists should ask is how does their work represent the values of a world and life view conducive to peace, or are their representations of war, conflict terrorism and protests innately representations of values typical of war and conflict? *Journalistic ideology* refers to contemporary (after World War II) mainstream journalism's tendency to be 'leftist', per definition 'anti-government', and innately in opposition to power. This is described by various authors in their discussions of the so-called 'crisis of journalism' – a crisis pertaining to journalism's loss of objectivity and credibility (cf. e.g. Allan, 2005). In his discussion of the 'leftist' nature of journalism, Kenneth Minogue (2005) refers to the "corrupting devices of journalism". According to Minogue "the tricks of the trade of journalism" or what is usually understood to be the professional practices of journalism related to the selection, writing, editing and publication of news, cause journalists to, inter alia, (1) become hopelessly addicted to pointless puns (especially in headlines); (2) to treat politics as if it were a sports contest; and, (3) to turn rivalries into 'rows'

¹³ The nature of the new digitised media landscape and of postmodern society is well described by media theorists. Fourie (cf. 2010b; 2010c; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2012), for example, emphasises the diversity of numerous media platforms and genres brought about by convergence and digitisation as one of the outstanding characteristics of the new media landscape, one that fundamentally impacts on media practice, media use, media policy, and in general, the conceptualisation of pluralism. As far as postmodern society is concerned, he also emphasises diversity, hybridity and fragmentation as being responsible for a variety of public spheres in society, democracy as being in flux, and concepts such as *public opinion*, *public interest* and *freedom of expression* as being constantly renegotiated.

¹⁴ See in this regard Fourie's description (2010a) of the media as *mediasphere* of meaning analogous to Jurij Lotman's classic description of literature as *semiosphere* of meaning.

by talking up competition into conflict and hatred. From this position of power, journalists adopt a position of blind and unquestioned *oppositonality*, negativity and a universal scepticism of everything else that is powerful, established and superior. At the same time, journalists adopt a kind of meta-moralistic addiction to tolerance, secularism, ecumenism and anti-discrimination, thus turning journalism into 'outright liberal advocacy'. This kind of journalism, if not characteristic of contemporary journalism, has become an ideology in itself, the so-called 'journalistic ideology' (see Fourie, 2011a; Minogue, 2005).

What constitutes the media as a semiotic act?¹⁵ For the purposes of this article, four essential characteristics are expounded: the media as a signifying system (or the media as signification), the media as representation, the media as rhetoric, and the media as dialogue. This can also be formulated as follows: journalists communicate the values of a world and life view through signification, representation, dialogue and rhetoric.¹⁶

3.1 Signification

The process of mediated signification comprises a series of semiotic activities through which the media *signify* meaning. Some of the outstanding characteristics of mediated meaning is that it is produced making use of various sign systems (linguistic and visual communication), each with its own communication qualities and modalities. This makes the media a powerful communication instrument through which strong and rich representations of reality or aspects thereof are produced.

A second outstanding characteristic of mediated signification is that various choices of both the communicator (journalist) and the media user are involved. These choices relate to the selection of content (what to represent and what not), ways in which the selected content are represented (codes such as writing style, camera-use and the various options available in this regard, editing, and so on), in other words, codes of content and codes of form through which the journalist interprets and presents a structured representation ('story'/narrative/telling the story) embedded in the values underlying his/her world and life view. In semiotics, this is known as the processes of meaning articulation. The articulations of meaning can differ

¹⁵ Thinking about the media as a semiotic act and construct is nothing new. It can be traced back to early Greek thinking about the rhetorical and dialogic role of public communication. It has also been prominent in early mass communication studies in the work of, for example, Ernest Goffman, the tradition of symbolic interactionism, the semiotics of Umberto Eco and Roland Barthes, and in the seminal work of communication scholars such as John Fiske and John Hartley. From literature studies, the semiotic work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Yuri Lotman is increasingly encountered in the study of contemporary theory of mediated communication because of their emphasis on dialogue and rhetoric in symbolic forms of expression, such as literature (cf. Aktherov & Fourie, 2011).

¹⁶ In two articles and a book chapter, the author expounds on signification, representation, rhetoric and dialogue as the essential communicative constructs of and in mediated communication. The articles, from which this discussion is elicited, are: Fourie, 2011b; Fourie, 2011c; Fourie, 2012.

between mediums, communicators and media users. Articulations depend on circumstances (e.g. deadlines), knowledge (about a topic), education, culture (including pre-existing opinions and ideological attitudes about the topic), and, in general, media literacy.¹⁷ It is based on the cognitive capacity and strategy of both communicators and media users and on the values constituting their world and life views and the associated values of these.

The cognitive processes are also known as processes of *semiosis*, which, in terms of a diversity of meanings, can be created and are almost impossible to describe in a comprehensive manner (in semiotic analysis itself it usually requires a systematic breakdown of units of signification). The diversity of significations makes any generalisation about media content, form and presentation almost impossible, and thus media criticism (also of violent and conflict-oriented media coverage) a rather ambiguous activity (in the sense that different substantiated opinions can be raised). In terms of the premise of this article, the question is: How aware are journalists of the impact of their world and life views and the associated values of these on the processes of signification in their work and of how they arrive at meaning?

Further characteristics of mediated meaning and processes of signification are, inter alia, their

- Narrative nature (already referred to)
- Different genres (reports, interpretative articles, crime, war reporting, politics, etc.), all signifying meaning according to specific generic codes
- Intertextuality, for example, how different stories about the same topic in the same and different media relate to each other and together denote and connote meanings about a topic.

From the above it is clear that the processes of creating meaning and signifying meaning about a topic are processes informed by many choices having to be made by both journalists and media users in their processes of interpreting and understanding media content and form. As is the case with all communication, journalists are seldom knowingly aware or conscious of these processes. It happens, as Bourdieu (in Barnhurst, 2005) argues, in a habitual way. Similarly, media users are seldom aware of the cognitive processes involved in

¹⁷ Bourdieu argues that the shortcomings of the journalistic profession stem from *structural limitations* such as (1) economic “censorship” (the fact that journalism is practised as a business with questions about cost and profits dictating content); (2) the limitations of time, space and format; and, (3) pace, work routines, and conditions of labour. These structural limitations dictate which news events and how and why they are covered. Being increasingly heterogeneous in nature, Bourdieu argues that the media and journalists are losing control from within and are subject to external forces, especially the commercial pressures in a consolidating globalising industry. This, according to Bourdieu, causes ‘symbolic violence’, which occurs internally as journalists become involved in self-censorship without realising it and which occurs externally as the news industries produce conditions of what Bourdieu considers to be demagoguery (cf. Barnhurst, 2005: 1). The big problem is that journalists accept the structural limitations as the ‘tricks’ of their trade - as how things should be done and they seldom question them.

their understanding of the media. Media messages (meanings) are therefore most of the time unquestioned and taken for granted.

Nevertheless, as a semiotic act and construct, the media are similar to other symbolic forms of expression, such as a novel, a drama, a painting, poetry, etcetera. In the case of these forms of expression, however, the creators are (usually) acutely aware of what they are doing. In contrast to these forms of expression, the news media are expected to be objective in their portrayal and representation of something and to convey the 'truth' and tell the 'full story'. However, at the same time, and because of their being a symbolic form of expression and as such a *representation* of something, it is phenomenologically impossible for the media to be objective and to tell the full story. (Fourie (2012) warns that motivated criticism against, for example, the media's lack of objectivity and related topics is almost impossible and cannot be substantiated against the background of this phenomenological nature of the media. Criticism can only be valid if it acknowledges and emphasises the diversity, plurality and intertextuality of the media and against the background thereof, the relativity of criticism.)

3.2 Representation

A second characteristic of journalism as a semiotic act (cf. Fourie, 2011b) is that it is always a representation.

'Representation' and the problem of the truth or the falseness of a representation have been dealt with for ages and can, for example, be traced back to the work of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Kant, and today in various branches of philosophy, the arts, literature studies and critical media studies. The problem and complexity of journalistic representations, also of violence, crime, war and, increasingly, protests and demonstrations, are no exception. On the contrary, fundamental questions about journalism as gate-keeping, agenda-setting and framing, and also about critical matters related to news selection, news values, the authenticity, the truthfulness and the objectivity of journalism can all be linked to the phenomenological nature and quality of journalistic representation. It all concerns the question whether journalism is an authentic and true or a false portrayal of something/somebody. They are all concerned with the journalistic processes of selecting and defining what news is.

As referred to above, from a phenomenological point of view, journalism can never be the 'full' truth about a topic or object. As a semiotic representation of something, journalism is always:

- An abstraction of reality. That is, all journalism is a space-time structured portrayal of reality or an aspect thereof. A 'story' captures and frames something in a specific time and a specific space. What happens before and after the act of capturing (writing the story/filing the television or radio report) is neither known, seen nor heard by the media user and, as far as the media user is concerned, is indicative of the journalist's perception and understanding of the topic at that moment, even if the story may later be followed-up.

- A structured narrative (telling a story). Journalism frames something in the format of a story (see also the discussion of narrative above and of rhetoric below). A story is always structured with a beginning, a body and an end.
- A schematic trace of the truth and of reality. Schemata, as understood in the cognitive and human behavioural sciences, are based on preconceived, social-cultural understandings and pre-existing knowledge of reality. In short, an 'innocent eye' simply does not exist.
- A producer, disseminator and circulator of social myths and ideologies. Journalism seldom questions social 'truths' or social myths (understandings and interpretations of reality passed on from generation to generation about culture, social beliefs, politics, life, etc.), but rather confirms and reaffirms social myths. For example, the very essence of *war* (What is war?/Why war?) and of *violence* (What is violence?/Why violence?) is seldom questioned.
- A producer of hyper-realities and simulacra of the real. Despite the above phenomenological characteristics of journalism as representation, journalism has the appearance of being a true, realistic and objective semblance of something. In this lies journalism's iconic and symbolic power and its power as a source of information and persuasive communication. Journalism (and thus the media) becomes a hyperreality (a superreality in and for itself of something) and as such a simulacrum of reality (cf. Baudrillard, 1983).

What the above emphasises is the symbolic nature (and power) of journalism. It also emphasises, as in the case of all symbolic forms of expression, journalism's potential to express values – in this case, the values of an underlying world and life view.

3.3 Rhetoric

A third characteristic of journalism as a semiotic act is its rhetorical nature and style (cf. Fourie, 2011c).

Similar to the long and profound research tradition related to representation, rhetoric too has a similar research tradition that can, inter alia, be traced back to classic Greek thinking about the nature of public communication. Journalism as public communication was seen to address, through storytelling (including myths), peoples' need to find answers to questions about identity, ability, human survival (continued existence), understanding (of life, humanity and the world), and information/knowledge (about whatever topic) (Rosenfield & Mader, 1984: 475-544). These questions and their answers are addressed in a *rhetorical fashion* in the sense that they underlie and can be found repetitively in each story, programme, genre, article, column, etcetera, and underlie news values in the Galtung and Ruge sense of the concept. Does a 'story' provide knowledge about identity, ability, and/or survival? Questions and answers about identity, ability, survival, understanding and knowledge are inherent in all symbolic forms of expression, be they art, literature, sculpture, painting, etcetera, and also in journalism as a semiotic act and as a process of *semiosis* (meaning-making and meaning-

understanding). Again, dealing with matters such as identity, ability, survival and knowledge cannot be separated from a world and life view and its values. They are closely linked to and present in all representations of war, violence, conflict, and the like.

To reiterate: Through its 'stories', journalism is overtly and/or latently addressing questions about:

- Identity: By representing, interpreting and examining *relationships* between people, groups, cultures, nations, in a rhetorical fashion (prescriptively and repetitively) and in its various stories about various topics (politics, crime, war, the environment, etc.) journalism provides answers about roles and functions in society, groups and individuals. As such, matters of identity are both inherently addressed and the values of a world and life view are conveyed.
- Ability: Journalism seeks to answer questions about possibilities (options, opportunities, prospects), for example, how to behave in certain circumstances, what to do, how to solve problems, etcetera.
- Survival (continued existence, endurance, life and death): Journalism seeks to answer questions about values related to, for example, existence, relationships and religion. In so doing, it addresses human fears about destruction and ultimately death.
- Understanding of life, the world and reality: Journalism (as is the case with all media content) seeks to answer questions and shed light on reality or an aspect thereof and so lead the media user to an understanding of life, the world and 'reality'.

In short: It is from the perspectives of the values of world and life views that journalism conveys representations, interpretations and knowledge of and about human identity, ability and survival. Journalists should ask themselves to what extent their representations of war provide peace-oriented answers to issues of identity, ability, survival and knowledge towards peaceful co-existence.

3.4 Dialogue

A fourth characteristic of journalism as a semiotic act is its dialogical nature (cf. e.g. Fourie, 2011b). Different stories (journalistic accounts) about the same topic in different media can create dialogue about a topic (be it the war in Afghanistan or crime in South Africa) in the media itself, between different media, between media and media users, and between media users themselves. Through dialogue, different and/or specific world and life views are communicated.

Journalism as dialogue is especially prominent in the new digital media's horizontal relationship of interactivity and interconnectivity in two-way communication between communicators (journalists) and media users, while this was not the case in the vertical relationship between communicator and recipients in the 'old' mass media. Dialogue is also prominent in journalisms' underlying ideology (cf. Minogue, 2005 on journalistic ideology)

of and emphasis on (1) a democratic voice for everyone; (2) being a platform for as “many voices” as possible; and, (3) journalism’s so-called defence of democratic values through dialogue. (Some authors such as Minogue, 2005) refer to this as the liberal or leftist ideology that dominates journalism.) In the end, it is contemporary journalism’s nature and emphasis on dialogue that contribute to the forming of public opinion and of a public sphere for debate and deliberation, and through which an underlying world and life view becomes apparent. Obviously, at the same time, journalism can also obscure and obstruct dialogue.

The dialogical nature of journalism is central to questions and issues related to freedom of expression, the right to know and media ethics. The core questions are: Does journalism contribute to dialogue or does it obscure it? What is the quality of journalistic dialogue? What is the quality that public-sphere journalism creates and through which world and life views find expression? As far as peace journalism is concerned, the question is whether and how journalism’s representations of war and conflict and the values it communicates contribute to dialogue about peace and what are the values of the world and life views underlying such dialogue(s).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the above, it can be argued that a profound understanding and awareness within a journalist of the nature of journalism as a semiotic act may contribute to a sensitivity about the inherent values of a world and life view being communicated by journalistic representations and interpretations. In the case of peace journalism, such awareness will relate to the journalist’s innate world and life view of humanity and the role of peace versus conflict, war versus violence in human society. Journalists may be unaware of how their choice of topics (news selection) and use of representational codes (in short, language, camera, editing and overall ‘style’ of reporting) may innately (and even if not meant to be) emphasise a violent view of humanity and society and of how his/her processes of meaning-production may support violence and conflict. This, for example, often happens in the almost aesthetically framed and presented images (and thus representations) of war in the myriad of daily photographic, television, radio, Internet and newspaper reports about wars, conflicts, terrorism and protests. If they are aesthetically conceived (in other words, with the emphasis on ‘striking’ images and ‘touching’ descriptions) representations may/could be interpreted and understood as a glorification of violence and conflict. Having an awareness of his/her inherent world and life view and how this is reflected in journalistic representations, requires that the journalist will have an understanding of how journalistic work as a semiotic act produces meaning (signifying representations) in rhetorical and dialogical ways (as described in 4.1–4.4).

In the end it boils down to journalists’ profound ethical awareness and responsibility – an awareness of how their work signifies world and life views and the importance of the world and life views being represented in and by the media in people’s cognitive understanding and experience of their worlds and lives.

Regarding ethics, Keeble (2005: 56-64) identifies a number of categories of current discourses about journalism ethics. The categories can also be seen as the way in which journalists experience journalism ethics:

More often than not, journalists (according to Keeble) have a cynical, almost amoral, approach to and thinking about the ethics of what they are doing. Newsworthiness, determined by whether a story will sell, and the profit motive, are the main determinants of ethical behaviour. Such journalists follow an ethically relativistic approach in respect of the formal codes of their work. Secondly, there are those journalists who unquestionably commit themselves to professional and trade union codes of ethics. These codes are seldom questioned, argued and/or adapted either to given or new circumstances. A third category is the so-called liberal-professional approach. These journalists emphasise the media's social responsibility and modify reality and reporting reality (e.g. reporting war) to suit a social responsibility ethos. For example, come what may, it is the media's social responsibility to report the gruesomeness of war in the most realistic ways because war is gruesome and the media is the truth. In opposition to the above ways of thinking about journalism ethics, there are also those journalists (and media critics and analysts) who follow a radical approach to ethics. They tend to see all arguments about, for example, the journalist's ethical position on matters such as public opinion, freedom of expression, objectivity, neutrality, and so on, as constituting myths.

Keeble (op cit) then argues that the old Cartesian dualities that characterise journalism ethics (right/wrong, good/bad, emotion/reason, objective/subjective), are worthless, especially in the new media landscape that is characterised by quantity and diversity. What should be emphasised are the choices of the journalist. Apart from a journalist's numerous choices related to form and content, the journalist also has a choice to communicate through a medium (or media) that allows him/her to justify his/her ethical behaviour (professional practices). For example, if journalists are unable to agree with mainstream newspapers' focus on violence and crime, they have the choice of moving on to another newspaper, radio station, television channel, the Internet, and so on, that support their ethical view(s) that is, at least, in principle.

However relativistic and postmodernist such a position may be, it emphasises the topic of *choice*. To that, this article adds that being aware of journalism as a semiotic act entails that journalists be aware of the meaning and consequences of their choices and how their choices represent in rhetorical and dialogical ways the values of a world and life view of hate and violence or peace.

In conclusion: This article has argued that an alternative way of understanding peace journalism is not to focus on peace journalism as an ideological manipulation of the reality of war, conflict, terrorism, and so on, but to be aware of, investigate and practise journalism as a semiotic act in and through which the *a priori* or innate values of a world and life view are represented, and to determine how such values could inherently signify peace and/or war and conflict. Such awareness should heighten journalists, researchers and media users' sensitivity about what and how war and peace are communicated. With this as the essential argument, the article started off by asking what peace journalism is. This was followed by an explanation of what is meant by *world and life view*. The article concluded with a description of how signification, representation,

dialogue and rhetoric constitute the semiotic nature and character of journalism as a semiotic act and thus as an act of representing and interpreting the values of a world and life view which may or may not be indicative of peace.

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