

The Pope in the public eye. Distortions as a result of communication deficiency

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Abstract: *The media coverage about Pope Benedict XVI is generally critical, often negative. This article studies what the trigger for a such negative media coverage was, if the reasons for this are communicative problems or theological problems, respectively deficiencies. It also analyses the reactions of the Vatican and the way they manage crises. The type of media coverage does not depend just on the content, but also on its editing and representation. The public relations of institutions need to take into consideration the way the media absorb and deliver information and try to provide the appropriate context for the desired results.*

“It’s in the nature of the media itself [...] to oscillate between what’s important and what’s not important [...]. People are not there when something happens, but they read a report about it in the media, a report which is already an interpretation and a selection and finally that report will be more important than the fact itself, this means we begin to live more and more by appearance – and we also start to produce for the appearance. Politicians, religious people start to ask themselves, not what is right, but what will be accepted by others, how will it be covered in the media and how will it be perceived. This means that one does not act anymore for the sake of reality, according to ones principles, but for the sake of appearance. This type of slavery is cataclysmic for public people, politicians and for religious people [...].”¹ These were

¹ In a discussion with August Everding, in: Bayerischer Rundfunk: meeting in Rome, 1997.

the words of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger 1997 – eight years before he was elected head of the Roman-Catholic Church. He has not let himself be led by the temptation of the media to become – quote „servant of his own appearance“², neither before nor after he has been elected Pope. If he had been producing more for the appearance, the media wouldn't have labeled him as „the fallible“³ or „the engrossed“⁴.

The media coverage about Pope Benedict XVI. is generally critical, often negative, sometimes even destructive – even in Germany. The election of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, as the first German Pope after almost 500 years, has been celebrated (the newspaper BILD- publishes on 20.04.2005 articles with the headline „Wir sind Papst!“ (*We are Pope*)), but some of the Pope's declarations and actions have been criticized intensely. Two situations have been discussed the most: the case „Mohammed“ from the year 2006 and the case „Williamson“ from the year 2009. Both cases have been covered in a negative way in the international media and have led to strong reactions. In this context, some questions have to be answered:

- What was the trigger for a such negative media coverage? Are the reasons for this communicative problems or theological problems, respectively deficiencies?
- What were the reactions of the Vatican? How can one evaluate the crisis management of the Vatican?

1. Events and (their) news

„A dog bites a man – this is not news, but: a man bites a dog – this is news“, claimed 1880 John B. Bogart⁵, local editor of the American newspaper the SUN. In this manner he made it clear that not every event can become news and that an event must be something really extraordinary, respectively special, to gain the character of news. In other words: an event has to have a certain news value, in order to become news.⁶ This news value is the result of (the number and importance of) news factors – journalistic criteria, that make the difference between valuable and non valuable media.⁷ Really important news factors are for example status (of an actor) and relevance

² *Ibidem*.

³ Smoltczyk, Alexander: Der Fehlbare, in: Der Spiegel 47/2006, p. 112.

⁴ Title of Spiegel in 6/2009.

⁵ Cit. in: Strohmeier, Gerd: Politik und Massenmedien. Eine Einführung, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2004, p. 113.

⁶ Lippmann, Walter: Public Opinion, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922; Östgaard, Einar: Factors Influencing the Flow of News, in: Journal of Peace Research, (1965) 2, S. 39-63; Galtung, Johan / Ruge, Mari H.: The Structure of Foreign News. The Presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in four Norwegian Newspapers, in: Journal of Peace Research, (1965) 2, p. 65-91.

⁷ Scherer, Helmut: Nachrichtenfaktoren, in: Jarren, Otfried / Sarcinelli, Ulrich / Saxer, Ulrich (Hrsg.): Politische Kommunikation in der demokratischen Gesellschaft. Ein Handbuch mit Lexikonteil, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998, p. 60.

(of an action). Consequently, the declarations and the actions of the Pope have still kept a high level of news value – as the status of the Roman-Catholic Church and that of the Pope are still very high.

The fact that media are constantly reporting about a certain actor, doesn't mean that those articles that are published have a positive content. The reporting about a fact, does not depend exclusively on the fact itself, but usually on the editing and the representation of that fact. Clever „news management“ respectively „spin doctoring“⁸ lead to positive reports, in the same manner as (conscious or unconscious) ignoring of the media lead to negative reports. Consequently, the type of media coverage about the Pope's declarations and actions does not depend just on the content, but also on its editing and representation.

2. The “Mohammed” case

On 12.09.2006 Pope Benedict XVI. made a speech at the University Regensburg during his visit in Germany, a speech about „Faith, reason and university. Memories and reflections“ – and this speech became (unintentionally) one of the most read, discussed and disputed lectures, since the Sermon on the Mount.⁹ We will quote some of the most important part of his lecture. The Pope began his lecture with these words: „It is a moving experience for me to be back again in the university and to be able once again to give a lecture at this podium. I think back to those years when, after a pleasant period at the Freisinger Hochschule, I began teaching at the University of Bonn.“¹⁰ Then the Pope spoke about the time he spent in Bonn and also about people's doubts about the existence of God: „It was once reported that a colleague had said there was something odd about our university: it had two faculties devoted to something that did not exist: God. That even in the face of such radical skepticism it is still necessary and reasonable to raise the question of God through the use of reason, and to do so in the context of the tradition of the Christian faith: this, within the university as a whole, was accepted without question. I was reminded of all this recently, when I read the edition by Professor Theodore Khoury (Münster) of part of the dialogue carried on – perhaps in 1391 in the winter barracks near Ankara – by the erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both.“¹¹ Then the Pope described how he had found the

⁸ Cf. Esser, Frank / Reinemann, Carsten: Mit Zuckerbrot und Peitsche. Wie deutsche und britische Journalisten auf das News Management politischer Spin Doctors reagieren, in: Holtz-Bacha, Christina (Hrsg.): Wahlkampf in den Medien – Wahlkampf mit den Medien. Ein Reader zum Wahljahr 1998, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1999.

⁹ Smoltczyk, Alexander: Der Fehlbare, in: Der Spiegel 47/2006, abgerufen auf www.spiegel.de.

¹⁰ Papst Benedikt XVI.: Glaube, Vernunft und Universität. Erinnerungen und Reflexionen“, Universität Regensburg, 12.09.2006, abrufbar unter www.vatican.va.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

idea, that he intended to present in his lecture („to raise the question of God through the use of reason“). The introduction of this subject was exhaustive and surprisingly substantial. Then he went on: „Here I would like to discuss only one point – itself rather marginal to the dialogue as a whole – which, in the context of the issue of “faith and reason”, I found interesting and which can serve as the starting-point for my reflections on this issue.¹² It is important that the Pope looked at „just one – marginal point for the constitution of the dialog“, a point that was the “starting point” of his thoughts. But this marginal starting point, that has been originally used in the 14th century, has been a central point for people. And the Pope went on: „In the seventh conversation edited by Professor Khoury, the emperor touches on the theme of the holy war [...] Without descending to details, such as the difference in treatment accorded to those who have the “Book” and the “infidels”, he addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general, saying: “Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached”.¹³ With this quote, the Pope made a link to his (actual) subject: “The emperor, after having expressed himself so forcefully, goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul [...] The decisive statement in this argument against violent conversion is this: not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s nature [...] At this point, as far as understanding of *God* and thus the concrete practice of religion is concerned, we are faced with an unavoidable dilemma.”¹⁴

But for most of the media, the lecture began and ended with the question that was quoted by the Pope, from the Byzantine emperor – that was the marginal starting point for his deliberation, a point that dates back from a dialog of the 14th century. The quote about Mohammed, that was attributed to the Pope, directly, indirectly, by the media, but also by the public, determined the Pontifex to appear in public. Carolin Emcke described all this: “A single sentence is ripped out of its context, a simple quote that was used, is attributed to the speaker, the delicate argument of the speech is reduced to a shred.”¹⁵ To some extent this is not fair, but – for the connoisseurs of the modern media society – this is not necessarily surprising. The strong reactions all over the world have been surprising: indignation among the Muslims and violent acts in the Islamic world. In Somalia the Italian nun Leonella Sgorbati has been shot, in Irak and Pakistan dolls looking like the Pope have been burned, in Kashmir the police has confiscated newspapers, in order to avoid stronger reactions, and so on.

¹² *Ibidem.*

¹³ Pope Benedikt XVI.: Glaube, Vernunft und Universität. Erinnerungen und Reflexionen“, Universität Regensburg, 12.09.2006, abrufbar unter www.vatican.va.

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*

¹⁵ Emcke, Carolin: Entlarvt die Ideologen!, in: www.spiegel.de, 24.09.2006.

Without knowing the exact reasons, the context and the information the Pope had, we witness a strong reality difference: a difference between the reality from Regensburg and the reality of the media – but also, at least in the Islamic world, a difference between the reality of the media, and the reality of the public. The subject of the Pope was “Faith, reason and university. Memories and reflections”, while the subject of the media and the public was: “The Pope against Mohammed. Religious war against the Islam, reason and violence.”¹⁶ In other words: While the erudite theologian Ratzinger gave his academic speech in Regensburg in front of a benevolent public, made out of 1500 listeners (and was appraised therefore), Pope Benedict XVI made an involuntary comment about the Islam in front a public made out of millions of people (and was roughly criticized therefore). Especially in the case of communication thorough the media, one cannot avoid reality differences¹⁷. The inevitable selection and transformation mechanism of the media always leads to a difference between the (objective) reality and the reality of the media¹⁸ – and the inevitable perception and reflection patterns of the public also lead to differences between the reality of the public and that of the media¹⁹. But the differences in communication are not always that great, that the public always assimilates something different, than the media wants to express; the shortening and the modifying doesn't always lead to a distorted message. “The Pope wanted to express in his speech something completely different, than what some parts of the Islamic world have understood”, declared the vice-chancellor of the University of Regensburg.²⁰ “None of those who were present in that room, and some of the members of the public were Muslims, have interpreted that lecture in the way it was interpreted later”, claimed the former spokesperson of the Vatican Joaquín Navarro-Valls.²¹ Although the Pope has declared something that can be presented – at least in some parts of the media – as it has been presented, and can be interpreted – at least in some parts of the Islamic world – as it has been interpreted. Important is that “the context of the Pope's report has not calmed things

¹⁶ So titelte Der Spiegel in 38/2006. Noch während der Papst seine Vorlesung hielt, wurden Berichte über die Vorlesung mit dieser Botschaft verbreitet.

¹⁷ Schulz, Winfried: Politische Kommunikation. Theoretische Ansätze und Ergebnisse empirischer Forschung zur Rolle der Massenmedien in der Politik, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997, p. 78.

¹⁸ Schulz, Winfried: Politische Kommunikation. Theoretische Ansätze und Ergebnisse empirischer Forschung zur Rolle der Massenmedien in der Politik, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997, p. 78.

¹⁹ Brosius, Hans-Bernd: Modelle und Ansätze der Medienwirkungsforschung. Überblick über ein dynamisches Forschungsfeld, Bonn: ZV Zeitungs-Verlag Service, 1997, p. 36.

²⁰ Cit. in: www.spiegel.de, 15.09.2006.

²¹ Smolczyk, Alexander: Der Fehlbare, in: Der Spiegel 47/2006, abgerufen auf www.spiegel.de.

down”.²² Important is also the fact that the reality difference could have been avoided, if the selection and transformation mechanism of the media and the perception and reflection patterns of the public would have been anticipated. On the one side, the Pope could have simply excluded the quote about Mohammed: The Pontifex was actually not talking about Islam, but “on a high academic and abstract level, about the unity between religion and faith”²³ and has not criticized Islam, but the fact, that religion and faith have lost their meaning – he has referred also to Islam, which was not necessary in respect to the approached subject.²⁴ He could have at least referred to “the not so glorious crusades”.²⁵ On the other hand, the Pope could have distanced himself more from the statement about Mohammed, by criticizing not only the form, but also the content (which has not been done in the revised, respectively official version of the speech either). He could have at least performed “a clearer historic classification”²⁶ of the quote. We can only assume that – despite his skeptical feelings towards the media – the Pope has underrated the effect, that a lecture can trigger at a University, respectively the fact that a speech full of footnotes can be reduced to a “ten second soundbite”.²⁷

The communication problem of the Vatican has become obvious not only in the media coverage about the speech in Regensburg, but also in the reactions that followed (or moreover, didn't follow). On 14.09.2006, two days after the lecture, the new spokesperson of the Vatican, Federico Lombardi, has rejected the critics and has made a kind of rectification: “It has certainly not been the intention of the Pope to develop a deep study about the Jihad and about the beliefs of the Muslims in this respect.”²⁸ He has also reassured the public, that the Pope didn't intend to hurt the feeling of the Muslims and has said that the Pope respected and that he wanted to maintain the dialog to the Islamic people. Another two days later, on 16.09.2006, a tentative rectification and an indirect apology followed from the cardinal – the secretary of state, Tarcisio Bertone: “The holy father regrets, that some parts of his

²² Schwarz, Ulrich: Benedikt contra Mohammed, in: Der Spiegel – Jahres-Chronik 54/2006, abgerufen auf www.spiegel.de.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ Es ist natürlich nicht nachprüfbar und daher strittig, welche Bedeutung der Papst dem Zitat beigemessen hat bzw. inwiefern er damit Aussagen gegenüber dem Islam treffen wollte. Doch selbst wenn das Zitat mehr als eine unnötige Hinführung zum eigentlichen Kern der Vorlesung war, dürfte der Papst seine Wirkung deutlich unterschätzt und damit auch nicht einkalkuliert haben.

²⁵ Bednarz, Dieter et al.: Das Haus des Krieges, Der Spiegel 38/2006, p. 71.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ Smolczyk, Alexander: Der Fehlbare, in: Der Spiegel 47/2006, abgerufen auf www.spiegel.de.

²⁸ Cit. in: www.spiegel.de, 14.09.2006.

speech could have offended the Muslims.”²⁹ The Pope decided to speak directly only five days after the speech from Regensburg, on 17.09.2006. He regretted “from the bottom of his heart, the few passages of [his] speech at the University of Regensburg, that have led to reactions in some countries.”³⁰ At the same time he underlined the fact that, that those he used had been “quotes from an ancient text, which were not reflecting his personal beliefs.”³¹ From 28.11.2006 until 01.12.2006 the Pope finally visited Turkey – where he probably wanted to reestablish things – and declared that Turkey belonged to Europe, respectively – as it was interpreted, translated or at least believed in Turkey – belonged to the EU. In general, we can conclude that the crisis management of the Vatican was very slow and that it was not very efficient. It was far from a modern “spin doctoring” – that the modern media society knows and needs.

3. The “Williamson” case

On 21.01.2009 Pope Benedict XVI signed a decree that stipulated the revocation of the excommunication of four bishops of the traditional “Society of St. Pius X”. One of them was Richard Williamson, who denied the existence of the Holocaust. He claimed on the Swedish TV channel SVT: “Not a single Jew has been killed in a gas chamber.”³² He talked also about anti-Semitism: “If anti-Semitism is a bad thing, then it is against the truth. If something is true, then it cannot be wrong. I don’t care about the word anti-Semitism.”³³ The interview had been recorded in November 2008, but was published the same day Pope Benedict XVI signed the decree that stipulated the revocation of the excommunication of the four bishops – which has led of course to a range of speculations.³⁴

The worldwide reactions to the revocation of the excommunication and to Williamson’s declarations had been strong: the Jews were outraged. Karl Cardinal Lehmann from Mainz saw all of this as a “disaster”, the archbishop Werner Thissen from Hamburg saw it as a “sloppy work” respectively “an insupportable event”³⁵, the archbishop from Berlin and cardinal Georg Sterzinsky saw it as a situation that had to be fixed. At the same time he declared that the Pope should have been informed about “the Williamson case” before the interview was issued: “The hole world knew

²⁹ Cit. in: www.spiegel.de, 16.09.2006.

³⁰ Cit. in: Smoltczyk, Alexander: Der Fehlbare, in: *Der Spiegel* 47/2006, abgerufen auf www.spiegel.de.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² Cit. in: Berg, Stefan et al.: „So bitter, so traurig“, in: *Der Spiegel* 6/2009, p. 41.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ So spekulierten religiöse Kreise (zit. in www.spiegel.de, 04.02.2009) über eine „bewusst gestellte Falle“.

³⁵ Cit. in www.spiegel.de, 03.02.2009, 06.02.2009.

that bishop Williamson denies the existence of the Holocaust.”³⁶ Not only Roman-Catholic bishops expressed themselves very clearly, but also politicians, especially chancellor Merkel, who had to express the following position, because of the German past and the German nationality of the Pope: “Holocaust denial cannot be accepted and, in general, there must be a positive association with Judaism as a whole.” She went on to say: “I do not believe that sufficient clarification has been made.” Of course the critics in the media were very harsh. For example the newspaper SPIEGEL used in the 6th edition of 2009 the following title: “The raptured. A German Pope disgraces the Catholic Church.”

Without knowing the exact motives, context and information the Pope had, again there has been a huge reality difference – that could have been avoided by the anticipation patterns and information sources of the media. On the one hand, the Pope could have underlined the meaning and the consequences of the excommunication and its revocation. In the end it was not clear, that the bishops still belonged to the Roman-Catholic Church after the revocation of the excommunication (which means that they could receive the sacraments of the Roman-Catholic Church), but they didn’t belong anymore to the other bishops of the Roman-Catholic Church (with the own diocese and the ordination to the priesthood etc.). On the other hand, the Pope should have taken up the case “Williamson” separately. Therefore he should have known this case.

In the case “Williamson” the communication problem had been not only in terms of media coverage, but also in terms of the following (or lacking of) reactions. On the 24.01.2009, three days after the Pope signed the decree, the spokesperson of the Vatican Federico Lombardi made a shy clarification. He used the words “gesture of peace” and added about the case “Williamson”: “The excommunication has nothing to do with this.”³⁷ The decision didn’t mean that the Vatican shared the same opinion with Williamson. It meant the integration of the bishops belonging to the Society of St. Pius X, in the Church. A week after signing the decree, on the 28.01.2009, the Pope made an indirect clarification. During his weekly audience, he declared – without saying the name Williamson – that the destruction of the Jews “should be memorial against oblivion and denial.”³⁸ He assured the Jews of his “full and undoubted solidarity.”³⁹ Because there was no end in sight for the debates, the Vatican repeated its affirmations. On the 04.02.2009, two weeks after the interview has been issued, the secretary of the state Vatican made a clearer clarification. It was made clear that

³⁶ Der Spiegel berichtete z.B. am 19.01.2009, zwei Tage vor der Unterzeichnung des Dekrets, über Williamsons Ansichten. Es kann allerdings durchaus möglich sein, dass der Fall Williamson im Vatikan, aber nicht dem Papst bekannt war.

³⁷ Cit. in www.spiegel.de, 26.01.2009.

³⁸ Cit. in www.spiegel.de, 28.01.2009.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

the four bishops were still suspended from priesthood and that Williamson “should distance himself from his affirmations about the Shoah”, in order to be accepted bishop of the Roman-Catholic Church.⁴⁰ It had been emphasized, that the Pope didn’t know anything about Williamson’s denial of the existence of the Holocaust when he revoked the excommunication. On 12.02.2009 the Pope made a new clarification and announced a journey to Israel. The lack of professionalism in the crisis management is obvious, because the problem has been viewed as an actual problem only after a long period of time: “Whereas the declarations of bishop Williamson were spreading all over the media, all the initial press releases of the Holy Chair were focusing on other issues, like the city of Mariazell and the Communion of the patriarch Antiochien.”⁴¹ Only on the 10.03.2009, almost two months after signing the decree, the Pope made a clear and direct clarification through an open letter addressed to the bishops of the Roman-Catholic Church. In this letter, the Pope underlined the fact, that his goal was the conciliation between the Christians and the Jews. He criticized – being obviously hurt – the critics, but also himself and announced structural, personal and functional reforms. Without any digressions he admitted the existence of two communication faults. The first fault was in the case “Williamson”: “An unforeseen mishap for me was the fact that the Williamson case came on top of the remission of the excommunication. The discreet gesture of mercy towards four Bishops ordained validly but not legitimately suddenly appeared as something completely different: as the repudiation of reconciliation between Christians and Jews.”⁴² He admitted that the information policy, respectively the information system of the Vatican was very obsolete: “I have been told that consulting the information available on the internet would have made it possible to perceive the problem early on. I have learned the lesson that in the future in the Holy See we will have to pay greater attention to that source of news.”⁴³ For experts of the modern media, this has been “an almost curious admission”.⁴⁴ The second fault, the Pope has mentioned in his letter, had been about the explanations about the excommunication: “Another mistake, which I deeply regret, is the fact that the extent and limits of the provision of 21 January 2009 were not clearly and adequately explained at the moment of its publication.”⁴⁵ So the Pope has recognized the central PR Problem of the Vatican: the lack of consideration and use of the modern media communication systems.

⁴⁰ Cit. in www.radiovaticana.org, 04.02.2009. Dies ist bislang nicht erfolgt.

⁴¹ Berg, Stefan et al.: „So bitter, so traurig“, in: *Der Spiegel* 6/2009, S. 44.

⁴² Cit. in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 12.03.2009, p. 6.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ Bahners, Patrick: Ein Papst beschwert sich über den Lärm, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12.03.2009, p. 33.

⁴⁵ Cit. in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 12.03.2009, p. 6.

4. Conclusion

The negative media coverage about Pope Benedict XVI. was mainly the result of communication problems, respectively of the lack of a communication policy: the lack of media communication anticipation and their possible implications, as well as the lack, respectively tardivity and inefficient reaction to the media communication. We can conclude that the communication of the Vatican is situated far behind the possibilities and demands of modern communication.⁴⁶ The fact is that the Pope has been either advised in a wrong way, has not been advised at all, or hasn't been willing to be advised in this field so far⁴⁷. The fact that many parts of the world have reacted with indignation against the Pope, and the Pope reacted likewise when he was criticized⁴⁸ shows that the Vatican and the world are two parallel worlds regarding communication.

Of course this doesn't mean that the ideal use of modern media automatically leads to the acceptance of all declarations and actions of the Pope. Moreover, there has to be a difference between a media coverage that was the result of a communication problem, and a media coverage that was the result of theological problems. The first applies to both cases, the "Mohammed" case, but also the "Williamson" case. In both cases there would have been theological critics, but in neither of the cases there waves of indignation would have been felt as a result of communicative ignorance and incapacity.⁴⁹

The Pope is no politician, no diplomat and of course no PR strategist, he is a theologian, scientist and the head of a church. But in order to have a positive influence on world affairs, he should have a little from a politician, a diplomat and a PR strategist. If he makes a scientific declaration, he should represent his statement also as head of church, if he takes an action as head of church, he has to legitimate it not only

⁴⁶ Daran kann auch die Präsenz des Vatikans mit einem eigenen Kanal auf YouTube (der übrigens am 23.01.2009, also nahezu zeitgleich mit dem Fall Williamson, in Betrieb genommen wurde) nichts ändern.

⁴⁷ Es wird jedenfalls berichtet, dass sich Papst Benedikt XVI. nicht so gut beraten lässt wie sein Vorgänger (Smolczyk, Alexander: Der Fehlbare, in: Der Spiegel 47/2006, abgerufen auf www.spiegel.de).

⁴⁸ So war man im Vatikan laut CDU-Politiker Georg Brunnhuber über die offene Kritik aus Deutschland im Fall Williamson „geradezu entsetzt“ (zit. in www.spiegel.de, 05.02.2009).

⁴⁹ Ohne über die genauen Motive, Hintergründe und Informationen des Papstes Bescheid zu wissen, ist davon auszugehen, dass er derart heftige Reaktionen (gewalttätige Ausschreitungen, scharfe Kritik aus den eigenen Reihen, zahlreiche Kirchenaustritte etc.) nicht gewollt haben kann. Dafür spricht auch die tiefe persönliche Verletztheit, die in seinem Schreiben am 10.03.2009 deutlich wird.

through doctrines.⁵⁰ He has acknowledged all this – as he has stated this in his letter on 10.03.2009.

When the Pope had been cardinal he has acknowledged – as it has been showed in the beginning – that “the media distinguishes between important and unimportant” through “interpretations and selections”.⁵¹ But he has not acknowledged that one can draw the attention of the media towards that what’s important without – as he has puts it – “having to live through appearances.”⁵² The question, “what is the most appropriate thing”, does not exclude the other questions “what will be perceived, how will it be reported, how will it be acknowledged”.⁵³ Decisive is the question “how the appropriate thing can be communicated”, in order to be covered in the media and perceived by the public. Because “in the end” – as the Pope has stated – “the report will be more important than the fact itself”⁵⁴, the fact should determine the report as far as possible. This can only be possible when one produces for the appearance, when one accepts and anticipates the selection and transformation mechanisms of the media and when one is appropriate informed about the media. The fact that the Pope has not produced for the appearance has made him believe that that which he considered appropriate has not been communicated. So he has not become “the servant of his appearance”⁵⁵, but the victim of his appearance. To produce for the appearance does not have to mean “not to act according to the reality and according to ones own standards, but to act according to the appearance, that one wants to cause”⁵⁶; that the appearance policy determines the decision policy;⁵⁷ that one communicates “the inappropriate thing” compliant to the media. This can also mean that if one communicates “the appropriate thing” compliant to the media – the “appropriate” is being communicated appropriately. In this way one does not become the servant, nor the victim, but the master of ones own appearance.

⁵⁰ Es ist für den Papst eben nicht möglich, eine akademische Vorlesung als Wissenschaftler zu halten, der mit dem Kirchenoberhaupt nicht in Verbindung gebracht wird – so wie es beispielsweise auch dem ehemaligen Außenminister Joseph Fischer nicht möglich war, eine Rede als Privatmann über die Finalität der europäischen Integration zu halten, die mit dem Außenminister nicht in Verbindung gebracht wird (Fischer, Joseph: Vom Staatenverbund zur Föderation – Gedanken über die Finalität der europäischen Integration, 12.05.2000, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin).

⁵¹ In einem Gespräch mit August Everding, in: Bayerischer Rundfunk: Begegnung in Rom, 1997.

⁵² *Ibidem.*

⁵³ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁷ Korte, Karl-Rudolf / Hirscher, Gerhard: Darstellungspolitik oder Entscheidungspolitik. Über den Wandel von Politikstilen in westlichen Demokratien, München: Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, 2000.

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