

COMMUNICATING VALUES EXEMPLIFIED IN A CATASTROPHIC MEDIA IMAGE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA USAGE IN BLACK MIRROR BASED ON SELECTED EXAMPLES

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Abstract

The modern world is strongly correlated with the media and new technologies. The human system of values is constantly threatened and subjected to numerous tests and challenges. Axiology faces a huge challenge in the face of modernity. Thanks to the serial productions these threats are strongly highlighted and accentuated, while the consequences of the use of media and new technologies are clearly depicted in the dystopian and catastrophic storyline. The communication of the image of the degradation of human values is superbly presented in the series Black Mirror, which has an ethical and educational dimension.

Key words: media image, communication, series production, axiology, dystopia

Introduction

The mass media are a very important element of the modern world, playing a crucial role in shaping societies and individuals' opinions and values. TV series (also called in literature TV drama) are specific media tools which just like movie, communicate and this type of communication is a resultant of three cultural orders: artistic (a form of artistic production), material (a product of a particular technology) and social (an expression of dominating values, characteristic for a particular institution or social group). A series defined as a cultural text is at the same time a form of art (aesthetic category), a product of cinematographic industry (economic category) and a message (an effect

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of the communication process between the author and a particular viewer – communicological criteria) (Ogonowska, 2004, p. 17). All these aspects are assigned to certain values in the processes of axiologisation. As Filipiak (2004, p. 129) claims, in general the media exert an influence on the views, interests, aspirations, attitudes and behaviours of their recipients and shape the social order. It means that TV series can be a tool that shapes positive attitudes, influencing audience decisions, however on the other hand can create a distorted perception of reality when the media image is mixed up with how an individual (or a whole group) perceives the world (Kicior, 2018, p. 63). This may lead to a kind of degradation of the values that form the basis of society, which brings to mind a catastrophic thought, very clearly visible in the *Black Mirror*.

This serial is an example of contemporary TV serial productions that perceived as hybrid, not only in terms of their construction, but also in terms of the content it conveys. Just like television genres, which for many years have been constantly subject to endless changes, modifications and transformations, called “confused genres” (pl. gatunki zmęczone), so serials are increasingly difficult to subject to normative ordering, while their terminology enforces a short-lived systematization (Kisielewska, 2007, p. 30). It is therefore difficult to arrive at a uniform typology of serial productions. Many researchers establish their own typologies and divisions based on, among other things: subject matter, genre, seriality, types, and even potential audience groups. The constant changes indicate their popularity, which has lasted for over a decade, marked by a true renaissance in the world of film. What is more, the differences in genres are evident not only between specific types of television genres, but also between different media. Digitalization of media and the appearance of streaming platforms led to transfer of television formats to the Internet. Consequently, in the context of TV series began to use the phrase “serial productions” in order to include in a theoretical and genre framework also series that are produced and only available on streaming platforms like Netflix or HBO. *Black Mirror* is an example of series production that premiered on Channel 4 and later has been purchased by Netflix and now is available on their platform.

Theoretical framework

Some of researcher stated that *Black Mirror* is a non-futurist, technological dystopia (Gałek, 2016; Sculos, 2017; Ziomek, 2017; Lopes, 2018; Maziarczyk, 2018; Radovanović, 2018; Conway, 2019) which means that the vision of the future existence of mankind in it is exclusively negative (Smuszkiewicz, 1990, pp. 262-264). As a nihilistic dystopia it focuses on presenting technological order of things as fated to catastrophe. Moreover, its realism involves an emphatic critical dimension as regards existing social institutions or practices, as well as generalizing and significant statements consequential on the character of the present or near, alleged future (Balasopoulos, 2011, pp. 66-67). According to Smuszkiewicz (1990, p. 263) dystopia draws its black visions of the future directly from reality.

In *Black Mirror*, systems brought to life by founding acts are shown, as are utopias (understood as an intentionally good system, intended by its constructors to promote, disseminate and consolidate positive values). Such systems are based on lies and illusion, using utopian rhetoric (Leś, 2008, pp. 13-14). Catastrophic visions of systemic collapse, despite their momentum, place the individual at the centre. The dystopian system is always in an unstable equilibrium, and at the centre of the vortex is the victim and the catalyst for change in one person (Leś, 2008, p. 152) – it can be main character or someone related to him/her (for example partner, child, co-worker, friend, etc.).

Catastrophism is part of the dystopian world. It itself is a tendency of a crisis character, denoting a certain type of historiosophical and moral awareness, the content of which was to predict the imminent and inevitable destruction that would threaten the modern world (Wojnowska, 1984, pp. 428–429). A characteristic feature of the idea of

catastrophism is its pessimistic overtone. Moreover, the crisis itself is a kind of turning and decisive point and the moment of making important choices. On the other hand, a crisis situation is sometimes associated only with a threat and uncertainty. Such a negative understanding of the crisis became a premise for historiosophical visions of the transition from a crisis situation to a historical extermination according to René Thom (1991, p. 116) the crisis heralds a catastrophe.

Catastrophism is an interdisciplinary phenomenon, which is a subject of various scientific studies. Throughout the centuries it was an interesting theme of interest and research of philosophers such as Heraclitus, Plato, Giambattista Vico, Jean Bodin, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, etc.; worldwide writers and poets that used the catastrophic motif, for example: Herbert George Wells, Aldous Huxley, Franz Kafka, Karel Čapek, Kamil Baczyński, Tadeusz Różewicz, Józef Czechowicz, Czesław Miłosz, etc; as well as representatives of historiosophy, such as Oskar Spengler, Ortega y Gasset, Arnold Joseph Toynbee (Diec, 2002; Gawor, 2015).

What is more, the theme of catastrophism can be found in the theories such as “clash of cultures” in the work of Samuel P. Huntington or circular view of world history by Nikołaż Danielewski, works of Loys Le Roy, which propose a “global” vision of the catastrophe and draw the picture of an age of universal victims (Goldman, 2018, pp. 155-176) or Karl Vollgraff, who drew analogies between the history of nations (humanity) and the biological process of birth and death. Among philosophical concepts one can notice an evolution, which also affected catastrophic thought, as exemplified by the works of Jürgen Habermas and Jean Baudrillard, who were primarily concerned with describing society and diagnosing its current condition, developed what can be called “neo-catastrophism”, denoting the phenomena of self-destruction of contemporary Western post-industrial information societies (Smrokowska-Reichmann, 2008, pp. 267-282; Smrokowska-Reichmann, 2013, pp. 231-242). This act of self-destruction, generating mechanisms of destruction that operate not only in interpersonal and communicative relationship, but also in the axiosphere, in the ethical sphere and even in a certain sense in the ontological dimension (Smrokowska-Reichmann, 2015, pp. 127-149).

Catastrophism has been the subject of research of literary study, philosophy or theology, but also media, cultural and social sciences. This is due to the development of this concept in films and series production. In the literature we can distinguish between total and particularistic catastrophism (Hughes, 1962; Sorokin, 1963; Szpakowska, 1976), as well as consequential catastrophism (emphasizing the irreversibility and inevitability of the act of annihilation) and alternative catastrophism (i.e., hypothetical, predicting the approaching cataclysm, including the possibility of avoiding final annihilation), which we deal with in the *Black Mirror* series production. Specifying the reflection of the “particularistic” catastrophism by indicating the types of threats, we can distinguish the following types of catastrophism: technological, existential, sociological, scientific, and scientific, the metaphysical called also (Gawor, 2015, p. 19). By crossing these two typologies, four models of catastrophism are obtained: consistent total catastrophism, consistent particular catastrophism, alternative total catastrophism, alternative particularistic catastrophism (Gawor, 2015, pp. 20-21). The analysed series production confronts the viewers an alternative particularistic catastrophism through the situations the characters find themselves in and the way they use new technologies and media. The catastrophism is indicating by technological, scientific, sociological and metaphysical threats.

Research materials and methods

The main aims of the research are a reflection regarding communication of values based on catastrophic image of degradation of human values which are negative consequences of using futuristic media technologies presented in the dystopian, modern world of *Black Mirror* series production. The research method is based on discourse

analysis of selected episodes of series focused on degradation of social values, as well as critical analysis of the available literature related to the axiological and educational role of media. Episodes were categorized by: degradation of interpersonal relationships and loss of freedom, attack on dignity, as well as invasion of privacy and manipulation. Additional categories are assassination of a human life and psychological violence, which are not discussed in this article, due to the breadth of the covered subject.

Black Mirror is a British television series created by Charlie Brooker, in the genre of fantasy, drama, with social and moral elements. In format it is "anthology series" with episodes completely independent of one another (Pescatore & Innocenti, 2012, p. 58). The stories presented in the series take place in the alternative present or near future. The issues discussed in the series show the process of technological progress, depicting real civilization transformations, which in the future may severely affect every man, as well as society. The series is rather dominated by horror and terror related to usage of new technologies. Therefore, it is described in terms of drama or even sociological thriller, science fiction. However, in individual episodes one sees the creators playing with genres known to a competent audience, such as conventions of reality and talent shows, as well as classic science fiction film, American drama or political fiction, etc. The unifying motif of the series production are the "black mirrors" – the screens of electronic devices – from phones, through tablets, laptops and TV sets, to whole rooms composed of screens.

In addition, the series is defined as a dystopian serial production, which presents a dark, pessimistic vision of the future, usually constituting a "hyperbolic statement", internally consistent, resulting from the critical observations of a person looking at social events and the world around him or her, denying its ability to change the status quo in the future. Referring to the above statement, it should be emphasized that the series presents an inevitable catastrophic vision of the downfall of humanity, the destruction of the world of values, morality and the reality surrounding man. Thus, the creators of the British production produced a format characterised by axiological utility. This means that the essence of the values shown in the ethical dilemmas of the characters of the titled "black mirror", are extremely current. Everyone's life is constituted by a more or less conscious realisation of values within a particular social structure and culture, and what follows, the contemporary issues from the area of values and negative values shown by means of mass media, constitute an interesting research space, not only for scientists from various fields, or media experts themselves, but also for those viewers who are hungry for more and more ambitious and perfect audio-visual productions

Research material consists of 5 seasons (21 episodes) of *Black Mirror* and has been analysed from two perspectives: image of axiological degradation of the modern world (content of the series) and axiological educational role of the medium. These two perspectives have been examined from two aspects: the media-technological point of view and in the philosophical-ethical context. Due to the wide range of material and issues addressed in the analysis, this paper is exploratory and focuses on selected episodes that introduce the topic of catastrophic thought in the context of the degradation of the modern world of value such as interpersonal relationships, freedom, dignity, rights to privacy, free will, freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.

Degradation of interpersonal relationships and loss of freedom

New technologies and social media (SM) are shown in *Black Mirror* as destructors of interpersonal relationships. The technological, scientific, sociological catastrophism lies in the addiction of characters, to technology that, instead of "improving" a human being leading to the degradation of human relationships and a voluntary, unconscious forced loss of freedom. The reason for this is the obsessive need to have constant control over another human being, with the goal of achieving complete disclosure in every

aspect of life that can be seen in episodes *The Entire History Of You* and *Arkangel* or build our relationships with others are dependent on the app, social media, technology or like in *Hang The DJ*, *White Christmas*, *Nosedive* or addiction to social media that can be found in *Be Right Back*.

These episodes illustrate very well Jean Baudrillard's concept according to which the characters, in their search of full knowledge of themselves, paradoxically instead of gaining freedom and improving their relationships with others, voluntarily condemn themselves to enslavement that destroys those relationships (Ziętek, 2013). The "*Arkangel*", memory implant "grain" or very similar in function implant "*Z-Eyes*", which were supposed to "perfect" the characters (makes them sincere and true) or helps them to improve their relationships with others makes them decide to lose their own freedom and destroy relations.

In *The Entire History Of You* the characters have a memory implant with a microscopic camera behind their ear, called a seed, which, connected to their visual system, records every moment of their lives. Initially, the viewers may find that the implant is a great convenience for humans, as it allows them to track their behaviour, catch the mistakes they make, and learn from them. However, with every passing minute of the episode, they learn that it is not such a safe invention and sometimes does more harm than good. The main male character is looking for complete happiness and a sense of having full control over his life, then begins to be sensitive to every, even the smallest, signal that something is escaping his attention. This leads to the fact that the character, seeing his wife – Ffion – talking to her ex-boyfriend, becomes obsessed with finding any traces of the old feeling in her gestures, facial expressions or reactions. Eventually, he demands that she confirms her feelings in the form of digitally recorded memories. In this way the trust between them has been destroyed and resulted in the character's private life and relationship falling apart. *Arkangel*, on the other hand, instead of seed, one is dealing with a chip technology that allows a parent to track and monitor their children, and blur (a.k.a. pixelate) images that might cause them distress. Thus, the viewer is introduced to a single, overprotective mother, Marie, and her daughter Sarah, who has been implanted with the device. At first the implant is a success, but one soon learns that such a monitoring system has weaknesses and can have serious consequences for a child's development. First of all, after a few years, it turns out that the girl is emotionally immature for her age, which makes her an outcast at school. The mother, wanting to correct her own mistake, turns off the tablet and restarts when Sara is fifteen, as a result of Sarah secretly attending a party with her schoolmate Trick. The mother then discovers that his daughter and Trick are having sex. Since then, she regularly monitors her actions. When she discovers that Sara is pregnant, she puts a pill in her daughter's drink to prevent it. The young girl finds out about everything and a confrontation ensues. Sara snatches the tablet from Marie's hands, accidentally reactivating the obscenity filter, and beats her mother with the tablet until it breaks. The filter shuts off moments later, and Sara sees what she has done and runs away in shock. A stunned Marie wakes up some time later and after trying to use the destroyed tablet, she leaves the house frantically calling out for her daughter.

These episodes illustrate how characters become slaves to a "seeing machine" that enables a person to "see" without having to "look", leading to the automation of perception, the dominant feature of which is to shift the analysis of reality from the individual to the "machine", depriving it of a holistic interpretation (Virilio, 2011, pp. 39-62). Liam's actions do not rely on his own memory but on digitally recorded memories, which he realizes only in the final scene. Maria, on the other hand, instead of letting her daughter walk through life on her own two feet, talking to her, trying to understand her or help her in difficult situations, relies on technology, forgetting about trust.

Relying only on "the machine" in everyday life has also become fatal for the protagonists of *White Christmas*. The of the features of implant "*Z-Eyes*" is blocking that enables to physically "block" another person in real life. The block censors both image and sound

in real life, photos and video footage. The blocked person and the individual who placed the block are seeing each other as grey silhouettes, moreover, this also includes the offspring of the blocker. The protagonist – Joe Potter has been blocked by his fiancée Beth after the fight over her decision to have an abortion. After some time, Joe tried to confront with woman, but has been arrested. After Beth death he could see and talk to the woman's daughter, but he found out that this is not his child and his fiancée cheated him. In anger he killed the grandfather of the child and left the girl alone. In order to find help, she freezes to death.

Another story shows Matt who used to run an online group who watched each other seduce women, through implants called "Z-Eyes" which record the user's vision and hearing. One member, Harry to whom Matt offered advice on how to behave, dress, what to say to attract a girl he liked, has been murdered by a mentally ill Jennifer. She mistook his "Z-Eyes" communication for him hearing voices, as she did. Matt not only saw everything but shared the broadcasts with others. He did nothing to help the Harry and was convicted as a sex offender and permanently blocked by everyone.

This episode shows that on the one hand, censorship can have positive applications (e.g., in the case of people who are socially harmful, emotionally and ethically degraded), but on the other hand, this technology can contribute to the destruction of family relationships by taking shortcuts by "blocking" the other person instead of talking and trying to solve problems, and can also lead to the destruction of oneself. Joe by not being able to talk to his beloved, he was unable to come to terms with the situation, to close a chapter in his life, which led to his obsession with the woman and child, and finally to self-destruction.

Striking Vipers on the other hand shows how the game and created virtual life and identity affected family relationships. Two friends Karl and Danny (who has wife and child) decided to play together game called Striking Vipers X. Karl chose the character Roxette while Danny plays as Lance. The virtual characters fell for each other and started to kiss. At the beginning Danny was shocked exited the game. However, over the next few weeks Danny and Karl as the characters Lance and Roxette have sex with each other in the game. This situation negatively influenced the physical, intimate and mental sphere of relationship of Danny and his wife Theo. In the end the viewer can see how distant the pair became.

However not only relying on technology can be dangerous and destructive. Computer mediated communication (CMC) and different mobile application can also have negative impact on relationships and people's freedom. In *Be Right Back* because of social media addiction loses his life in car accident. Also because of this his relation with his wife was not very good. Even so, his wife missed the man so much that she decided to log on to an Internet service which, based on her husband's activity in various social networking sites, first creates a virtual copy of him and then a bot. Initially skeptical, Martha becomes more and more involved in the virtual world, treating the copy as a real person. The character's actions bring to mind a nostalgic attitude towards life and death resulting in the inability to come to terms with the loss of loved one, known as melancholy. According to Sigmund Freud (Freud, 2007, pp. 148-149), the disturbance of mourning leads to depression, which makes the self "impoverished and empty". Unfortunately, virtuality is not conducive to regaining psychological balance, but leads to an intensification of the woman's melancholic state. The deeper the woman entered into this relationship, first with the virtual copy, then with the bot, the more she neglected her relationships with the people around her, and her attempts to start a new phase in her life (accepting the fact of her husband's death and a new life without him). The turning point of the plot is the possibility of buying a synthetic body that will resemble the Martha's dead husband. However, the bot is a distorted image of the man. This is evidenced, among other things, by the look of its face which, that despite its similarity, is different from the face of the deceased, and by its inability to help the protagonist find answers to her dilemmas. In

the episode one can notice references to Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum – an empty sign deprived of references and having no reference to reality, and to the theory of hyper-reality which refers exclusively to the area of simulation based on previously prepared questions and the range of anticipated answers, being a precisely defined model meant to reflect reality (Baudrillard, 2005). However, in effect, it only imitates it.

Nosedive show how obsession over ratings on app that shows socioeconomic status is making human relationships shallow and not real. The main protagonist Lacie Pound need to raise her rating to 4.5 for a discount on a luxury apartment. She was suggested to gaining favour from highly rated people, like her childhood friend Naomi (with currently rates 4.8). She uploads the photo to which Naomi reacted and even asked Lacie be her the maid of honour. However, in last part of the episodes female lead encounter a series of unforeseen and unfortunate situations occurred that caused her score to drop. She reached the bottom, but only thanks to that she saw how enslaved she was, how she couldn't be herself for fear of being judged by others, and how she did not have really friends who liked her for herself not because of the high score. The negative impact of this kind of inventions can be comparable to social media such as Instagram. Researchers indicate that the online trends promoted on social media, as well as influencers or self-popularity (rating between other users) have very big influence on individual's life and their psychological wellbeing, mood and self-perception (Turner & Lefevre, 2017; Muqaddas, Soomro, & Nawaz, 2017; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018; Lowe-Calverley & Grieve, 2021). Moreover, one of the negative consequences of social media is flattening of relationships. People has lots of "friends" on social media but the they are not authentic (Jensen & Sørensen, 2013). Also, whether in friendship, dating or professional relationships social media use shapes and is shaped by how people see their relationships, with who they have or want to have relationships, and how those relations are built, managed, and ended (Butler & Matook, 2015). How new technology and media can impact human relations is also presented in episode *Hang The DJ*. The "Coach", an artificial intelligence system installed on a small, circular tablet, matches the users for a certain period of time in order to find their "ultimate compatible other". The episodes focus on two characters Fran and Amy, which has been matched together for 12 hours. After this they has been matched with different people and in some time for longer period of time or short 36-hours relationships based more on the sex than trying to get to know the other person. During this time, they met few times and talked about not good matched partners. In the end, decided to try to be together without checking the given time, which again was very short. The episode ends with their rebellion against the system and coming back to real world. Moreover, it has been disclosed that the System and its simulations are part of an online dating app's matchmaking algorithm which reveals Frank and Amy actual match is around 100%.

Attack on dignity

Expect technological, scientific, sociological catastrophism some of analysed episodes concerns metaphysical catastrophism, which concerns the violation of the basic value of every human being, which is dignity. According to "The dignity of the human person is not only a fundamental right in itself but constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights" (Praesidium of the European Convention, 2007, p.17). The term "dignity" is hard to defined, but it can be categorized as dignity of individuals (as equal status of all persons) and dignity of human species (Kateb, 2014). Human dignity is the belief that all human beings, regardless of class, race, gender, religion, ability, or any other factors, hold special value that is tied solely to their humanity. People are born with dignity and rights that are related to it such as independence or respect. Human dignity justifies human rights, being at the same time their foundation. With dignity comes, among other things, the right to freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. It means that

people should not contribute to very serious and cruel suffering (physical or mental) of another person or treatment that is extremely humiliating and undignified (Equality and Human Right Commission, 2018). In episodes *The National Anthem*, *White Bear*, *Shut Up And Dance*, new technologies and media are used to as a tool of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment. *The National Anthem* and *Shut Up And Dance* shows how media can be used to blackmail other people and attack their personal dignity. In the first one British prime minister Michael Callow learned that Princess Susannah a beloved royal, has been kidnapped. In order to free the princess and ensure her safety and inviolability, the kidnapper demanded that the prime minister had sexual intercourse with a pig broadcasted on national television at 4 pm that afternoon on every network, with a list of technical specifications designed to make it impossible to fake. These demands were posted on YouTube and have been viewed by thousands of people, whilst the topic is trending on Twitter. In the end he gave in to the kidnapper's demands and did as he was told. Which was extremely humiliating. In *Shut Up And Dance* laptop camera was used by hacker to record characters compromising behaviours and blackmailed them to release the video to other people. The hacker's demands made them feel extremely stressed, terrified and later injured after brutal fight. Even they did what the hacker told them to do their videos and sensitive information have been publicized. such treatment was the cause of bad conduct (hiring a prostitute, paedophilia), however, instead of punishing them yourself, it should be reported it to the appropriate services. In the case of Kenny (accused of paedophilia) this resulted in his arrest. A situation of self-judgment is also presented in *White Bear*. The protagonist – Victoria takes part in a performance, that is a punishment for participating in the kidnapping, torture and murder of six-year-old Jemima. She filmed the whole situation with her cell phone, so according to her sentence, she is tortured by being chased every day by masked individuals who are in fact park employees, accompanied by people who record her on their cell phones, who are in fact entertainment-thirsty spectators. After several hours of this spectacle, strapped to a chair, she watches the video she recorded of the crime she and her fiancé committed. In the end, she is robbed of her memory so that the performance can be repeated the next day.

Technology or media makes people stop "seeing" what is happening. Watching the behaviour of the audience, or looking at the behaviour of the character herself, filming the crime, one gets the impression that the phone becomes an excuse for them not to act, not to help the other person, acting as a kind of wall, separating them from the harm of the other person. The performance in which the character takes part resembles torture more than punishment, and the accompanying emotional insensitivity, the disappearance of the impulse to help others, facilitated by technology, creates an extremely pessimistic image of the world.

Moreover, both episodes refer to Foucault's concept of power (Foucault, 1993, p. 245). In *White Bear*, the amusement park becomes a reflection of the Panopticon, becoming a space for modifying the behaviour of individuals, as well as seeking the best possible punishment for the prisoners according to the crimes committed and their nature, and seeking the most effective. Furthermore, at the end of the episode, alternating with the closing credits, the viewer can watch the event from the point of view of the park employees who are preparing for the "performance". One can speak here of a backstage, within which the impressions that the show serves to evoke are most consciously denied. On the other hand, in *Shut Up And Dance* demands of hacker were the best kind of punishment according to the person holding power – compromising information knowledge of how new media and technologies work. Additionally, the characters' dignity has been attacked, and this is emphasized by the use of the technology, which captures the entire performances and the state the character is in. Moreover, the rules of the play are more like torture than punishment. First of all, they are not aware that and for what are being punished - because in *White Bear* Victoria's memory is purposely erased and in *Shut Up And Dance* the characters are not told. In addition, the use of the phone or video

as an instrument of torture or degrading treatment (like also in The National Anthem) becomes even more horrifying and makes the viewer realize how easily someone can be stripped of their dignity, hurt and humiliating.

Invasion of privacy and manipulation

New technology and made it possible to share, gather, combine, analyse and indefinitely store massive volumes of data. The initial optimism about the potential of the Internet and social platforms has given a concern that people may lose their privacy. Alongside dignity and freedom privacy is considered a basic human right. The respect individuals' rights to a private life, to act without compulsion, and to maintain control of personal information is important value. However, most of the activities on social media platforms (but not only) rely on our privacy. From registering, to sharing photos, posts, life updates, joining events and various types of groups. In some terms people share their privacy at the same time give up their right toward other people or companies to other people or companies. Moreover, this information can be attractive for cyber (and not only cyber) criminals. In *Black Mirror* the invasion of privacy by not only using social media but also different types of new technology is especially seen in *The Entire History Of You*, where husband required from his wife to show her intimate moments; *Arkangel*, where mother regularly monitors her daughter Sara actions and also interfere in her decision or even made decision without Sara knowledge (e.g., termination of pregnancy); *White Christmas*, where through the media or technology people can watch others life or *Shut Up And Dance*, *Hang The DJ*, *Nosedive*, *Be Right Back* where is shown how our data can be hacked, monitor and later used.

Modern society via Internet or new technology hand over intimate details about them by accepting the fine print on every form they sign or button they press. Often without awareness or consent, detection devices track Internet users' movements, their preferences, and any information they are capable of mining from their digital existence. This helps to profiled people and also to manipulate them (Zarsky, 2019; Goldstein, Tov & Prazeres, 2018). In *Black Mirror* this kind of manipulation was presented in some of above analysed episodes. However, in this series production the viewers have been confronted with manipulation of human's minds by using new technologies. It shows some kind of limitation of free will, the ability to learn from one's mistakes, or manipulation related to omitting the full consequences of consent for e.g., an implant placement. For example, in *Arkangel* the mother manipulated the vision of her child by using microchip's technology and blurring (a.k.a. pixelating) images, that in her opinion, could cause Sara's distress. It affects normal life of the girl, who was emotionally immature for her age and it made her an outcast at school and limited her and the ability to make decision. In *Men Against Fire*, military organization used an implant called Mass to help with strategic operations related to battle "roaches" (mutated leftovers of a biological weapon from an unspecified war). During the action Stripe (main character) instead of roaches, that was being seen by his companion, was seeing a woman and a child. The woman explained him that Mass implant has altered his vision. Those seen as roaches are in fact human victims of global eugenics program to "purify the bloodline" of humanity.

Conclusions

Mass media are carriers of information that reaches a wide audience, through which people unite around world disturbing events. Another of their important functions is to provide entertainment and educate their audience. Both these functions are fulfilled by the *Black Mirror* series, whose creators show the dangers that users of new technologies may face. By different stories the series production communicates axiological degradation of the modern world. In the selected episodes technological defeatism is

represented, which manifests itself in the characters' weakened sensitivity, at the same time fostering the release of "low" instincts in them. New technologies, on the one hand, erode human relationships which essential component – mutual trust – is atrophied, leading only to pain and suffering. On the other hand, technology provides "effective ways for people to torture each other, exaggerating ordinary passions and dangers to absurd proportions" (Wójcik, 2016, p. 30), they attack dignity and basic human right such as right to privacy, freedom, free will, as well as manipulate people's perception of world around them. These values are communicated by presenting their degradation and using negative values (such as manipulation, violence).

In most of these episodes, it can be seen that the seduction mechanism of technology to which humans are subjected is based on the seduction mechanism described by Jean Baudrillard. The researcher noted "that the pursuit of unrestrained action in all areas of activity, which has become not only a supreme law, but also a commonly expected behaviour and a promoted norm" (Wójcik, 2016, p. 32) can lead to the need to unwind an excess of freedom, i.e., to the opposite situation. This means a conscious relinquishment of this value in favour of the individual, the authorities in power (Ziętek, 2013, p. 86), and technology. The loss of privacy, which may be the result of constant observation and recording of data on the users themselves (which means that we are dealing here with permanent control), dependence on the computer, tablet or smartphone, which leads to the disappearance of interpersonal ties, transferring relationships to the network, or neglecting other spheres of life in favour of the virtual sphere, are just one of many risks associated with virtual reality, which lead to a kind of disaster on axiological grounds.

Black Mirror presented media image of alternative particularistic catastrophism by emphasizing the erosion of essential values with the probability of overcoming the crisis (e.g. *Hang The DJ*, *Be Right Back*, *Nosedive*). The catastrophism is indicating by technological, scientific, sociological and metaphysical threats. Moreover, *Black Mirror* shows pessimistic vision that focus on presenting technological order of things that leads to catastrophe. Even if at beginning it shows positive impact of new technologies and media the black visions of the future directly from reality is drawn. The technology used in the series production is an inspiration for an already available and well-known one. This confirm the hypothesis that *Black Mirror* is a dystopian image of the modern world.

What is more, catastrophism is a kind of cultural attitude that grows out of attempts to tame history, due to the fact that it is both diagnostic and prognostic, evaluates, values and predicts (news, is prospective in nature), and is strongly axiological, appeals to values, not only to knowledge, appeals to the realization of values (Wojnowska, 1984, pp. 428–429). The popularity of series touching on technological, scientific or metaphysical catastrophism may be influenced both by their incredible relevance, the closeness of the viewer, who has the impression that what happens in the series can happen in everyday life, but also by the hope that shines through this type of production, the hope of overcoming the doom that is coming. On the other hand, the systematic experience of violence by the individual in the audiovisual world has the effect of weakening traumatic experiences and blunting emotional sensitivity (Hajduk-Nijakowska, 2012, p. 251). In this way, the viewer can distance himself from the emitted images while becoming accustomed to them.

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Appendix. Analysed episodes of Black Mirror

- BATHURST O. (Director). (2011), *The National Anthem*, Available at: Netflix (May 22, 2021).
- FOSTER J. (Director). (2017), *Arkangel*, Available at: Netflix (May 21, 2021).
- HARRIS O. (Director). (2013), *Be Right Back*, Available at: Netflix (May 22, 2021).
- HARRIS O. (Director). (2019). *Striking Vipers*, Available at: Netflix (May 22, 2021).
- TIBBETTS C. (Director). (2013), *White Bear*, Available at: Netflix (May 23, 2021).
- TIBBETTS C. (Director). (2014), *White Christmas*, Available at: Netflix (May 21, 2021).
- VAN PATTEN T. (Director). (2017), *Hang The DJ*, Available at: Netflix (May 21, 2021).
- VERBRUGGEN J. (Director). (2016), *Men Against Fire*, Available at: Netflix (May 23, 2021).
- WATKINS J. (Director). (2016), *Shut Up And Dance*, Available at: Netflix (May 23, 2021).
- WELSH B. (Director). (2011), *The Entire History Of You*, Available at: Netflix (May 21, 2021).
- WRIGHT J. (Director). (2016), *Nosedive*, Available at: Netflix (May 22, 2021).