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Chapter 2 Ethical Reflection

Chapter two talks about ethics in journalism and how to recognize it. It is very important to be ethical when promoting the news because this is a field that requires credibility and good morals. What is discussed in the beginning of the chapter is four different scenarios in which a journalist would be required to be ethical about. The first is to promote an herbal supplement that claims to be natural but wants you to hide the fact that it contains an over the counter drug. The second one is about a race issue in a school, that also incorporates footage that is on youtube and an injured African-American teenager by a Caucasian man. The third one is about a story that could become very famous but that could also hurt some airlines and give terrorists ideas to exploit other airports with this information. And the fourth scenario is that a charity campaign is being staged but there is also the risk to hurt other charities if the work is published.

The chapter explores some different ethical issues that a journalist might encounter in his/her career, and these are complicated ones to solve because it involves much more than just a story. These are dilemmas, and the chapter wants to help us solve these dilemmas, which are part of ethics. Then some questions are asked such as “what duties do I have” , and the values that are reflected in the duties that we assume as journalists. In ethics you do what is morally right instead of what you were hired to do or what you personally think it is the best answer. You always have to stick to what is morally and ethically correct. Then, because morals is involved, the chapter helps us to distinguish between morals, which is religious, and ethics, which is a rational process focused on agreed-on principles. Which means that ethics is what we, as a society, believe that is correct, without involving religion or such principles.

We are then exposed to Bok's model, which is a model that the philosopher Sissela Bok wrote that can help professionals make ethical decisions. In this model, two things are taken into consideration. One is that we have to have empathy for the people involved in ethical decisions, and that maintaining social trust is a fundamental goal. Then we are encouraged to ask three questions when facing situations like these, and they are: "How do you feel about the action?" , "is there another professionally acceptable way to achieve the same goal that will not raise ethical issues?" , and "how will others respond to the proposed action?" And then we are exposed to another ethical scenario that can be solved using Bok's model. Your city's foundation executive director falsified a time sheet to take pay while he was on leave to attend his roommate's funeral. They want you as a reporter to withhold the information, and just publish that the director resigned. However, you are being requested to see if there is more information than what they are releasing. What do you do? The first step, according to Bok, is to consult your conscience. We have to tell the truth as journalists but we also can't harm our community. The second step to this is to see if there are any alternatives to the case, and usually are more than one. Which leads to the third point, to hold an ethical conversation with the parties involved, where other points of view can be voiced. It is important to go through all three steps before making a final choice, and you should take everything in consideration not in the heat of the event, but when you have the right mindset to make some choices.

Aristotle also tried to make a guide for making ethical choices, since this is an issue that had been around since ancient Greece. This is called Aristotle's Golden Mean, which basically says that a person could be ethical if they correctly used and understood their virtues and were always working to improve them and use it on their daily lives. For the philosopher, the people

who acted virtuously were more ethical than the ones who were simply following the law. Virtue ethics flows from the nature of the act but also from the person who is doing the act.

The chapter also gave the example of another philosopher, Kant, who said that an individual should act as if the choices one makes for oneself could be universal law, which he called categorical imperative. For him, the test of moral act is when it can be applied to everyone. We are also exposed at utilitarianism, that says that the consequences of the actions are important in deciding wheatear they are ethical; which means that we should think about the impact of our decisions (that might be negative and affect many people in a wrong way).

In this chapter, we were shown that ethics is a subject that has been debated and studied by philosophers for many years. It is not easy to be ethical and make ethical decisions, especially when working on the journalism field when you have to also be mindful of the people who are going to be impacted by what you post, and the ones who will be the reason of your posts. The studies that these philosophers did are just a few ways to help us make smarter decisions when facing ethical situations, but at the end, we need to use our own judgement and morals to decide what is best for us, the community, and what follows the guidelines of the profession that we chose.