

SUMMARY

Throughout history, researchers have tried to find the specific feature of humans, the one that distinguishes him from other beings. Among other things, he was seen as *homo loquens*. Beyond any attribute, man is a being who speaks. Communication is a process of interaction between individuals, process which is mediated by word, gesture, signs or pictures.

With the help of persuasion and manipulation, as forms of communication, people seek to influence, to change attitudes and beliefs and to mobilize their peers to action. The word *persuasion* comes from Latin, from the noun *persuasio* – “conviction”. Persuasion is the act of determining someone with arguments, to think or act in a certain way. Manipulation is a pathological form of persuasion, in which one tries to mislead the audience. The word *manipulation* comes from the Latin *manipulus*, a division of the Roman army, which can be easily handled.

Both persuasion and manipulation are placed in the service of a goal. If in the case of persuasion the purpose

is the one stated, in terms of manipulation, the aim is hidden.

Throughout human history, the communication techniques have been perfected. In ancient Greece was developed an art of speech, and in modern times appeared a process of mass communication, called propaganda. Both rhetoric and propaganda appeal to human emotions and feelings. With the help of language, people stir up feelings and reactions in a game of mutual influence. From the simple dialogue, to institutionalized propaganda, the one who communicates appeals to the feelings of his audience.

In this paper, we propose to analyze the concepts of persuasion and manipulation from an ethical perspective, in order to find their role in the political propaganda. Important, in this respect, are the concepts with which we operate, the demarcation and the establishment of the similarities and the differences which they involve. Naturally, we insist upon the beginnings of the art of correct speaking, as they are highlighted in the works of the ancient philosophers. Thus, in the first chapter of the thesis *Ethic and Non-ethic in Political*

Propaganda are treated issues related to the ancient rhetoric, from the sophists and reaching Saint Augustine.

Modern political propaganda does not ignore the rules outlined by the ancient thinkers. They had different attitudes towards the status of rhetoric. Some of them considered it as an art, while others have blamed her. The study of these issues is necessary because a great number of critics given to rhetoric are brought as well to propaganda. Also, the proposed approach makes possible the achievement of an overview of the qualities that a speaker should have and on the values to which he must comply, in order to have a speech which obeys the ethical norms. In the same chapter, we approach the question of truth at the ancient philosophers. Since antiquity, philosophers have designed the structure of the ideal state. Plato's Republic is offered as an example to emphasize that, since that time, there was a temptation to totalitarianism.

In the second chapter, there are analyzed issues related to persuasion, persuasion and manipulation. People make use of verbal communication, and the word is an essential tool for passing on thoughts, it is used in

order to argue, to understand, and to persuade. Here, a major topic of interest is the process of manipulation, viewed as a species of persuasion. In the same chapter is also conducted an analysis of the ethical perspectives on persuasion and manipulation. We study the concepts of persuasion and manipulation from an ethical perspective, in order to emphasize the ethical responsibilities that must be proved by both the issuer and the receiver in a correct communication process.

The next chapter is the core of this paper. Here are dealt issues related to the definition of the political propaganda and the location of this phenomenon in the field of persuasion and manipulation. The emphasis rests on the ethical issues aroused by the use of the political propaganda, as a process of communication. Researchers did not reach a consensus on the ethical implications of propaganda; some of them saw this phenomenon through a neutral prism and the other ones cataloged it in negative terms.

The last chapter is approached the totalitarian propaganda. For a better understanding of the subject, we consider the analysis of the features of totalitarianism, as

they were understood by Carl J. Friedrich, Hannah Arendt and Raymond Aron. The interpretation offered by Hannah Arendt interests us from a dual perspective. First, she was a witness of the events, and in the second, she did not only carry a description of totalitarian regimes, but also provided an answer on their emergence. At the same time, as we said, we propose to study a particular case of totalitarian propaganda, namely, Nazi propaganda. The issue of the intellectual roots of fascism is another section of this paper. The object of research is the reaction against Enlightenment values, the theme of nationalism, the role that myth plays in thought and politics, the relationship between irrational and masses. The object of this research is the reaction against Enlightenment values, the theme of nationalism, the role played by myth in the thought and in the political life, the relationship between the irrational and masses. Starting from a slogan of Nazi propaganda, “Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!”, there are analyzed some political myths used by the Nazi party. In the same chapter, we analyze the perspective of Joseph Goebbels and Adolf Hitler on political propaganda. In this way, we

can make an idea about the way in which the Nazi leaders designed and used the propaganda instruments.

Propaganda is a communication process by which information is transmitted, beliefs and values. Its goal is to produce a change in the thought or in the behavior of individuals. Throughout history, it has proved to be a good way for political leaders to secure the support and the appreciation of their people. With the help of political propaganda, they were able to mobilize the masses and determined them to fight in the service of a common ideal.

Modern political propaganda emerged from the need for communication between the state and the citizens. In order to obtain a support and to legitimize their political decisions, any leader must furnish information about the work they undertake. Given that individuals are different and have different opinions and needs, political propaganda intervenes in order to bring to common the thoughts and the attitudes of individuals, to determine them to act in a way or another.

If in its inception, propaganda was perceived as a mechanism of spreading beliefs, in time it gained a negative connotation. Over time, its use caused a change

in the perception of people. It came to be associated with lying and manipulation, concepts that have, in turn, a negative resonance. Political propaganda was connected with the moments of social and political crisis.

In order to succeed, political propaganda must take into account of certain rules.

It cannot work if it is not connected to the target audience. The propagandistic message must be connected to the beliefs, the expectations and the needs of individuals. The language should be simple and clear in order to be understood by a large number of people.

Over time, political propaganda was defined as a process of persuasion or manipulation of the individuals. We cannot talk, however, about a definition of propaganda that is widely accepted among researchers of this phenomenon. The modality in which we define propaganda determines the way we perceive this process as ethical or unethical. There are two schools of thought which deal with the problem of defining the concept in question. The first school of thought is the moralistic one, of Platonic inspiration. The members of this school of thought define propaganda as a form of mass

manipulation. The second school of thought is the neutral one, of Aristotelian inspiration. The members of this school perceive propaganda as a neutral form of communication that can be made both in the service of good causes and in the service of evil.

In order for persuasion to be correct from an ethical point of view, both the issuer and the receiver must prove a number of ethical responsibilities. First, the issuer has the obligation to check the veracity and validity of the arguments he wishes to promote. However, the receiver must understand the ideas, he must process the information and must evaluate it according to his beliefs and values, because only after an understanding of the message of the persuasive agent, one can clearly establish the morality of its strategies and goals. The receiver can fulfill his ethical responsibilities to the extent that he can enjoy freedom of thought, of speech and of will.

In conclusion, persuasion can be an ethically correct process, insofar as the persuasive agent's intention is positive and if the goals are stated and do not contravene with the ethical principles. Propaganda can use both persuasion and manipulation. When the political

propaganda is used in a “healthy” way, it helps the governmental agencies to explain and justify their measures. With her help, they can inform their citizens and governments can obtain the support of them. The political leadership can use this communication process to correct certain conducts which they consider undesirable, without resorting to coercion. An anti-smoking campaign launched by the Ministry of Health is an example of ethically correct propaganda. Unlike the enactment of a legislation that would ban smoking, such a campaign informs the citizens about the risks posed by this vice and gives them the freedom of choice. With healthier citizens, the state cuts the costs for health services. This campaign respects the interests of its citizens, such as being healthy and having a longer life expectancy.

On the other hand, propagandists may resort to manipulation, too. It is a pathological form of persuasion, it unwittingly enters in the minds of individuals and determines them to act against their will. Manipulation paralyzes thinking and treats the individual as a mere puppet. As a rational being, man should treat with thrifty skepticism the information that he receives and should

seek additional sources of information, in order to be able to discern truth from falsehood.

The totalitarian parties used political propaganda to gain power and to maintain control over society. Totalitarian regimes appealed to lies and manipulation in order to achieve their goals. Nazi propaganda is undoubtedly a case of non-ethical propaganda. This kind of propaganda used the political myths to build the image of a providential leader, a savior of the German people. By building a single enemy, by finding a scapegoat, the Nazis were able to exploit the prejudices that already exist in society. Nazi propaganda was fueled by hatred, prejudice and fear. This is a case of abuse of the political propaganda and its use determined the defamation of this concept.

The political propaganda is not a phenomenon as powerful as one might think. It is not universally valid; in order to work, propaganda must be connected to the social, political and cultural environment in which should produce effects. Political propaganda cannot ignore the target group, but it must be adapted to their attitudes, beliefs, needs and expectations.

Political propaganda doesn't rely only on lies and manipulation. It must build a certain credibility, gain the public's trust. When it turns out that propagandist appealed to lies in order to manipulate the audience, propaganda is doomed to failure. Lies are the greatest enemy of propaganda. The propagandist rarely uses lies, because he appeals more to the interpretation of the truth, depending on his goals.

Political propaganda is, after all, a mere tool in the hands of the political leaders. What really matters is the intention behind the propagandistic campaigns. A correct propaganda from an ethically point of view must respect the values and ethical principles, must help the individuals and treat them as ends and not as means, must provide information fairly and objectively, and must give people the freedom of choice, whether to accept or reject the principles promoted. If history propaganda was largely the history of an abuse, this does not mean that it cannot be put in the service of the moral good.