

Mass-Media Imagology

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Abstract: In a very general sense, the influence is any action taken against a person, to determine the compliance of the influencer's intentions. In a more developed approach, the influence can be defined as a way to communicate, having as last stage the conviction. The influence is effective only if it is accepted by the receiver. He voluntarily adopts some action manner, because it believes that he is doing something good for him. In this context, it reveals a certain availability to influence of the recipient. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that the efficiency of influence is dependent also of the influence power of the communicator. This is given by the prestige of persons known by the receiver, the norms and values that operate in the reference group or institutional framework.

Keywords: influence; symbolic thinking; tools of communication; mass-media

Groups, collectivities, state, organizations that possess the necessary knowledge about the mechanisms and possibilities of influencing the process acquire a significant force, because possessing such information makes it possible to make a whole typology of social influence: argumentation, seduction, manipulation, inducement, propaganda, etc.

As sociologist Denis McQuail stated, according to a number of variables which intervene in the relationship between the speaker and the one it speaks to, and the context or situation in which the communication occurs, "*the relevant influence process is the communication between a sender and a receiver that can have a predictable effect on the latter*" (McQuail, 1999, p. 149).

From the perspective of this first sense, relatively indeterminate and very general, we refer to numerous and heterogeneous forms of social influence, among which mass-media play an overwhelming role. Today, the media exercises a shaping force much stronger than the surrounding reality; it often develops inserts innate predispositions to certain lifestyles, personal images, permitted or prohibited behavior patterns, systems of value, etc. Media space is the great scene where all the scenes of collective life stand. It forms and reflects them. Everything tends to

be seen and everything becomes visible. The technical tools of observation and transmission operate on all levels, starting with the offered space using satellite technology until the private territories of everyday life. The image can be produced everywhere. It is omnipresent, it shapes and encompasses. Some TV channels specialize in continuous broadcasting images of the world. *"The image, because of the effects of media and influence symbols that exhibits it, due to the impact generated by advertising demonstration and staging the objects orient the organization of the spaces that govern the privacy of self-presentation, of an appearance increasingly conditioned from the outside."* (Balandier, 2000, p. 151).

1. The Social Conquest through Mass-Media Images

Today, because of the new technologies, the image proliferates. It becomes the *main artisan of building the real and now, through its most developed forms - images called of synthesis, evaluative - it is capable of infinite metamorphoses, operates by simulation and it opens the access to virtual worlds"* (Balandier, 2000, p. 152). The image acts, *"to each it is given the freedom of movement and it subordinates to its influences."* The moving images are most active and most compelling; they require a new form of intelligibility, where the affect takes the place of trial and evaluation. According to Gilbert Durand, mass-media, in its hypostasis of diffuser, *"are omnipresent at all levels of representation, of Occidental or Occidentalized human psychic"* (Durand, 1999, p. 145). The social communication in its inter-individual, institutional and media aspects appears as a condition of possibility and of determination to representation and social thinking. The social imaginary and the individual imaginary can be found in speech in a system of collective representation.

As the information is simplified and reshaped to enter into the logic and in the internal consistency of the group, it becomes a consensus within the group, and therefore communicable, in its quality of new component of the imaginary group. Social representations are formed in an image and its meaning is attached to it. *"They are a particular form of symbolic thinking, once the concrete images include directly and at the same time a reference to very systematic set of relationships that give a wider meaning to these concrete images"* (Palmonari & Dois, 1996, p. 25). A social representation can only be analyzed in terms of an iconic and linguistic process analysis, sending input sources such as mental representations and fantasies and upstream, when they are, in turn, sources for other construction

cognitive: clichés, stereotypes, prejudices; stories, myths, superstitions, beliefs. Thus, social thinking marked by the mental iconic and linguistics.

According to Marshall McLuhan, any new environment of services, such as those created by the alphabet, railways, automobile, telegraph or radio, it profoundly changes the very nature and image of humans that use it. "*Radical changes of identity, happening very fast and at extremely short time intervals, have proven to be more deadly and destructive to human values than the wars fought with material weapons*" (McLuhan, 2006, p. 560). The media are not simply a catalyst, but "*it has its own physics and chemistry, which contributes at any time to alchemy and social change*" (McLuhan, 2006, p. 293). In the era of electricity, altering human identity because of the new medium of information services has left entire populations without personal or community values, and its effects exceed substantially those of the various crises of food, fuel or energy. Marshall McLuhan quotes Medawar to highlight the fact that the main feature of the human "*stems less from the ability to invent tools of communication, than from the communication as a human being, from the other know-how required for their manufacture*" (apud McLuhan, 2006, p. 560).

In the traditional societies, which are vocal societies, the social and political dramatizations are linked some way to the nature of things. They are an aspect of quasi-daily operation and display. The generalization of writing, printing, changes, primarily, the situation. "*The argumentation substitutes the demonstration and the abstract, analytics, encoders replaces the Global, immediate and emotional knowledge. The idea prevails over the image, the ideology over the symbolic devices and practices that they envisage.*" (Balandier, 2000, p. 123). The written culture has encouraged the individualism and specialization. The printed word has stirred the whole order of society and heralded new ways of organizing activities essential to man and to the capitalist order that was just born. "*The book was the first learning machine and also the first good produced of mass scale*" (McLuhan, 1975, p. 174). It was established as an instrument of individualism and it made possible the personal expression in society. The printed publications represented an ideal way to conquer fame and celebrity. "*Until the advent of cinema, it did not exist anywhere in the world a more efficient tool as the book, seen from the point of view of diffusing the personal images*" (McLuhan, 1975, p.219).

Governance, education and art have acquired the features of the main means of communication and its particular logic in organizing the visual experience. But, while the visual power extended through the printing it increases, in turn, the

means to organize a spatial continuous, the auditory power extended electrically, it actually abolishes time and space, without distinction. Electricity is an instantaneous and ubiquitous technology; it can create multiple centers-without-borders (McLuhan, 2006, p. 135). Innis points out that "*the disastrous effect of eye-based communication monopoly, has hastened the development of a competitive type of communication based on the ear, radio, and by introducing the sound in cinema and television*" (apud McLuhan, 2006, p. 135). The effectiveness of printed material has succumbed broadcasting and sounding.

The electronic revolution creates a new break; it partly engages the return of the old ways. The radio sets the omnipresence of word, allowing the sound dramatization, which makes possible the influence of various audiences. Thus, it installs a sort of "radiocracy". The radio revolutionized by entertainment and cultural shows, the news, ways of informing, they served for the rise of "popular culture". The electric age, represented by the telegraph, radio, television, computers, marginalized the importance of printing. The use of communication means involves the creation of new forms of action and interaction in the social world, of new types of social relationships and of new ways to be connected to others and with themselves.

In the work *The Adventures of Image. Symbolic Imagination. The Imaginary*, Durand Gilbert sustains that from the cradle to the grave, the image is present, dictating the intentions of anonymous or hidden producers: starting with the pedagogical awakening the child, with the economic and professional choices of the adolescent, "*with the typological options (the look) of every individual, in public or private morals, the mediatic image is present, sometimes wanting the "information", sometimes hiding the ideology of a "propaganda" or having seductive "advertising"*" (Durand, 1999, pp. 145-146).

First, the means of communication are used to transmit information and its symbolic content by individuals. The term "symbolic power" is used to refer to "*the capacity to intervene in the course of events, to influence the actions of others and to create, indeed, events, through the production and transmission of symbolic forms*" (Thompson, 2000, p. 21). Then, the mass-media makes spatial and temporal organization of social life, "*creating new forms of action and interaction, as well as new ways of exercising power that are not related to sharing a common space*" (Thompson, 2000, p. 10). The study of mass means of communication deals not only with the content and the means themselves; its explosive growth, which is increasing, covers the existence of the human environment.

In this context, becomes problematic our powerlessness to control our own evolution. *"Nowadays, in the electronic age of instant communication, I think our survival - or, at best, our peace and our happiness - depends on understanding the nature of the new environment, because unlike previous environmental changes, the electric means cause a total transformation and an almost instantaneous culture, values and attitudes"* (apud Dobrescu, Bargaoanu & Corby, 2007, p. 359). This inversion generates a great pain and loss of identity that cannot be improved only through the consciousness of process dynamics. If we understand the revolutionary transformations caused by the new media, we can anticipate and control them, *"but if we persist in our subliminal self-inflicted trance, we will become their slaves"* (apud Dobrescu, Bargaoanu & Corby, 2007, p. 344-345). The means of mass communication have a public media feature, a non-localized area, non-dialogical, open to visible, *"where the mediated symbolic forms may be expressed and received by a plurality of other non-present individuals"* (Stăciungelu, 2009, p. 145).

The public space is no longer bound by certain space-time places: it is like a sphere of manifestation of mediated symbolic forms, in which individuals act and interact at global level. *"The producers send mass media messages for an undefined number of potential recipients, and the recipients usually receive these messages under the conditions which do not allow producers to respond in a straightforward and discursive manner."* (Stăciungelu, 2009, p. 145). The words and images can occur spontaneously, and the consequences of becoming visible cannot be fully anticipated and controlled. Few written sentences on the reverse of a local newspaper can be collected by the national press and turned into a great event, *"an image captured by an amateur photographer can be collected and transmitted to television networks worldwide; the consequences of these and others similar processes cannot be determined in advance"* (Stăciungelu, 2009, p. 145). Today, because of the new technologies, the use of imaging modalities is multiplied. It becomes the main artisan of constructing the real. By its most developed - called synthesis, evaluative - the image is capable of infinite metamorphoses, it operates through simulation and it opens the access to alternative worlds. The real, produced by a stream of images, continuously and permanently maintained, is becoming comparable to an endlessly written, modified, rewritten palimpsest. The image gives the impression of a communication, of an exchange, enhanced by the effect of scene, it addresses to the imaginary, expectations, desire for someone to notice it. (Balandier, 2000, p. 152).

We may appreciate, from this perspective, the immense importance that fighting for visibility began to have in the social and political life of societies, at the end of the twentieth century. *"The images and the mass-media messages can lead to deeper divisions and feelings of injustice that are experienced by individuals during their daily life."* The communication means can politicize every day making it visible and observable in ways that were not possible before, *"thus turning everyday events into a catalyst for action, which is overflowing far beyond the immediate places where the events happen."* (Thompson, 2000, p. 116). The force and the technique of communication are associated. They juxtapose and mutually reinforce. The first one has scored the entrance into the video-sphere. The communication media domination has caused the emergence of a different, transparent, society, but also the disruption of ways of knowledge and thinking styles.

2. Mass Media Ritual

It is crucial and even vital for institutions to communicate, to appear and emerge on the social ritual scene. The President, the star of Cannes, the teacher who chairs the committee a doctoral thesis – each at his level - gives a certain image (physical and moral) during the rite. In a formal context, this image *"will become, by extension, a function of the institution which he represents"* (Lardellier, 2009, p. 114). Then, these images will be stored and subsequently viewed in memory and in photographs, as recollections and in the "mass media ritual" narrations.

During the rite, the institutions and groups communicate, that is groups and protagonists offer an image of themselves, which will remain etched in the memories and in images sometimes engraved and subsequently photographic, televisual, cinematic, as an idealized representation (Lardellier, 2009, p. 113).

The ritual device is represented by the carpet (the famous red carpet protocol), barriers, fences delineating the space. However, in the same way, the circumscribing horizontal device is completed by other elements, which reveal certain exposure techniques: scenes, stages, bleachers, the gala stairs have the function to allow a display, an apparition, an incarnation. The physical rise and the spatial scale are elements that exceed their normal size in order to become powerfully symbolic. *"During the rite, the figures do not try to communicate as to communicate itself, by sending a certain image about them being sublimated"* (Lardellier, 2009, p. 115). The global perception of the institutions convey through

even in this image, which their representatives offer it publically, and, especially, through audio-visual mass media.

According to Pascal Lardellier, the mass media ritual performs the following functions (Lardellier, 2009, p. 150-152): (a) the "testimonial" function, which reveals that speech, ritual media images are witnesses of something that occurs, showing it as how they would ensure the veracity, their authenticity, (b) the mass-media ritual, it makes the event monumental, building the official image that the collective memory will preserve, (c) the ritual mass media tend to legitimize the events that they resubmit or rewrite (d) both authorities that watch and the media protagonists agree to terminate or amend regular programs to broadcast an event that seems to be historical, and that is historic in a circular way by the retransmission; we may invoke here two burial ceremonies televised for Diana Spencer, Princess Welles and Mother Teresa in the pantheon of the Great Ladies of the twentieth century, (e) the mass media ritual "vectorises" the ritual events; they offer an undefined audience, often global. That is the most successful of them; an example is given by the papal blessing *urbi et orbi* from the St. Peter's Square; starting with the emergence of television, hundreds of millions of people can participate in this (f) the mass media ritual proceeds to a dramatization of events that they retransmit; operating by the codes established by devices that emphasize details of intimacy and relaxation of good quality, the audiovisual mass media practices, thereby, their social linking function.

Daniel Dayan believes that an important category of televised ceremony represents the "coronation." The term "*does not denote the monarchical events such as the coronation of Queen Elizabeth or Prince Charles's marriage but equally the investiture, memorials*" (Dayan, 2010, p. 251). These "coronations" are often related to rites of passage of political characters, establishing a relationship between contemporary figures and symbols which will enter into the collective memory. "*Therefore these symbols will be reincarnated and updated by new characters*" (Dayan, 2010, p. 251). From the category of "coronations" are funerals as well. For example, the late American President Kennedy is compared to the fundamental values of American civil religion, so he was considered a kind of reincarnation of Lincoln. In this way, the present seems an extension of tradition. This type of events, "coronation", is characterized by loyalty to the traditional established norms.

Another type of televised ceremony is "the celebration of history about to be born" (Dayan, 2010, p. 252). In his first visit to Poland, Pope John Paul II caused

extensive discussions which were deliberately reduced. His strategy was to act "as if": as if Poland had returned into the Church, as well as the Communism was over. The President Anwar Al Sadat was received in Jerusalem in 1977 "as if" he had always represented peace, although he was the head of an army that participated in a bloody war against Israel and "as if" he represented all Arabs, not only the Egyptians. This issue of "to act as if" brings to the fore aspects of ritual universe, the world of *what might be* or of *what would worth to be there*. The society members interested in this event will leave the "spell" to act and they will let themselves to be "conquered" by the proposal of historic reorientation. These are the *"true gains of public opinion"*. (Dayan, 2010, p. 252-253) Such enterprises are specific to the characters who exercise a charismatic authority. *"The events that have the ambition to become ceremonies become effective ceremonies if they find a public validate their symbolic claims."* (Dayan, 2010, p. 253) The expressive events do not have automatic access in the public sphere. They must be confirmed, legitimated, validated. Their legitimacy can be achieved in more ways: (a) by their ability to represent the "centre" of a society, such as presented televisual ceremonies; (b) by the skill of representing a civil society, (c) by the fact that they are not validated by anything, but there appear, however, in the mass media, although it does not represent the "centre" of a society, or civil society, but private interests, even in minority; they are "pseudo-events"; (Dayan, 2010, p. 253) (d) there are events that come into the public sphere through coercion, is the case, for example, the terrorist events; at this level, Daniel Dayan also identified other types of ceremonies, such as those of humiliation, exclusion, suppression; for example, suicide bombers, who were registered before the attack, tapes with messages designed to played after their death. These tapes "do not engage the "direct fascination", but the message "from beyond the grave" (Dayan, 2010, p. 255). The new ceremonies are marked by a cult of death and the idea of promoting violence beyond any negotiation. The mass media, in such cases, have a reduced role; they are just technical relay of events delivered as "ready to broadcast."

3. Bibliography

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