PERSUASION AS A FORM OF INFLUENCE

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Abstract

Our research takes into consideration that the consistent structuring of life in society is achieved by social influence. The human being is, in the same time, permeable and vulnerable to influence, has propensity and inertness to be influenced.

The thesis in favor of which it is argued is that, in spite of what specialists like Ştefan Boncu (2002), S. Chaiken (1987), R. Petty and J.-T. Cacioppo (1986), Ch. Kiesler (1969) have asserted, the persuasion is a form of social influence, because it relies on the permeability and the influensive inertness of personality, on the human tendency to confirmatively adapt to the situations of influence and on his capacity of assimilating processing the messages of influence. The persuasion thesis, as a form of social influence is also argued by R.B. Cialdini (2001), C.A. Zanbaka (2007) and Ch.U. Larson (2010). The persuasion, because is based on emotions that strike briefly, directly, and efficiently is the short way of influence.

Cuvinte-cheie: persuasiune, influenţă socială, comunicare.

Keywords: persuasion, social influence, communication.

1. CONSISTENCY AND INERTNESS

The fundament of the humanity lies on solidarity. The power of social cohesion comes from the native tendency of attachment and trust. It is inevitable to become human without passing through the selection corridor of the communion. The engine of the social consistency is the influence. Related to this system of social reproduction two inertnesses are delimited. The centrifugal inertness of the social system is called alienation. This type of social connection deals with the phenomenon of remaining outside of the circuits of the social influence. The alienation is a frail force. The network of alienation is feeble and with no consolidating mechanisms. Thus the alienation appears as an error of the system, as weakness of the gear of social influence. The centripetal inertness focuses on the concept of power. The power operators are the ones who know and can set the nodes of command of the social influence. Any power is a power of influence.

2. PERMEABILITY AND VULNERABILITY TO INFLUENCE

The human is an object of some pressures he can't resist to. As an individual, he is a sum of irrepressible influences. The influences are to an equal extent the

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environment we learn to live in, how to react and what to believe, but also the way we select and organize our experiences. We can't control individually the influences of the social environment. Penetrating the society is a jump into the rules, prescriptions, regulations, codes and conventions, constrains governing the way this system operates. One of the sections of the social is the influence with its different forms: language, learning, imitation, conviction, persuasion etc. Similar to language, influence in general (its terms, conventions, regulations and prescriptions) supports a structure of values and significances built in a controlled manner on the fundamental, self-reproduction interests of society. We often make a considerable effort to perceive, evince, correctly use and obtain a full satisfaction from the practice of influence. There are stages of influence easily attainable, like annoyance, threat, putting in inferiority, flattering or blandishment, and stages more difficult to attain: seduction, collusion and sophism. Each of such a subset may be a component of an operation of influence, but also a type of influence presiding some fields of activity. The subjects of influence are deeply identified with the deployment of some or other of the stages of influence of which phenomenology it's no need for them to be aware of. This identification makes them permeable to operations, actions or complex strategies of influence, like: intoxication, disinformation, propaganda, rumor, and manipulation. Most often on these types of influensive connivance it is efficiently communicated in terms of the resources of the stage of influence without necessarily benefiting from the conscience of some approaches associated with it. For instance, once getting old, the preferences of integrating in the circles of influence at the limit of social (anarchist movements, unusual dressing style etc.) soften, the permeability to the roles specific to sex, age and social conditions amplify. With age, the conformity, as a form of influence, commands with a greater and greater authority. Not genetic, the receptivity to influence is acquired. The interests, the readings, the preferences, the values, the role identifications and the expectations compose the stages of a process that can't be rejected. The process of influence is a natural process in the society. Last of all, in any social process we discover a process of influence. We learn to discover ourselves, to explore ourselves, to get closer to others, to understand and to understand us in terms of some influences, in the parameters of some grid of influence.

The first of the grids is the language. By it we take more than words, we take behaviors. Wittgenstein (1980, p. 467) argues "the language catches us in its net". In the moment we learn the first word we will confirm the acceptance of the social influences.

Our inertial submissiveness to the social influences makes us permeable to the persuasive influences. Our obedience to the controlled exerted by the social system is majority voluntary and accepted unconditionally. On this background of internal availability to influence, any external approach of transferring opinion, attitudes and behaviors will find a favorable ground. The human is shaped to be influenced. Thus, the persuasion has in this area an open and valid chance. Starting from the fundamental values of access to influence (right, truth, justice, beauty)

and from their structuring by engaging others (respect, trust, honor, honesty, equilibrium), on the idea of the optimistic ranging of the world, the persuasion insinuates imperceptibly.

There is a universal language and a general culture of influence. This makes visible the fact that influence is a component of identity and, in the same time, an expression of it. The human defines by his influensive capabilities: receptiveness to opinable, suggestibility, learning etc. The language of influence is learned in family, in church, in school, from the press, from advertisements, from parents' advice, from the daily talks with the colleagues and friends. All the circuits of information are circuits of influence. Information, it is known, can mean a lot of propaganda, disinformation, lie, and seduction. Only in some cases the information is the truth. Always it is influence. Information as influence makes us part of a symbolic order, gives us an imaginary space we identify with. With the information we become more permeable to influence. Acquitting with the structuring of information is a learning of influence. This type of training has an important financial support, because it is a business too. Largely, the culture of influence is nowadays promoted and governed by commercial interests. The influence and the information are an industry. If we try to express identity, as an essence of the intimacy, through them, we will be able to accept that our identity is the product of an industry, and that impersonal institutions like mass media negotiate our intimacy.

We may conclude that, nowadays, the persuasion has become an identitary component. Our personal involving in the industrial circuit of cosmetic influence shapes for two destinations. The influesive effect is firstly fulfilled as a self-reproduction of some structures of social relations. Subsidiary, within the self-reproduction, the identitary paradigm is performed by us, accordingly to the structuring in self-reprocessing of the social relations of influence. Thus we participate to our own subordination to influence. We attest permeable positions to the subordination and the dependence to the social influence. We make available our identity to influence; by extension, we put our identity in the hands of persuasion. Therefore, we must know the persuasion, because it supports our identity. The theory of persuasion contributes to the defining of identity, what is our most precious asset as individuals. Therefore, in the price of identity is always considered the credit of persuasion.

We accept the persuasion, as a matter of fact as any other form and institution of influence, through a double articulated social language: as self-reproduction of the social relations and as self-structuring of the personal identity.

3. PERSUASION – THE SHORT PATH OF INFLUENCE

Among the forms of social influence are: the social facilitation, the composing of the group regulations, the conformism, the group polarization, the minority influence, the phenomena of social change, the complacency to others' requests, the imitation, the obedience, the de-individualization, the social laziness, the contagion (Boncu, 2002, p. 12). Taking Zimbardo and Leipe's ideas, the specialist from Iaşi, Ştefan Boncu (2002, p. 12–13) asserts that the leadership, mass communication and

hypnosis may be included among the forms of social influence, but the change of attitude and persuasion must be excluded. Excluding these last mentioned is motivated by a difference consisting of the fact that the researches on social influence take largely into account the social context the attitudes form and change in. The Ştefan Boncu's conviction is that in the studies of persuasion "an agent of influence declares his position on a matter and presents some arguments supporting his position" (2002, p. 12).

In our opinion, the persuasion is a form of social influence, based on operations of which effect cannot be delimited from the generating context. Not mentioning an argument doesn't mean the absence of any argument. The evidence, for instance, is the most powerful argument. When the evidence is not pleaded it doesn't mean dropping the most powerful argument! There is no undertaking of influence that doesn't bring arguments. We emphasize that it is not necessary that the arguments should be discursively enlisted. Therefore, considering persuasion outside the social influence would endanger even the structure of social influence. An important part of the social process of bonding is undermined by persuasion. To ignore it is to allow persuasion to act freely. Persuasion is a danger. We cannot permit that this danger be detached from its place of birth and action: within the social influence.

Charles Kiesler is in favor of differentiation too, considering that social influence is the study of manifest influence, and persuasion – the study of profound influence, of private influence. We conclude that both the social influence and the persuasion are forms of influence.

Although tending to leave persuasion outside the social influence, when they approach the message matter that would produce the effects of influence, Ştefan Boncu and the specialists of the paradigm of the information processing (Chaiken, Petty and Cacioppo) are forced to emphasize the importance of the persuasive messages. "According to these approaches, Ştefan Boncu argues (2002, p. 17), the change of attitude depends on the way the persuasive messages are processed". If we don't consider in a strict syllogism that the social influence is achieved through persuasive messages, that persuasion is achieved through persuasive messages, we should conclude that the social influence would be a form of persuasion. The reality is that, in fact, the persuasion is a form of social influence, another form being the conviction, besides the ones mentioned earlier. The persuasive message is thus a type of message of influence. The individual is a person who addresses to a crowd. This human intends through communication to influence the others. "Any communication, Alex Mucchielli demonstrates (2002, p. 191), is an attempt to influence". The individual's approach is presided by needs and interests. Any interest, as a form of goal, any approach will be thus oriented towards a goal. In a discourse forces and resources are engaged for reaching some mainly social goals. The situation of influence is the place when the individual meets the object of his influence.

The individual is controlled by his group, regarding his goals, resources, methods and language. Just managing these resources is up to him. The management may be co-directional with the audience's orientation or non co-directional, positively or negatively. It can go two ways: the way of convictive communication

or the way of persuasive communication. Their specific procedures, even the methods, intercross and on sequences, insert. In the *Psychology of crowds*, Gustave Le Bon has related facts he himself witnessed to: "During the assault of Paris, a furious mob has made the marshal V. a prisoner in the Louvre, being caught taking the plans of the fortifications in order to sell them to the hunnish. A member of the govern, a famous orator, G.P., has gone out to address to the crowd which requested the immediate execution of the prisoner". "I was expecting – Le Bon continues (1997, p. 22–31) – that the orator should prove the absurdity of the accusation, telling that the accused marshal was precisely one of the builders of these fortifications, of which plan was selling, practically, in all the bookshops. To my major surprise – I was very young at the time – the discourse was entirely different. «The justice will be served, the orator shouted, advancing towards the prisoner, and it will be a unmerciful justice. The accused will be put in jail». Immediately calmed by this apparent satisfaction, the crowd has left and, after a quarter of an hour, the marshal was able to go home. He had been certainly mutilated if his lawyer wouldn't have displayed to the angry crowd the logical arguments that my inexperienced youth made me find convincing". Young Le Bon's expectation was that the saving discourse should rely on "convincing", "logical arguments". In return, the soteric effects are obtained in an illogical, emotional manner. We may say that the lawyer reasoning has an emotional conformation and persuasive effects. The general is innocent. In order to support his cause, it would be natural that the lawyer should use the manner of convincing by logical arguments (the conviction manner). In return, he places his speech on the emotional manner of persuasion and resorts to persuasive arguments, but not convictive. The discourse addressed by the lawyer to the crowd contains emotional reasoning, and not logical arguments, and the effect is achieved by persuasion and not by conviction. The motivation of choosing the persuasion manner relies outside the natural and it is a frustrated expectation. The choice is not in the orator's hands; the persuasion manner is mandatory. The crowd coerces the manner. The discourse oriented towards the crowd articulates differently from the discourse addressed to an audience, which is rational by definition. Resuming Le Bon's reasoning, we find the explanation of the mind-blowing social event. "Enumerating the factors capable of influencing the soul of the crowds, we can manage without mentioning the reason, if it wouldn't be necessary to demonstrate the negative value of its influence" (Le Bon, 1997, p. 55). Le Bon emphasizes that the crowds are not suggestible by arguments. They understand no more than the associations of harsh ideas. Therefore, "the orators who know to impress them resort to their feelings and never to their reasoning". In other words, in the terminology we try to promote, the crowds constrain to choose the manner of persuasive influence. There are two methods of influencing with no violence: the convictive method (the conviction) and the persuasive method (the persuasion). The laws of rational reasoning have no effect on the reasoning of the crowd: that means the crowd compels to persuasion.

J.-J. Rousseau has followed the same idea when, in *Emile*, has asserted that the children can't be convinced of anything, "if you don't know to persuade them"

(*apud* Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1988, p. 35). In order to influence, the shortest way is the persuasion. There is a long, logical, rigorous, but tough way: the conviction. The persuasion, in its approach of taking over, compelling, keeping and con-solidating the control over audience's opinions, attitudes and behavior, resorts to standards-sets of means, methods, procedures and techniques called informational actions. The persuasion counts on the generating a change in the opinions, attitudes and behaviors of the target. Robert B. Cialdini (2001), C.A. Zanbaka (2007) and Charles U. Larson (2010) share the idea that persuasion is a form of influence. The first considers that persuasion, as a form of influence, has six "rackets of influence": reciprocity, commitment and consistency, the social test, authority, pleasure and lack (2001, p. 36–92). Catherine Amine Zanbaka argues that there is two forms of influence: a direct and active one and another, indirect and passive; the persuasion is included in the first type (2007). Larson demonstrates uncompromisingly that persuasion is mainly enlisted among the species of influence (2010, p. 28).

4. SUGGESTIBILITY, SITUATION OF INFLUENCE, TYPES OF INFLUENCE

The social influence is facilitated both by identifying with a social common ideal of a generic leader, and by the ideal of identification as being a member of the group. Beyond this conscious propensity towards influence, the individual displays an inner disposition for suggestibility. This psychological parameter measures the level of the individual's independence comparing to the others, in what he does, he feels or thinks. The first clue of the permeability to influence is suggestibility, the predisposition to react to others' suggestions. The simple suggestive messages, the professor Irina Holdevici (1995, p. 16) argues, have bigger effects on less intelligent subjects, while the more complex messages have bigger effects on the intelligent ones. Easy to suggest is easy to influence. G. de Montmollin (1984) demonstrates that there are arguments as that it's not a question of a suggestibility feature to answer for suggestibility. In spite of this, the suggestibility remains a global feature of personality.

In the relation of variability of influence the two-term personality + situation of influence establishes, none of the two elements is not direct and decisively determinant. The influence depends on the message of influence too. In the majority of cases, the message is decisive.

C.-I. Hovland and I.-L. Janis (1959) have studied the connection between personality and the global feature of persuability. In fact, the persuability is just a form of suggestibility. "Few people, S. Asch (1961, p. 144) asserts, are aware of the historical circumstances responsible for their opinions". We develop by saying that few individuals are aware of the situations of influence and realize the convictive, persuasive contents of the messages and much less realize where their opinions, attitudes and behaviors come from.

The real and most profound influence is accompanied by a target's clear conscience that it is independent and with no influences. The target and the source of influence always interact using a message in a social situation. "The source,

Serge Moscovici (1997, p. 22) argues, is the initiator of the normative information or the sender of influence, while the target is the receiver of the normative information or the receiver of influence". The sources of influence are categorized as follows in: having authority sources, lacking authority sources, reliable sources or unreliable sources, attractive or unattractive sources, consistent or inconsistent sources, minority or majority sources, sources ideologically similar or not similar with the target, sources of status socially common to the target or of status socially different.

The types of targets are delimited implicitly by the classification of the sources. The two main participants of influence are always engaged, in this quality of theirs, in a social situation having their personality and message as variables. Related to the three canonic factors of influence (personality, message, situation) there are theories giving a fundamental role to one of them. The influence receives explanations whether of personal kind, or situational kind, or of message kind.

One of the supporters of the explanatory situational version is Ştefan Boncu. He argues, "The success of the message sent by an agent of influence largely depends on the situation" (2002, p. 20). The truth is that the influence success depends on the features of personality of the agent of influence, of the promoted message or of the situation of influence. Determinant, in the last resort, is the agent of influence, because he promotes the message and fixes the limits of the situation of influence. On the same idea, it may be argued with Stang and Wrightsman (1981, p. 470) that "the social influence refers to direct or indirect effects of one person on another". The influence is indifferent to the intention animating people. It answers for all the effects a message produces on a target. That's why is natural to be considered that the influence should mean modifying the subjects' behaviors, attitudes and feelings in the way the source of influence wants to. (Baron, 1984, p. 248). The guiding, determinative, or impeditive content of the message are variables within influence as a result. Thus, we may talk about three types of influence: the guiding influence (when opinions, attitudes or behaviors are guided), determinative influence (when opinions, attitudes or behaviors are determined) and impeditive influence (opinions, attitudes or behaviors are imposed). There is, on the other hand, a positive influence (the one by which values and the basic culture are set) and a negative influence (the one by which values and a deviant culture, opinions, attitudes or behaviors meant for generation of the psycho-motivational platform for fulfilling some interests which the target, by knowing them, would disprove, are set).

A normative, social influence and an informative, social influence are also defined. The first one generates a conformation with the personal motivation that the individual is afraid of the consequences of qualifying as deviant and of the constraints of not becoming deviant or getting back to normal. The informative social influence generates submission and the self-induction of the subjection to the personal reasoning that the ones who transmit opinions, attitudes and behaviors promote the authentic values that must be taken over.

The social influence brings together diverse and complex phenomena: education and re-education, suggestion, seduction, hypnosis, requesting and attraction, contagion, conformation, obedience, submission, engagement and mobilization to action, the

behavioral shaping of individuals and conditioning. These phenomena are restricted to conviction (honest influence) and persuasion (insidious influence). There is a natural influence and a formal influence. The natural influence is generally based on conviction. In return, the formal influence orients, determines and imposes opinions, attitudes or behaviors through persuasion.

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REZUMAT

Cercetarea noastră ia în seamă faptul că structurarea consistentă a vieţii în societate se realizează prin influenţă socială. Fiinţa umană este, totodată, permeabilă şi vulnerabilă la influenţă, are propensiune şi dispune de inerţii în a fi influenţată.

Teza în favoarea căreia se argumentează este că, în pofida celor opinate de specialişti precum Ştefan Boncu (2002), S. Chaiken (1987), R. Petty şi J.-T. Cacioppo (1986), Ch. Kiesler (1969), persuasiunea reprezintă o formă de influenţă socială, căci se bazează pe permeabilitatea şi inerţia influensivă a personalităţii, pe tendinţa omului de a se adapta confirmativ la situaţiile de influenţă şi pe capabilitatea acestuia de a procesa asimilator mesajele de influenţă. Teza persuasiunii ca formă de influenţă socială este susţinută şi de R.B. Cialdini (2001), C.A. Zanbaka (2007) şi Ch.U. Larson (2010). Persuasiunea, întrucât se fundamentează pe emoţii ce lovesc scurt, direct şi eficace, constituie calea scurtă a influenţei.