

ETHICS VERSUS MANIPULATION: ABOUT CHARISMA AND OTHER TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The ethics of communication is the most significant branch of the applied ethics; it comprises everything that means common aspect within the other professional ethics (e.g. legal ethics, business ethics, etc.) and, moreover, it has, its own topics with their own dynamics – whom we will pay attention hereby given their significance for public communication (specific for administration). Thus, we will first address the charisma (which we rather consider a hindrance against healthy communication, rather than its catalytic) and we will continue with the definition of manipulation and persuasion and we will draft a taxonomy of the communication pathological types or potentially pathological. The invoked pathology is, obviously, a moral one and we want to point out that, the difference specific to public communication related to other communication forms is exactly the fact that the types described hereby do not have to manifest themselves within it (as we sometimes notice nowadays). But, necessarily for the ethics of communication – the lie is the most important subject (= sine qua non conditions which makes the difference between moral and immoral) and thus we will approach it in our paper.

Key words: *communication ethics, manipulation, charisma, lie, public communication.*

Introduction

Nowadays not only people trained to govern have public offices or political functions. Actors (for instance, Arnold Schwarzeneger), poets, musicians, journalists and even porn stars have been elected for different administrative levels. Is it possible for their success to be the result of their personal magnetism, their charisma? Is it possible for such people to have outstanding communication skills meant to counter-balance the lack of strict specialized training? May be social influence considered a specific form of power? Is it natural to meet within the public communication environment (specific for administration) the two forms of social influence: persuasion and manipulation? Which is the difference between persuasion and manipulation? All these questions and similar ones are the object of study for communication ethics.

The ethics of communication is the most important branch of the applied ethics, comprising everything that means communicational aspect within the other professional ethics (journalist ethics, business ethics, legal ethics, medical ethics, ethics of public servants, etc). However, necessarily for the ethics of communication – the lie (with its variant – deceit) is the most significant subject and we will address it throughout our research. This is the concept within makes the difference between moral and immoral on the level of communication means and according to which there is traced the border between good and bad upon purpose level. The lie, more exactly its inexistence, is a minimal threshold in terms of moral.

Before discussing in terms of moral the communication pathological types or potentially pathological, we believe it is necessary to examine what can be considered either as a favoring factor for communication or as hindrance or jam, as ante-chamber of the “diseases” of communication, but which may not be ignored, namely **charisma**. It might be defined as the personality trait, mainly expressed by non-verbal language (attitude, gestures, look, voice, etc.),

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but as well by verbal language – which triggers an abnormal receptivity condition of the interlocutors or audience.

Is charisma a catalytic of communication? If it acted biunique (as the communication process should develop), the answer would be positive. But charisma seems to catalyze the communication in a single way, from the charismatic speaker to the receiver (audience). Even so, it seems a positive factor. But charisma does not increase the speech's clarity and does not add to a more efficient, clearer decoding of the message, but it only amplifies its persuasive effect (sometimes it transforms persuasion into manipulation). The communication process is impaired anyhow because, objectively speaking, "the code of the transmitter is not identical with the receiver's code"¹. Thus, we rather tend to deem it an obstacle against healthy communication, a "pathologic" communication, the invoked pathology being a moral one.

Decomposing charisma in its key-elements: the art to speak in public, to adjust to the perceptive horizon, to the audience's "code", the art to listen and the power to persuade, the art to inspire trust, to benefit of a kind of gift in relation with others, to have trust in your personality, to penetrate the heart's secrets, to seduce by your own charm, to have a sort of aura for those who surround you, to know what decisions must be made for the respective group or team, to foresee future events – we would rather believe that it is important to learn them and to apply them immediately, to refine them in order to ensure success. As it could be easily noticed from the above enumeration, charisma is a sort of climax of communication, in its both forms: verbal and non-verbal. But, are its consequences only benefic, as it might seem on first sight? We say it again, if its cultivation becomes a purpose in itself, we may rather consider it an obstacle against healthy and efficient communication. More exactly, we refer to the semantic entropy which is reached during the coding-decoding process within communication, which entropy arises from the fact that a word's meaning is extrinsic and not intrinsic (= arbitrary feature of the linguistic sign) and it depends, on a large scale, on our perceptive experience (linguistic and not only). Charisma, on its turn, increases the entropy degree, thus, the recollection of the two codes (transmitter and receiver) and the communication act is twice difficult.

Charisma, manipulation, persuasion, lie:

But, to begin with, let's understand what charisma is. The word charisma has, first of all, a religious origin: it is the mane given to extraordinary spiritual gifts. In Greek, **charisma means "divine grace or favor"**. Charis was one of the three dainties and it symbolized the divine attributes every human being has in itself. Only later, the word charisma meant the authority of a known, prestigious person, **the influence such person exercises on someone else**. The root "charis", which names grace, means, on its origins – and this is decisive for the word's meaning and "color" – what shines, what enjoys (the eye).

Therefore, the three classic meanings of the word "grace" deserve our attention:

- Charm (in French the word "charme" has as first meaning "spell") of beauty, joy, pleasure;
- Favor, benevolence, courtship, signs of respect, condescendence, desire to like (la bonne grace);
- Acknowledgement, reward, remuneration, wage, gifts received only because one is king, deity;

When we say to a person that she/he is gifted with charisma, we generally refer to a particularly exceptional quality in the relation with others. This quality is often difficult to define, it is like a sort of aura or magnetism, something unclear which makes us intimidated by the

¹ Mihai Dinu – Comunicarea, Ed. Științifică, București, 1997, p. 67;

presence of the respective persons or subdue, seduced, caught by the charm that person has over us. But, this quality needs to be acknowledged by a number of people to be able to speak about charisma, therefore a **social acknowledgement** is necessary. We can give countless examples of contemporary characters we name charismatic. The conductor Herbert von Karajan has a charisma which charms, casts its spell over musicians and allows them to search for perfection constantly with him, between them it creates complicity close to osmosis. High level athletes, like the soccer player Zidane is often assimilated to heroes and, thus, he benefits of a prestige that triggers trust in his words; at this point his prestige may be successfully used in advertising.

Regarding the **nature of the charismatic power**, “the sociologist Max Weber relates the charismatic power with someone who has received from gods, demons or nature a gift others have not received”²; then, he associates the idea of gift with the one of capacity and exceptional skills. The one who has this kind of gift has an ascendant, attraction, informal power over others. That person is vested with a sort of authority which is not based on success or demonstrations. The person’s speech convinces by means of evidence and not because it is more rational or eloquent. The person’s orders are not questioned. He/she is seen by people around, as someone who knows what decisions need to be made. We cannot assess if the charismatic boss (=charismatic management) has exceptional gifts, but it is important for those around to believe. Usually, he/she is related to the classes of scared, heroes, exemplary because that person exercises a real fascination over people around.

We cannot justify in a rational way the existence of the charismatic power. It would turn us back to an ancient age (Moses and Romulus are classic examples). But, the notion of charismatic leadership becomes autonomous again with Fr. Nietzsche and the theory of super-human. In the contemporary age, we speak about the “providential human being”, who appears during crises and is able to cope with dangers and defeats. That person is “by nature” the leader. Thus, such power is grounded on the leader’s personality additionally to the adhesion triggered by such personality. This sort of adhesion is addressed by Napoleon when he said: “trust comes from below”; it is a phenomenon of faith with religious, mystic nature. The charismatic leader is not in opposition with the collectivity, he/she is not imposed or inspired by it, but he/she is not distinct: on the contrary, he/she is deemed as expressing perfectly a given historic moment. All his/her power resides in this relation.

When we speak about (moral) authority, prestige over other person, about strong personality, we have to admit that such persons are more gifted than others, without being able to say if such gifts are natural or transmitted by culture (education). At least, we can consider that all gifts (sharp, “open” mind) rarely lead to positive accomplishments if they are not backed up by work. At the same time, it is certain that education, the way the child is considered by people around, the trust the child gains in his/her own force, the acknowledgement of its abilities – play an essential part for the capacity to be able later to use freely such gifts.

But not all gifts entail automatically charisma, they do not imply by themselves such **capacity of presence over the other**- which remains very difficult to explain. There are, of course, relation techniques which can be learnt, taught. For instance, elocution may improve, similarly listening, silence management, respect for other’s speech (it is known that the word’s meaning is external, not internal, thus, it is necessary to be cautious and very careful upon decoding). We can point out “its mark images” necessary to seduce, to inspire trust, to increase the influence and weight of one’s words. “But, in all cases, we speak about acquisitions, of new images about one self. They may help to improve the relation, which we may call charisma – if such new images relate to the pure definition of prestige, ascendant, authority over others, but in

² Emilian Dobrescu – Sociologia comunicarii, Ed. Victor, Bucuresti, 1997, p. 37;

such case it is clearly an acquired skill and which does not last (for instance, a new manager may cause enthusiastic unanimity on first contacts and then to disappoint on people get to know him/her better)³. In exchange, age, experience, difficulties, sufferance often bring a life approach closer to the scared dimension – which is represented by the relativity of all images which only mean to have (we all know the classic difference between to be and to seem).

Thus, charisma involves a sacred dimension and gives the **presence of the person** who has it “a dimension of to be” which exceeds it (namely, it does not have it) and which is transmitted to those around. It is not accidentally that the word charisma has the same etymologic root with the word enthusiasm (“en-theos” = to release God from us).

Generally, **charisma is associated with power**. The liaison between them seems to be like a reverse connection, with synergic effect. There are, along the history, many examples of charismatic leaders, but the most useful for our endeavor (=to prove the ethics free effect of charisma and of other forms of “pathological” communication) seems to be the example of Adolf Hitler.

A key in understanding the gradual expansion of Hitler’s power may be found in a notion of Max Weber (already mentioned) – the one of **charismatic leadership**. Contrary to the domination based on the traditional authority of the inborn leaders or on the impersonal bureaucracy, with the legal authority characteristic to most modern politic systems, the charismatic authority is based – as already seen – on the perception of heroism, greatness and mission of a leader proclaimed by a “flock of believers”. Thus, in the beginning of the 30’s, Hitler came along and he claimed power and proved his heroic personal capacities. He had the support of an organization having all the marks of a charismatic community. It comprised, in the beginning, Hitler’s close entourage, those immediately subordinated to him in the top of the Nazi leadership, people who were the initial force for the promotion of the personality cult. Beyond this small group of Nazi leaders, the main promoters of Hitler’s charisma were movement supporters, commissioner and suppliers of the message of his great deeds. Other cornets and exploiters of Hitler’s charisma were officers and employees of organizations, out of which the most important was SS and which owed their existence and the expansion of the power by proving a strong attachment to the Fuhrer. There was the mass of Hitler’s loyal people, among the German population, whose adulation gave him a popularity platform and which strengthened dramatically his position. All those added to the increase of the charismatic image of the German leader.

Hitler’s powerful personality must not be over-estimated as integrant part of his power, neither must it be overlooked. Hitler’s charisma, which was so influential over his close supporters and which had its origin in the power inspired by his idea, especially for those already subdued by his political credo, but, also, his remarkable capacity to influence masses, proved useful when he actively involved in politics. It may be said that **the grounds for his persuasion and manipulation power were his ideas**, which, irrespective of how irrational and infamous they were, he managed to put them in an attractive and coherent ideology for his target audience. But these (fix) ideas, which did not change until his death, cannot explain by themselves the attraction exercised over masses or the ascension of the German Workers’ Party.

Therefore, part of **his power was due to charisma**. The first step Hitler took in politics was represented by the impact he has as speaker to masses; during his army period he was identified as natural born speaker, who, by means of his fanatic and populist style, made the audience share his ideas. Later, he created a network of relations (less known) in the high society of Berlin, attending the salons of several ladies whom, apparently, he impressed significantly. The statements of the

³ Charles Gellman, Chantal Higy-Lang – L’art du contact; Mieux vivre avec les autres, Editions d’ Organization, Paris, 2003, p.128.

Nazi leaders from his close entourage represent another proof regarding the fact that part of his power was due to his charisma (for instance, Joseph Goebbels – after reading Hitler’s “Mein Kampf” – asked: “Who is this man? Half ignoble, half God! A real Christ or only John the Baptizer?” he considered Hitler a genius, he wanted him as friend and he wrote in his journal, on April 19, 1926: “Adolf Hitler, I love you”). All these Nazi leaders were the “devoted dogs” of Hitler and not opportunists. According to different statements, during the last weeks of the Third Reich, Hitler said that he needed 20 years to make an elite that would have assimilated his ideals, but – he added – the problem was that “time had always been working against Germany”.

The power of Hitler’s personality, the fanaticism, the adherence of the self-taught prophet, the ideological trust and self trust, that something hard to define – his charisma – were essential to manipulate the German community. However, the attraction exercised by a charismatic leader over masses has only an indirect connection with his real personality and character. More exactly, **impressions are more important than reality**. Let’s not forget that few of the 13 million Germans who voted for Hitler in 1932 knew him personally. His prefabricated and embellished image suited what people heard about him, read about him in newspapers or saw at electoral meetings. The promotion of his image was essential.

Equally important was **their initial predisposition to accept such image (charisma)**. Most supporters of Nazis were half converted before meeting Hitler in person. The German dictator inspired million of people attracted by him because of their convictions that only him, supported by his party, could end daily misery, the economic crisis at that time and that he could lead Germany to a new greatness.

“The image promoted by the Nazi propaganda without interruption was one of power, force, dynamism and youth, inexorable march to triumph, future to be conquered by belief in the Fuhrer. The movie “Triumph of the Will” (by Leni Riefensthal) portrays the grand manifestation of the Congress of the German National Socialist Party on September 1934. The movie begins with a panoramic view of the spotless blue sky. Then, from the mountains shorn with white clouds, comes a silver plane. Beneath it, the camera starts recording the towers and the majestic walls of a medieval town: Nurnberg. The shadow of the plane crosses over a huge column of people marching. Other streets with people marching. At last, the plane lands and stops in a lavishly adorned place. From the shiny cockpit, appears Adolf Hitler like a deity descended from the skies. An exalted crowd greets him”⁴.

Although made as propaganda, “The Triumph of the Will” comprises real, shocking images, which uncover some of the methods used for the manipulation on large scale of human collectivities and its outrageous results, of the pathological communication (=profoundly immoral) to which charisma leads. Approximately a million and a half of people gathered at Nurnberg in September 1934 and they were not brought by force.

Manipulation is pathological communication, understanding by this communication hidden and malicious intentions, at the extent that the interlocutor’s interests are, in the best case, ignored by the manipulator and its self-determination undermined. The pathology invoked here is, obviously, a moral one. The manipulator replaces the will of the manipulated with its own will, kidnaps its free arbiter either by offering false pretenses for an apparently free choice or by exploiting the fundamental needs (subsistence or information, integration and affirmation) and of social reflexes or by inducing emotions and mobilizing the individual or collective subconscious.

Therefore, what is manipulation? In the work of Stefan Buzarnescu „Sociologia opiniei publice” (Sociology of public opinion), **manipulation is defined as** “action determining a social actor (person, group, collectivity) to think and act in a way compatible with the interests of the

⁴ Bogdan Ficeac – Tehnici de manipulare, Ed. Antet, Bucuresti, 1998, p. 56.

initiator and not with its interest, but letting the impression of free choice and thinking. Unlike the influence of the rational conviction, manipulation does pursue a more accurate and profound understanding of the situation, but the inoculation of a opportune understanding, using false arguments and non-rational ideas. The real intentions of the transmitter are unknown to the receiver"⁵.

The specialized literature notices that **there are types of communication having an exclusively pathologic nature** (=manipulations): propaganda, misinformation, intoxication and imposture. And there are **communication types** which may be seen as having or which **may acquire a pathologic nature**: lie, rumor, debate, negotiation and advertising. Charisma may be seen as a sort of "ante-chamber" of everything mentioned above, that's why we have stopped upon its search. We repeat, by pathology we understand lack of the ethic element in their manifestation.

The permanent diversification of the sources regarding the conception and transmission of messages has led to a manipulative practice based on concrete codes, which may be identified only by professionals and are entirely inaccessible to outsiders. One of the fundamental purposes of communication is to convince the message's receiver (receivers) of a certain opinion and to adjust its behavior. If a transmitter plans to change the behavior of another person, he/she must identify the factors of the communication process which might trigger such change.

The message intending to make a behavioral change on the receiver is called persuasive message. People are daily subject to lots of persuasive messages. Research conducted on this topic shows that the reaction to message often depends on the features of the person trying to convince, without having any connection with the message's value. In this respect, psychologists have highlighted and analyzed three characteristics: the communicator's credibility, the communicator's physical qualities and charm and the communicator's intentions.

Unlike manipulation, **persuasion is** the activity meant to influence people's attitudes and behaviors in order to make the changes according to the purposes or interest of the initiator (persons, groups, politic, social, cultural, commercial institution or organization, etc.). Persuasion is achieved if the reaction and receptivity features of the influenced persons are taken into account. Persuasion is **an activity meant to convince people contrary to a choice imposed or forced**, so that it leads to the personal adoption of the expected change. The persuasion's effects depend on personal factors and factors regarding the influences' organization. Personal factors are synthesized in the so-called persuasion capacity, namely the individual predisposition of being receptive to influences and of accepting attitude and behavioral changes. The factors regarding the influence's organization are often focused on the communication process, respectively on the relations between source, message, transmission channel, reception and social context which make it persuasive.

Gustave Le Bon notices the existence of **four main convincing factors**, which he presents as a sort of "persuasion grammar" and namely: "source prestige (suggests and imposes respect), ungrounded affirmation (removes discussion, creating the impression of an erudite documentation of those who represent the message source), repetition (makes it accepted as a certain affirmation compatible with the source's objectives) and mental influence (which strengthens the individual convictions, new or characteristic to people without personality)"⁶.

Both – manipulation and persuasion – may be classified in the wider class of social influence, representing different degrees of its manifestation. **Social influence is defined** as the action exercised by a social entity (person, group, etc) oriented towards modifying the action and manifestation of another. It is associated with the environment of power relations and social

⁵ Stefan Buzarnescu – Sociologia opiniei publice, Ed. Didactica si Pedagogica, p.83;

⁶ Gustave Le Bon – Psihologia multimei, Ed. Paideia, Bucuresti, 1997, p. 35;

control, but it stands apart from those as it does not use coercion. It is associated with socializing processes, social learning or communication. In this respect, “Raymond Boudon and F. Bourricaud deem that social influence may be considered a specific form of power, whose main resource is persuasion. The social influence’s effects depend deeply on context, as it stimulates or blocks receptivity and creates acceptance grounds, change manifestations (to the eventual products)”⁷. Two conditions must be met in order for the influencing process take place:

- The initiator of the intentional influence must have an acceptable degree of competence and information, being animated by intentions considered by the receiver as well oriented;
- The influencing relation must be grounded on a mutual consent of the involved entities and upon the shared values and probable effects.

We have mentioned that, certain types of manipulations – propaganda, misinformation, intoxication and imposture - are exclusively pathologic (=immoral) while other forms – lie, rumor, debate, negotiation, advertising may acquire, under certain circumstances, such immoral nature. We will briefly analyze in the following the lie, which, on large scale, means manipulation, regardless of its form. It is used by all of us, daily, but it is not necessarily for it to occur during public communication (as it happens sometimes).

The lie is defined (in the Explanatory dictionary) as “intentional distortion of the truth usually having the purpose of deceiving someone”. In Romanian, the lie has as synonyms deceit, ruse, but also fiction and invention. The adjective liar has as synonyms false, untrue and ungrounded.

For our purpose, **the lie as pathologic communication means** does not refer to fiction, which is not characterized by the immoral purpose, or to error, where misses the intention to distort the truth. Starting from the pattern reality – representation – discourse (implied by the act of communication), we notice that the lie is fundamentally different from error by means of the fact that, while error operates strictly on the representation level, **the lie works on the level of discourse, in order to change the representation and, ultimately, the reality**. Thus, the lie might mean manipulation, in a wide meaning, under any of its forms - either we speak about misinformation, propaganda, intoxication or imposture. Said clearer, the ethic behavior – either we speak about communication, public relations or other activity - excludes the lie completely. In this respect, we share the idea of Immanuel Kant who says that it is not ever justified to lie and the obligation to say the truth may not be limited by any sort of collateral arguments.

If we approach **lie from the perspective of the humankind’s religions and major cultures**, we notice two significant ideological trends (both for the laic and religious environments), which have been structured by contemporary thinkers in two models of ethic theory: the deontological model and the theological one.

The deontological model (also called legal or juridical) understands ethics as a theory of duty. From the perspective of the source of moral laws, this model has several variants:

- The theory of divine command, where the authority of the moral legislation is God’s rationality. The fundament of this theory is represented by the biblical precepts enforced by the Western Christianity;
- The ethic theory of Immanuel Kant according to which the authority of the moral legislation is the human rationality itself, grounded by “god will”;
- The contractual theory, where the authority of the moral legislation resides in the mutual political will of the human beings to organize a society which would remove them from their primitive “natural condition”. This theory, belonging to J.J. Rousseau, was shared by other rationalists of that period.

⁷ Tran Vasile, Stanciugelu Irina – Teoria comunicarii, Ed. Comunicare. ro, Bucuresti, 2003, p.126.

The theological theories represent the other major ethic source of the humankind's thinking, having a tradition and a force at least equal with the option of the deontological theory. **The theological model** understands by ethics an art and a practical science, like medicine, and places on top of the human behavioral options – values, embodied in good and desirable purposes. According to the criterion of the supreme value chosen as purpose, the theological theories may be classified as follows:

- Eudemonist theories (pleasure as ultimate value: hedonism, epicureism);
- Theories of virtue (focused on the way the moral characteristics of human beings must be built and on the definitive purposes of a happy life – Plato, Aristotle);
- Utilitarian theories (which subordinate moral to the individual or group interests - Th. Hobbes, J. S. Mill etc.);
- Perfectionist theories (which place perfection at the zenith of ethics – Windelband).

From such perspective, we can remind briefly the **position of major religions**, which ground various cultures, with respect to lie.

The word of the Scripture and Old Testament is clear regarding the moral behavior of the human being and the capital sin represented by lie. The tablets of the laws, given by God to Moses on the Sinai Mountain, comprise the 10 commandments and the 9th commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." (Exodus 20:16). The 9th commandments requires honesty, rejection of duplicity, simulation and hypocrisy, it forbids lie, libel, ungrounded suspicions. Thus, lie appears as non-truth and consists of telling the false with the intention of deceiving, being always illicit, and a capital sin. Moreover, the Ten Commandments are completed by the Book of Law, written with ink by Moses himself and which forbids: to lie or to bear false witness (Leviticus 6:3-8), to swear easily/irrationally (Leviticus 5: 4), to spread false rumors (Exodus 23:1), to join the crowd in bad things and to bear false witness (Exodus 32:1).

The lie is negatively seen in Psalms, as well: "Fear your tongue from evil and your lips from lies!" (Psalm 34:13), in Sayings: "Deceitful lips are ugly for God" (Sayings 19-22), as well as throughout the entire Old Testament. According to the Scripture, the origin of lie, its father, is the devil itself, having no connection to God. According to the Holy Scripture, God is very severe with lies and ethic behavior. The New Testament strengthens God's command against lie: "Leave all these: anger, hate, wrath, gossip, shameful words which come out of your mouths. Don't lie to each other as you have undressed of the old man, with his deeds" (Colossian 3:8-9). Lie destroys those who exercise it at first, being for the human nature what stain is for iron and manna for grape. At the same time, it is a choice and a vice, because God has given humans their free arbiter. And as any vice, it is developing daily. Lie is serious matter – one must not even try exaggerations, convenience lies - the so-called white lies as it is not good to take easy fire or poison. Moreover, Christians must not swear they tell the truth: "our way of speaking must be Yes, yes: No, no. what goes over these words, comes from the evil one" (Mathew 5:37), (Jacob 5:12).

"The imperative of not altering the truth is a meta-concept common to all older or newer religions, regardless of the geographical area of their manifestation"⁸. The religions of all cultures state that telling the truth is absolutely good and the lie is absolutely wrong, thus punishable. Thus, Hindu texts blamed the lie's capacity to occult reality: "a well sacrifice is hidden by lie". Buddhism equals the communication of the false with the hiding of the shameful deed, also mentioning the dark path of the liar: "a speaker of false words shall go to the purgatory and one who making an error says he hasn't done it shall be equal in the underworld". (Dhammapada). Brahmanism extrapolates the vice of lie as connection of all other illegal deeds: "all things are entailed by words, words are their roots and from words they arise. That's why, the one who speaks false words, is false in everything". (Manu's laws). And Hinduism states as clear as crystal: "there is not virtue above the truth or sin greater than lie" (Mahabharata).

⁸ Mircea Eliade – Istoria credintelor si ideilor religioase, Ed. Stiintifica, Bucuresti, 1999, p.9.

The Jains consider lie is grounded on the pathological soul impulses: “falsity involves a false vow by someone who is destroyed by intense passions” (Upasakadasanga Sutra), and Sikhism underlines the boomerang effect of the lie on its speaker: “deceit in commerce or the use of lies leads to sorrow.”

The two main Chinese religions – Taoism and Confucianism – have also stated clearly against lie: “don’t say what your heart denies” and Confucianism as warning, an impulse to resistance against manipulation: “I can’t see what a man can do whose words are not believed. Who can a cart roll without yoke or a carriage without bridles?”

If in the main religions of the world, lie is seen as capital sin, which cannot be justified under any circumstances according to the divine laws (only, rarely, having as goal to prevent a grater sin), apparently the Islamic religion sees it differently. The lie’s morality is one of the most confusing aspects of Mohammedanism, giving the impression that a person can be seen as honest or liar according to the situational ethics, the circumstances that person faces. Obviously, Islam does not admit two classes of leis: leis about Allah and lies about Mohammed. On the other hand, a series of lies is admitted, such as: lies told in battle to bring peace between opponents or lies between spouses; the lies told to save your own life; the lie told to gain peace and understanding; the lies told to influence a woman (and to make false promises to your wife).

Statistically, the weight of lie as deceit in the communication act has been measured by **Buller and Burgoon** (1994), and the findings show that lies has a significant percent, as follows: lie = 30%; exaggerations = 5%; half of truth = 29%; secrecy (as hiding) = 4%; diversion = 32%. Another series of research has shown that: more than 60% of people lie regularly, men lie 2-3 time more than women (D. Perry, 1995), women lie more often to protect others while men lie to point themselves out (Thierry Pfister, 1999), people hid the truth in their social relations 1-6 times/hour and the main reasons for lying are: to avoid personal troubles, to gain others’ appreciation and to avoid troubles caused to others.

Public relations act within the human communication field more than any other profession. Belonging to this field, they are in permanent contact with the transmission of potentially false information and when it happens on purpose, the lie territory is crossed. Public relations specialists in various organizations, spokesmen of famous politicians, businessmen or stars, representatives of public relations or communication agencies build and promote the public image of their employers or customers, strengthening their fame and credibility before their business partners or domestic and international public opinion. In this respect, there is always a tendency to embellish reality, to rapidly reach the goal and to save money and time in reaching such goals. Up to a certain point, such inadvertences remain benign, but if it said about a person having a public office that such person has academic studies while he/she has not passed the high school leaving exam, it becomes malign and the immorality threshold has be obliviously crossed.

Conclusions

We have undertaken this brief trip through charisma, manipulation, lie in order to underline the following idea: the **public communication** specific to administration (or, as it is called – social communication) – irrespective of its manifestation environment – must be, by excellence, **an ethic form of communication** and thus it must be “cleaned” of everything mentioned above. The moral desideratum within it is mandatory; it is the one that makes the difference between this communication form and others: political, governmental, advertising, economic, artistic, etc. each society tries to promote the collective values necessary for its development and comfort and, in this respect, to fight against the social evil which hits it – accidents, insecurity, diseases, environment degradation, etc. Or, usually, it is not enough for a measure to be mandatory in order to adjust individual behavior. Very quickly, regulations and controls prove unable to achieve the

results expected. Therefore, it is better to try to obtain everyone's voluntary adhesion, trying to train people in this movement which implies, at the same time, the individual and collective good. This is the **goal of the public communication**.

That's why, for Bernard Miege (the "Society conquered by communication"), public communication "represents a way by means of which state administration use more clearly and organized advertising methods and public relations"⁹. This is due to the fact that, on one hand, the state must face new responsibilities, and, on the other hand, it uses new management procedures, including procedures to manage the opinion within the business environment.

The usage of the public communication expression needs several explanations. At first, we have to make the difference between **public communication and political communication** as they are often mistaken one for another. During electoral periods, a government or minister is tempted to rather capitalize the personal and public policies and not the actions undertaken by the led administration. Or, public communication is not limited to the minister campaigns and the interest to avoid transforming it into an annex of the politic communication is more and more obvious. Secondly, **public communication must not be associated with institutional communication**. The highlight on the institutional or organizational aspect triggers a dissimulation of the characteristics specific to company communication, on one hand, and public communication, on the other hand.

Thus, **public communication endorses four classes of deeds**:

1. To bring up-to-date the administrations' functioning (the devices for public relations or systems for the information presentation and transmission). Administrations must face more complex and precise demands; the administered people expect to obtain information they consider themselves entitled to and do not accept answers hidden by the secret of administrative decisions or which give de impression of arbitrariness; the administrations' adjustment and modernization depend a lot on the behavioral changes of those administered which see themselves more like consumers and even customers.

2. Some companies set as goal behavioral changes;

3. For some administrations, the main concern is to ensure by communication a modern image;

4. To seek the citizens' adhesion regarding a certain problem, by sensitive actions.

The main feature of public communication is to act on the level of social representation and to allow a fast adjustment of public speech. We point out the fact that it **is essentially different from other types of communication by its end-purpose, by its remarkable moral connotations**.

Thus, **public communication** mainly endorses the citizens' personal life by mass-media; it addresses its message in a special way to citizens as particular individuals (prevention of diseases and accidents). It is focused on effects, studied results; it develops interactive relations within the field of humanitarian progress. Public communication has a goal of pure individual value, preventive actions on behalf of health and safety, promotion of patrimony resources. It is a neutral transmitter, which is not enthralled to any particular entity, power, group or person. It acts independently according to politic circumstances, until the disappearance of the evil had in mind. Unlike it, **propaganda** (=manipulation) transmits belief in its primary meaning, it fights in order for the public opinion to accept certain political and social opinions, to support a certain political orientation, a government, its representatives. It is an ensemble of informational means intentionally serving a theory, party or person in order to collect adhesions and the support of the

⁹ Bernard Miege – Societatea cucerita de comunicare, Ed. Polirom, Iasi, 2004.

majority. It serves whatever political strategy under circumstances of favorable exploitation with scientifically issued conquering techniques.

Also, public communication is different from advertising: while the first contemplates behavioral changes in order to change habits, it is against consumption and addresses the ideal behaviors of citizens regarding their own persons and it is financed by collectivity (funds from the state or associates, where most part of resources collected from the population), **advertising** (=manipulation) encourages the purchase of a new product, so it favors consumption. It highlights more the brand than the product, it wants to convince rather than to inform. It transforms the customer into a conqueror and it is financed by the products bought by them.

“Regardless of any opinion, by interposed organisms, may certain individuals arrogate to the privilege to try to adjust legally the behaviors of other humans?”¹⁰ By the virtue of ethic imperatives, of the priority of general interest against personal interest? When public communication serves general welfare, the collectivity has no reserve. Usually, public communication has an essentially governmental origin and the campaigns’ signatory party is not neutral regarding the undertaken action and its outcomes (regardless of the topic, often the minister in question notices the communication’s impact on the public and tries to benefit from its success in terms of image). Regarding the economic legitimacy of public communication, we point out that any prevention of social dangers (heart diseases, alcoholism, tabacism, drug addiction, etc.) entails significant savings regarding the costs of social and medical care when such actions prove to be efficient. Environment protection, economic information, brand image improvement of social organizations have, of course, a financial explanation, they trigger earnings which help the improvement of the entire community and of the individuals forming it. Public communication acquires a sort of economic legitimacy, concretely assessable. In fact, it names a moral desideratum in the politic, institutional and advertising communication. From this perspective, the respective communication forms have an inherent pathological nature, namely immoral.

In conclusion, we name public communication any form of communication with profound moral connotations, namely any process which accompanies the public institutions’ activity in order to please general interest. The transmitted messages must comprise public use information, such as: to inform citizens about the organizations within the public sector, their functioning and duties. Moreover, public communication attempts to discover the population’s needs and desires in order for public institutions, by their role and duties, to meet public interest.

¹⁰ P. Zemor – La communication publique, Ed. PUF, Paris, 1995.