

## THE COORDINATES OF THE NEGATIVE JOURNALISM

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**ABSTRACT.** The starting assumption is that the man is an accessible being, permeable to persuasion and to negative journalism. From the point of view of social influence, the communication submits two methods: the convictive method (the conviction) and the persuasive method (the persuasion). The approach of convictive influence is the approach of demonstration, of the intense arguments, the approach of the strictly and compelling logical inferences. But the man is not an entirely rational being. The individuals do not communicate in order to demonstrate. They communicate to share an experience, to agree on some values, on some actions etc.

Demonstrations focus on the necessary things. But people's life is not exhausted by the necessary things. The human has emotions, feelings, passions, needs, wishes. The conviction approach does not cover all that is human. The persuasion governs the emotion and the passion field. As a main form of persuasion it is individualized the negative journalism, understood as an informative intervention dragged along by an interest external to the direct, accurate, honest and balanced information. There can be detached four coordinates of the negative journalism, of the journalism determined by dishonest commandments: the lie, the seduction, the fiction and the myth. We can see them clearly articulated in journalistic operations of intoxication, misinformation, propaganda and manipulation.

### КООРДИНАТИТЕ НА НЕГАТИВНАТА ЖУРНАЛИСТИКА

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**РЕЗЮМЕ:** Отправна точка е, че човек е социално същество, поддаващо се на убеждение и общуване. От гледна точка на социалното влияние комуникацията допуска 2 метода: метод на принудата и метод на убеждението. Подходът при първия метод е подход на демонстрацията, на аргументите. Човек обаче не е изцяло разумно същество. Индивидите не комуникират само с цел демонстрация, а с цел обмяна на идеи, опит и т.н. Демонстрациите се фокусират на необходимите неща, които обаче не изпълват изцяло живота на човека, т. к., той има емоции, чувства, нужди, желания. Методът на убеждението управлява емоциите и страстта. Като основна форма на убеждението се приема негативният журнализъм, възприеман като информативна интервенция, изявяваща се като директна, точна, честна и балансирана информация. Възможно е да се определят четири координати на негативния журнализъм: лъжа, привлекателност, фикция и мит. Те могат да бъдат отчетливо разграничени в журналистическата практика като преувеличаване, дезинформация, пропаганда и манипулация.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE COORDINATES OF THE NEGATIVE JOURNALISM

The starting assumption is that the man is an accessible human being, permeable to persuasion. Any influence is produced by communication. From the point of view of social influence, the communication has two methods: the convictive method and the persuasive method. The approach of the convictive influence is the approach of the demonstration, of the intense arguments, the approach of the strictly and compelling logical inferences. But the man is not an entirely rational being. The individuals do not communicate in order to demonstrate. They communicate to share an experience, to agree on some values, on some actions. They communicate to transmit knowledge, to let the impressions being known, to communicate opinions, attitudes and behaviors by consensus. The demonstrations focus on the necessary things. But people's life is not exhausted by the necessary things. The human has emotions, feelings, passions, needs, wishes that aren't rationally necessary even if they are sometimes placed at the stringency limit. The conviction approach does not cover all that is human. The persuasion governs the emotion and the

passion field. The persuasive actions, even though addressing to the reflex, are the result of a reflection. Starting from this hypothesis, this research reaches the conclusion that the negative journalism, as a persuasion form, is an approach with a specific operational technology. Four fundamental persuasive coordinates can be detached within it, defined as operations: the lie, the myth, the fiction and the seduction. By the co-action of some of the operations the actions are attained. The main actions of persuasion are: the influence, the intoxication, the misinformation, the propaganda and the manipulation. When the actions extend in amplitude and complexity they become operations or campaigns. If the interventions like operation and action mainly aim the target opinions, the operations (the campaigns), Newson, VanSlyke Turk and Krukenberg [2003, p. 599] explain, „are usually built around the desire of establishing, of changing or of modifying different behaviors.”

As a form of persuasion it is individualized the negative journalism, opposed to the positive journalism in which the conviction dominates. Second of all, in this direction, it is stand out that the negative journalism is an informational intervention, inducted by an interest external to the direct, accurate, honest and balanced information. In its ex-

information configuration, the negative journalism is imposed as a possibility of satisfying some economical, political or any other type of commandments, in any case not above all informational. With the negative journalism the mass-media surrender itself to persuasion. There is not an entirely negative journalism. Without making from it an ideal, the journalism cannot become and remain purely and entirely a negative journalism.

The mass-media is the place where two journalistic consciences action: one of positive journalism and the other of negative journalism desired and presented as positive journalism. Thus, the mass-media is made of information and ex-information (para-information, pseudo-information and over-information). Only by a dissuasive reading the negative, in action journalism can be detected, decoded, deciphered and decrypted. The fundamental interventions of persuasion and negative journalism are: the influence, the intoxication, the misinformation, the propaganda and the manipulation.

If one may say that the persuasion is the short path of influence, then the negative journalism is the short path of persuasion: influence accomplished with emotional means to an ex-informational end and non-convectively interested. The conviction and the persuasion intend to be, at least programmatically and externally, convictive, convincing. The positive journalist and the positive journalism bet decisively on convincing, on shifting an internal conviction, on inducing a conviction. In return, the journalist and the negative journalism bet decisively on persuading, on inducing an external conviction, one about which he knows that is not legitimate and he interested promotes it. Is not the negative journalism that denies, but the journalism that denies itself, becoming the instrument of some interests, strange to the journalistic ethics of convincing (of conviction).

## II. The permeability to influence

The humanity foundation relies on solidarity. The power of social cohesion comes from the primary tendency of attachment and trust. It is inevitable to become human without passing through the corridor of the communion selection. The engine of social consistency is the influence. Related to this system of social reproduction, two inertias are defined. The centrifugal inertia of the social system is called alienation. This type of social connection covers the phenomenon of remaining outside the circuits of the social influence. The alienation is a frail force. The alienation network is weak and with no consolidation mechanisms. Thus the alienation appears as a system error, as a gripe of the social influence gear. The centripetal inertia focuses on the concept of power. The power operators are those who know and can place themselves at the commanding nodes of the social influence. Any kind of power is an influencing power. We learn to discover ourselves, to explore ourselves, to get close to the others, to understand and understand each other in terms of influences, in the parameters of some grids of influence.

The first grid is the language. Through it we absorb more than words, we absorb behaviors. Wittgenstein even demonstrates that "the language catches us in its net". On the second we learn the first word we confirm the accepting of the social influences. Any influence is a form of control. Thus the language appears as a mean of social control. We learn to

become what we are through the social influences among which the language is basic.

Therefore, our inertial submission to the social influences makes us permeable to the persuasive influences too. Our submission to the control operated by the social system is mainly volunteered and accepted with no reservations. On this ground of internal availability to influence any external approach of transferring opinion, attitudes and behaviors will find topsoil. The human is shaped to be influenced. With each action of influence, the persuasion talks about the human. By keeping the human in the spotlight, the persuasion has in its negativity a positive-convictive value. As much as we blame it, the persuasion talks about us.

The entrance in the society is a diving into the rules, the instructions, the regulations, the codes and the conventions, the constraints which govern the way this system operates. One of the sections of the social is the influence with its different forms: the language, the learning, the imitation, the conviction, the persuasion etc.

There are ranges of influence easily accessible, such as the anger, the threat, the placing in inferiority, the flattery or the adulation and there are ranges more difficult to access: the seduction, the collusion, the sophism. Each of these categories can be the component of an operation of influence, but also a type of influence that governs some domains of activity. The subjects of influence are profoundly identified with the behavior of one or the other ranges of influence of which phenomenology they need not to be aware of. This identification makes them permeable to the operations, the actions or the complex influence strategies like: the intoxication, the misinformation, the propaganda, the rumor, the manipulation.

Very often on these types of influential connivance the communication is efficient in terms of the resources of a range of influence without necessarily having the conscience of some related approaches. For example, once aging, the preferences of integration in the circles of influence placed at the limit of social (anarchist movements, peculiar closing styles etc.) are diminished; the permeability to the typical to sex, age and social condition roles is magnified. Once aging, the conformity as a form of influence, governs with a more powerful and powerful authority. Not genetic, the opening to influence is attained. The interests, the readings, the preferences, the values, the role identifications and the expectations form the steps of a process that can not be rejected. The process of influence is a natural process in the society. In the last resort, in any social process we discover a process of influence.

There is a universal language and a general culture of influence. This makes visible the fact that the influence is a component of the identity and, in the same time, an expression of it. The human is defined by his influential capabilities: the opening to the opinable, to the suggestibility, to learning etc. The language of influence is learned in family, at church, at school, from press, from commercials, from parents' advice, from everyday colleagues' and friends' talks.

The newspaper that we read reproduces social relations of influence we can not escape from. The newspaper that we read influentially enters the personal identity, not like a car crashing into a wall, but like a building material into the building

itself. As a derivative, the newspaper of persuasion teaches us accepting the social influences and makes us the subordinates of some institutions of influence which we perceive as naturals. The newspaper is like cosmetics: it's selling us and it's selling itself. In every system of influence, this process takes place specifically, but never outside these two coordinates: social self-reproduction and individual self construction. The forces and the institutions of influence are kept and transmitted through self-reproduction of the influential speeches, ordered by the significances and the values.

### III. The negative journalism – the short path of persuasion

As a short way, the negative journalism has the following features:

- it is the instrument of a persuasion claiming to be conviction;
- it disconnects from the information and capitalizes the factoid;
- it exploits the reality debilitated by the fragmentary and the complex;
- it introduces a dishonest interest and an adulterant intention;
- it disseminates the ignorance and the aggression.

a) "Instrument" of persuasion. The fourth power, as any other, can reach abnormal deviations. One of the forms of sideslip is the journalistic negativity. To be negative in press means becoming an instrument of persuasion, making from the persuasion a target in itself. The journalism can not become negative unless it abandons the royal path of equilibrium and of accurate information: the path of conviction.

b) The persuasion claiming to be conviction. The negative journalism demonstrates that the press can sometimes become a closed, impermeable universe. With the blocking in the perimeter of some purely persuasive goals comes the acknowledgement of a self-sufficiency conscience. The installation of this self-government and autotelism idea leaves the journalist governed by any interest, makes the journalism considering that it would function governed by its own laws. But it is known that an "own law" is a law of the self interest. These laws sometimes become strange, even abnormal. The negative journalism is at some "own law's" hand, first of which is the one of a persuasion that claims the conviction.

c) Disconnecting from the information. Once the negativism accepted, the idea of civilizing and cultural shaping is figured as undesirable. The functions of the honest information and of the education in social interest are disconnected from the journalistic producing mechanism. This manner of journalistic elaboration that attracts the audience on an artificial territory, integrates it into a persuasive ritual, either by an excessive simplification or by an exaggerating amalgamation. The audience is disconnected from the information.

d) The factoid. In the negative journalism field, the system of the reality marks is modified accordingly and as a consequence of the manipulative, propagandistic, influential, advertising interests etc. The negative informational environment is deliberately organized and planned with informational events, so that the capabilities of absorbing the persuasive messages by the target-audience be stimulated,

formed, maintained, and consolidated. Thus a persuasive education of the aimed audience is carried out. A journalistic intervention, a symposium, an anniversary, a conference, a presentation are excellent events with persuasive potential or persuasive engraftment.

By inserting the persuasive elements, the convergence base of information-real thing is weakened. In the negative journalism melody the real thing becomes factoid: the reality is replaced with an apparent reality. What the factoid proposes is a reality which never existed and will never exist. If it is acknowledged that the factoid would exist, this will have a content related only to the internal articulation of the factoid. In the language structure of the factoid acts of language can penetrate, such as promises, future projections, conditional declarations etc. But the cogitative reinforcement will every time consist of considering something that does not exist or it exists only as a probability for which accomplishment "the factoid" would not fight anyway. The factoid makes promises with no intention of assigning the energies of materialization. It announces something (an event, an act, a fact) without any thought of making some effort to participate in fulfilling the content of the announcement.

The factoid appears as a formulation of a valid or false hypothesis, and in addition a sovereign indifference to the materialization of the formulation. Vernacularly, the factoid is build using the conditional mode and the conjunctive mode of the verb, as well as with phrases containing vocables (conjunctions, adverbs, lexemes) such us: if, probably, maybe, it appears, it seems, it looks like, it's possible etc. The factoid does not make the music of the negative journalism all by itself. At the press level, the factoid is not alone. In Jane's T. Harrigan opinion, "besides mystification and rumor, the factoid is the third insidious form of the incorrect information" [1993, p. 24]. The elements named factoid, rumor, mystification, fable and simplification of reality compose the fragmentary and incomplete real. The fragmentary and the incomplete produce the debility.

e) The reality debilitated by the fragmentary and the complex. What the negative journalism builds is a debilitated reality. This debilitated reality has as subsidiary characteristics the confused, the insubstantial, the ambiguous, the irrational, namely those features of the informational goal which represents the topsoil of the engraftment of the persuasive.

The reality has a feature persuasively exploitable: the complexity. What philosophers such as E. Morin and V. Tonoiu call "the paradigm of the complexity" includes a complexity that reaches the unapproachable. The complexity is a studying matter for which we have no method. In a way, the fragmentary and the complex are equivalent: they allow the insertion of the persuasion. Because it can not work efficiently with a complex object, the cogitative spirit fragments it. The complex will be then processed after the method of the fragment. John Dewey discovers this solution of complexity, he shows [1990, p. 58]: „we have to divide it, so to say, in fragments and assimilate it slice by slice“.

f) The persuasive orientation. On the management of the influences background, the mass-media performs a valuable re-significance and an axiological correlation of the journalists' own experiences, which leads to the so-called direction or orientation of the information devise. Every media operator

produces an order of values. Once connected to one of the operators, the audience is connected to some axiological codes. Moreover, different media categories (the editorial, the first page articles, the titles etc) in order to attract a larger audience, promote different orders of values. Thus, the press reader as he passes from one valuable environment to another it is subjected to the pressure of a varying axiological order. The partial directional coincidence of the sequenced orders offers the media operator's orientation. The sequenced identity makes the direction. In return, the partial differences of the different sequenced orders can lead and do lead to the audience's disorientation. This disorientation also acts as an attractor to the insertion place of persuasion.

g) The dishonest interest. The negative journalism loses the informational equilibrium and returns the information to the direction of an economical or political interest, with no honesty related to the general interest. The negative motivation is one that has the conscience of incorrectness, of insidiousness. The mass-media is a more ordered and staged environment than the most social or informational environments. In order to influence, the media operators fragmentarily took the real, sterilize it, readjust it by their own interests and put a label on it. All these transforming operations lead to the manufacturing of an interested media reality. When the main interest is not an informational one, but an economical or political one, then the exposed real will be a stage the audience is attracted to in order to be negatively influenced. The negative journalism offers a stimuli-reality; it does not make the discourse of the reality of events, but another reality, the one that attracts the influence.

h) The adulterant intention. The object of the journalistic discourse is thus the events (the acts and the facts) and the personalities. When entering the informational circuit, the acts, the facts and the personalities pass through a grid of interests and values. This referential and selection system represents the road to publication. Once set in intrigue, the events suffer a magnification and a reducing of data. While making the effort of setting in discourse and assuring the cohesion, the event suffers a distance from reality. Even by transforming the acts and the facts into news an involuntary alteration takes place. This place of the informational process represents a point of inserting the persuasion. The vulnerability moment of the negative journalism is this sequence of setting the intrigue of the acts and of the facts. If the negative journalism can insinuate into the coordinates of the journalism of information, of the journalism of investigation, then by comparison, the journalism of opinion and the journalism of interpretation are already surrendered or taken hostages by the negative journalism.

The difference between information and ex-information comes from this: the moment of setting in discourse is infected with the intention of deceiving, of misleading: by an adulterant intention. The negative journalism is led by an adulterant intention.

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i) The dissemination of the ignorance. The negative journalism neglects and rejects the honesty and equilibrium. It implicitly disseminates the ignorance as intentional avoidance of the encounter with the reality thing. We are dealing with the promotion of ignorance as a lack of interest in knowing. Under the pressure of the interests of influencing economically and politically, the mass-media is setting a method of knowing ignorantly: to know so that not notice what it is all about. The negative journalism organizes the ignorance. Commonly, the events intrigue the audience, causing them an interrogative state. The reality causes a questioning state to the individual. The positive journalism starts with the state of interrogation-questioning and offers the arguments so that the audience deliberates on its own. On the contrary, the negative journalism offers solutions. It stimulates the ignorance even by the interested solution he is giving. The more powerful the influencing intention is and the feebler its arguments will be, the more it will flatter in order to seduce the audience. By validating the ignorance, it is militated for de-media.

j) The short path. The negative journalism offers solutions, it does not inform. It is not a parallel or alternative journalism. It is just a modality of the persuasion, it is the short and easy approach of the persuasion.

k) The aggression. Journalism is a social instance endorsing influences. In the absence of the autonomy and of the axiological responsibility, this instance inclines towards negative.

The negative journalism can not exist but on the terms of a functional media network. As Dona Tudor proves, the emergence and the development of the media structures modify the position of people involved in the media and the position of the public communication in the processes and the public activities and the possibility of their using to aggressive ends produces ample re-assessments in the modalities of conceiving the aggressions [2001, pp. 10-30].

The "agglomeration" of the not co directional alternatives determines the aggression. The informational aggressions represent the final feature of the negative journalism.

If it is not recognized by the ends and the interests, by the adulterant intention, the factoids and the debilitating of the reality, the negative journalism should be always recognized by its direct, immediate, with no equilibrium and morality aggressiveness.

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