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TESIS
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WORDS,

DISCOURSE

AND

THEIR RELATION TO

PUBLIC OPINION.

INFLUENCE ON CULTURE



Method

The following issues shall be investigated and dealt with:

- Words, as a set of sounds to express an idea.
- Discourse based upon the rational power through which some things or faculties are deduced from others, in order to deeply study and examine an issue and to design and propose actions and effects of discussing and reasoning following a method.
- Public Opinion: trying to unify the relation between the two previous subjects and to show and highlight its influence on culture at a certain historic period.

Every chapter of this paper shall include definitions of terms and shall consist in an individual introduction, development and conclusion based upon the research on different authors' opinions. It is also possible to consider every part as a separate paper.

Nevertheless, all parts as a whole shall constitute a sole integrated research work made up of a general introduction, the development of the different subjects and general conclusions.

*Words, discourse and public opinion,
emerged from the concepts expressed in the past
by philosophers and masters of rhetoric
a long time ago, are still as updated
as if such concepts were expressed in our days,
perfectly adapting to our reality,
thus constituting in many cases a model
for all the people
and specially for politicians and
for those who are in charge
of the communication media.*

*It is necessary to lay emphasis on the fact that
faith, even as small as a mustard seed
may move mountains
and we shall believe that
the Word became flesh and lived among us
to set a life example.*

*We shall not lose the last bit of optimism and honesty
that we still have as people and as Argentineans.
It is fundamental to return to the sources, in the light of
ethics and values both at an individual and social level
to influence on culture.*

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

1.- Introduction:

*LANGUAGE IS THE ORGAN
THAT CONSTITUTES THOUGHT
W. VON HUMBOLDT*

Since time out of mind, the Word has been significant as it somehow enabled the transmission of knowledge, habits and thus, the history of every group of people in times when there were no written records. Man is the only living creature who can speak, and the word is one of the most extraordinary gifts he possesses, since it enables him to communicate the prodigious wealth of the soul and to establish a relation with his fellow beings. The Dictionary of *Real Academia Española* defines the word as “set of articulated sounds expressing an idea, the capacity to talk”. An effective use of the word is supported on two basis: nature and education.

The human need to express feelings, ideas or thoughts, led to the creation of language, understanding this as a form to show our internal world through a set of significant symbols. Every person, in contact with other people, learns and internalises words and simultaneously acquires meanings, always in relation to real life experiences.

The linguistic system allows us to relate with other people, to share feelings, to communicate facts, etc. Thus, no matter the channel used or the way in which a person expresses him/herself, he/she shall always aim at being understood and at having the message “decoded”. By conferring meaning to words and, in turn, to the facts described thereby, we are somehow making an opinion, inferring the causes and consequences related to our personal experiences. This leads us to what Cándido Monzón Arribas calls Public Opinion: “the discussion and expression of the points of view of the public or audience as to general interest issues, directed to the rest of the society and specially, to the power”. Moreover, K. Young affirms that “public opinion is formed by verbalised attitudes, ideas and convictions as to a certain issue which is being discussed” and that “public discussion often starts through conversation and murmur”. This is then absorbed by the press, radio and cinema, which are public opinion spreaders, as “catalysts and revealers of society’s intimate reality”.

The word is the representation of every person’s thought, it is its translation and reconstruction. Language is spread through the print, which settles spoken language

rules. The word is the basic support element of public opinion, which, in turn, builds up and becomes part of culture. Culture may be defined as the set of traditions, beliefs, rules and language constituting the history of a group of people, comprising its past, present and future. Moreover, culture maintains people's identity, being open to everyday life changes.

Interaction between people is fundamental, and to the extent life becomes more sociable, education has a greater impact on society in a progressive way. Environment is also important: the family exerts a strong influence upon opinion formation and upon words and stereotypes to be used. This interaction is the starting point for culture formation, which may be modified by the individual experience of the members of the group.

In turn, interaction may become a strong influence, and even be deemed a factor of control, as the one important powers exert on the means of communication, whether by handling information through programmes, films, etc, or else through advertising. With globalisation, there is an "underlying colonialism", which generates, as in all human acts, a political interest. In such respect García Fajardo states that "the political candidate who understands television and radio may achieve an unknown power in history", that is to say, such power may also be used as means of domination or as a way to express either disagreement or objection. He who has power over the means of communication and more precisely, over television, may enter every house and try to persuade the audience of whatever this person wishes. Thus a potential danger is implied since there are no controls, schedules or permits, and only the receiver's decision to accept or reject proposals at every second curbs and keeps the information within certain limits.

The Dictionary of *Real Academia Española* defines the term Discourse as "the act or capacity of discussing or reasoning". It is the exposition of a certain issue a person makes to others, specially, pronounced in public for persuasive purposes.

The Sophists were the ones who tried to induce people towards certain subjects by means of dialogue and discourse. In such way they also transmitted knowledge.

Before electronic mass media were launched, political advertising was supported mainly by oral discourse. The means to transmit political ideas, doctrines and theories evolved, always only aiming to recruit followers for such ideas, persuade the audience and win new adepts. A clear example thereof is the "Socratic method" of the Greek

philosopher, Socrates, in which through his discursive argument he gradually directed the interlocutor towards accepting his ideas.

Some centuries later, writing played an important role in history (at least for those who knew how to read). Gutemberg's invention (the print of mobile types) produced a radical change: ideas or doctrines were printed on paper, in massive quantities, and this helped political leaders to extend their ideas and theories among the different audiences that received such printed papers.

With the emergence of electronic mass media, a real change was provoked as to making political doctrines massive, covering a growing population segment. The knowledge of the proper use of these electronic media to convince the public produced a deep change in the old political values.

For centuries on end, words and discourse have been equally important for human relations. Everything is built through the communication process and alternatives to extend our relation network are always sought for.

Nevertheless, when speaking about discourse, it is also necessary to connect it to oratory and to its two most important elements: eloquence and rhetoric. Everybody speaks, but only very few people do so efficiently, since the capacity to apply eloquence requires, as any other human skill, education and training. Eloquent human beings are the exception.

*AN ILLITERATE IS NO LONGER FREE, SINCE TODAY,
THE MASS IS CAPTURED AND BOMBARDED BY TELEVISION PROGRAMMES
WITH ANY TYPE OF MESSAGES AND CULTURAL CONTENTS*

HEGEL

2.- Eloquence, its purposes, elements, kinds and methods:

Eloquence has been defined in the most varied ways, both by ancient and modern people. For Cicero, the maximum Roman orator, it is a continuous movement of the soul and for Dionysius of Halicarnassus it is the art of making oneself believed. A lot more definitions may be added hereto, but though apparently different, all have a common background: eloquence is the external testimony of a deep soul. The word rhetoric derives from the Greek term *rhétor* which means orator and may be defined as the art of saying things well, enhancing concepts, making written or spoken language efficient in

order to enchant, persuade or move the audience. Rhetoric is, then, a set of provisions and rules to speak well. This definition obviously presupposes the possibility of making a human being eloquent by teaching certain principles thereto. As to this possibility, there has been a lot of discussion and even today it is still being debated if being an orator is innate or acquired. If the former is the answer, rhetoric will have no justification. It is impossible to admit that there are no naturally eloquent human beings and, in fact, experience will prove this to be false. Genius and talent do not follow any school, since the superior human being has inborn knowledge and wisdom. The provisions of rhetoric are not man's arbitrary creation; they have been extracted from the human word itself, from talented people's words, *i.e.* first there were the great orators and the great oratory, and then rhetoric appeared as codification of eloquence best examples. Rhetoric finds its place in the world of culture to the extent it is not understood as a magical formulae capable of furnishing a person with the genius he/she lacks, and provided it is construed as a useful transfer of other people's experiences for the benefit of our own capacity of expression. In this way, rhetoric or the art of word responds to the most important rule-maker of ancient thought, the Roman Quintilian, who defined this in an immortal phrase: "Orators are made, poets are born".

Eloquence purposes have also been subject to discussion since the beginning of times. For Cicero, eloquence purposes are to instruct, enchant, persuade and move the audience. Aristotle points out that eloquence was aimed at praising, persuading and convincing, accusing and defending.

Eloquence in its different forms sets different goals according to its different objectives. With the advent of Enlightenment, the political discourse was seen from another perspective, the enlightened reason lies on the trust that human beings may agree upon and exercise a social agreement, always tending to transparency. As for religious eloquence, Saint Augustine requests that eloquence shall teach, please and move the audience. With regard to eloquence in general, Fenelon affirms: try, persuade and depict. André Siegfried modernly agrees that we talk to persuade or teach. It is a matter of trying to convince and express our point of view. Coincidences are logical since all of them take into account the wide range of human intentions, and their apparent differentiation is only a subtle splitting of concepts. The complete linguistic scope is herein included, adopting the following classification, with all the implications of every term:

- a) To teach and learn, *i.e.* to transmit knowledge to other people or investigate and acquire same in deliberations.
- b) To persuade, *i.e.* to convince other people that our opinions are true and consequently move them towards action.
- c) To touch feelings, *i.e.* to provoke certain passions or emotions in other people's spirit.
- d) To please, *i.e.* to produce a feeling of pleasure in other people's souls with words for certain purposes.

In the reality of oratory, such purposes may appear individually, or what is more frequent, combined. The variety of forms, items, occasions, places, subjects and purposes which is evidenced in the use of the word is extremely wide.

Eloquence, as any other art, has its own elements, which shall be known by any person who wishes to achieve the rank of orator. In oratory, there are three elements, all of which are rendered the same importance. In his famous Rhetoric Aristotle stated: "Discourse consists in three elements: the orator who speaks, the subject that is dealt with and the audience to whom the speech is addressed", this evidences that eloquence is a social, and not an individual fact. Hence, any study of, or criticism to eloquence has to be made analysing these three elements and, in this way, every rhetoric treaty shall separately study the orator, discourse and the public.

There are as many types of eloquence as issues to be dealt with, and consequently, it is very difficult to try to make any classification due to the great variety of discourse nuances. This still becomes more complex when taking into account the type of public that is addressed, the occasion on which a discourse is pronounced, its form of production and purposes. Aristotle described three types of discourses: deliberative, judicial and demonstrative, which is an incomplete classification mainly taking into account the forms of oratory known in his time. A more modern and complete classification of eloquence establishes various types, namely: dialectic eloquence (which teaches and transmits knowledge), political eloquence (which exposes or discusses all issues related to public affairs), forensic or judicial eloquence (which occurs when exercising a right), religious or sacred eloquence (which deals with religious issues), sentimental or ceremonial eloquence (which covers the scope of multiple human ceremonies), artistic eloquence (which produces aesthetic pleasure), military eloquence (which is intended to inspire the defence of a country and stimulate patriotic virtues and

soldiers' heroism) and deliberative eloquence (which is intended to debate or discuss issues at meetings or boards to settle agreements or expose objections). Every type of eloquence has its own rules and usual typical forms.

In regard to oratory methods, we may talk about four different types of discourses: read discourse (in which the orator has a written text to be read in front of an audience), memorised discourse (in which the orator learns the written discourse by heart and retells it in front of the audience, simulating an improvisation) and improvised discourse (that is the most superior type of eloquence). Improvisation has the ability of exerting pressure and moving the audience. There are two types of improvisation: absolute improvisation, in which the orator is surprised by a circumstance and is forced to talk, and relative improvisation, in which the orator is invited beforehand and may prepare his discourse) and the combined discourse (in which both techniques are combined).

3.- Persuasion and Authority:

Methods based upon psychological research have been proposed to facilitate the orator's work. Two examples are persuasion and authority.

The method of persuasion consists in gradually invading the field of the audience attention and manipulating it, through progressive reasoning, towards the orator's point of view. The method of authority consists in imposing the orator's personality and his own ideas through psychological pressure. On being persuasive, the orator's soul is insinuated in the soul of the audience and those souls combine into one, while in the authority method the orator's soul is overwhelmed and takes control over the audience's. The method of persuasion is based upon the utilisation of certain procedures related to the audience psychical modalities and which are classified in different ways according to the different authors. Said method consists in talking to the audience about issues that are familiar thereto, presenting them with certain conviction in a dynamic way with sequenced statements, in which the parts keep proximity, similitude, continuity and inclusiveness, taking into account the audience intimate motivations.

The method of authority is supported upon two pivots: as to the audience general view, every orator has a certain superiority that is freely conferred thereto, for the use of public word is supposed to imply a particular handling of subjects and the people. In addition, a person who is assigned a superior level, causes a psychological reaction of

diminution and weakening in other people's mind. Authority may be used on some occasions, but it shall only be effective to the extent the orator really exercises the leadership of the audience and provided that his messages include some real truth and are not proved to be false by subsequent events. Authority is also conditioned to an attitude of audience real dependence or inferiority and to the orator's authentic superiority.

*WE ARE WORDS
AND DISCOURSE
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*

4.- Politics and Image Builders:

Political manipulations have not been a discovery of the XX Century. Napoleon organised a press office named Public Opinion Bureau, which was supposed to produce political trends upon request.

Machiavelli also made some original contributions to this kind of thought. People's manipulation under a dictator in a controlled society is relatively easy, being the dictator able to govern adopting, at his own will, a strict or lenient hand. The real challenge consists in efficiently handling the citizens of a free society who may vote in order to remove officers from their positions or not to support a candidate's aspirations. Mass effective political manipulation and persuasion in these situations had to wait for symbol manipulators, who did not pay serious attention to politics until mid XX Century. To cause the expected changes said manipulators took into account Pavlov's discoveries and his conditioned reflex, Freud and his paternal images, Riesman and his concept of modern electors as spectator consumers of politics and Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn and their science of mass commerce.

When referring to masses, we must not forget to mention that mass society alludes to the relation between individuals and their social order. Individuals forming part of a mass society are supposed to be in psychological isolation with respect to others; impersonality prevails in their interaction with others and they are relatively free from binding and formal social requirements. According to Broom and Selznick, modern society is made up of masses in the sense that what has emerged is a vast mass of segregated and isolated individuals, interdependent in various specialised ways, lacking

core values or unifying purposes. The weakening of traditional links and the increase of rationality and labour division have created societies made up of individuals who only have weak links among themselves. In this sense, the word mass suggests something more similar to an addition than to a strongly united social group. After the first decade of last Century, Europe and then the United States were launched into the great war. Labour division, with the subsequent heterogeneity and individualism which had enabled new societies, became a burden. The 1914-1918 war was really the first world fight in which whole populations had active and coordinated roles in their effort against an enemy. In almost all previous wars, opposing military forces fought with much independence from civil populations. Unless the combat took place near their houses, the population was not either personally or deeply involved in war. The new type of war was in fact the difference between the manufacturing capacity of a country against another, and in this way, armies in the battle field were supported by a nation's vast facilities. These enormous industrial efforts required sincere cooperation and enthusiasm of the civil populations which took part therein. The whole war implied a deep compromise of all resources of a nation. Material commodities had to be sacrificed, morality had to be maintained, people had to be persuaded to leave their families and to join the army, the manufacturing work had to be made with a vigour without weaknesses and money had to be raised to finance the war. But diverse, heterogeneous and differentiated populations of industrial societies were not united by that reciprocal feeling that maintains human beings together as members of a whole. To the extent every country became politically involved in the war, a critical and urgent need to give rise to stronger links between the individual and the society emerged. It became essential to move feelings and loyalties, to induce in the citizens a hatred and fear to the enemy, to maintain their morality disregarding deprivations and to capture their energies in an effective contribution to their own nation.

Advertising was the way to achieve such urgent objectives. Carefully designed advertising messages covered the nation in the news, through photographs, films, long playing records, discourses, books, preaches, posters, telegraphs, rumours, publicity on walls and in brochures.

Leading politicians decided that bets were so high and purposes were so important that they even justified almost any means applied. Citizens had to hate their enemy, love their country and maximise their war effort commitment. What individuals

did on their own could not be trusted. The current accessible mass media became the main instruments of persuasion.

After the war, numerous people who were considerably committed with advertising manufacturing, felt the burden of gross cheating and fraud in which they had incurred. Tremendous lies had been told, from one side against the other, and such lies, divulged through the mass media to whole populations, were frequently believed. This high range persuasion of entire populations, through mass media, had never been seen before and it was conducted in a very smart and coordinated way. Furthermore, such were times of more innocent appearance, in which the word advertising was not even understood by the common citizen.

The mass media enabled the spread of political ideas and doctrines to almost all the population. Nowadays, we do not always try to persuade the social mass to “adhere” to certain ideology, but on many occasions, instead of transmitting and trying to “sell” a doctrine or ideology, a person or a candidate is “sold”. And this leads to this man-product candidate who has a whole team of communication professionals available to communicate, persuade and try to sell brands and products. For this man-candidate, marketing strategies shall be projected, tactic plans shall be performed, survey results shall be analysed, spaces in the media shall be hired, promotional material suppliers shall be contacted. Every kind of activity inherent to a brand or product shall be carried out, only related to a politician, a candidate or a party. This constitutes Political Marketing.

*YOU CAN CHEAT EVERYBODY FOR SOME TIME ...
AND SOME PEOPLE ALL THE TIME ...
BUT YOU CAN NEVER CHEAT EVERYBODY ALL THE TIME.
ABRAHAM LINCOLN*

The structures shaping our everyday life, forming public opinion and systematising sociology tend to the complete humanisation of the social organisation, trying to achieve human beings universality in its realised humanity. The duties of social and cultural institutions may be directed to its super-structure, to art or to the functional infrastructure thereof. This functional infrastructure always includes three main indivisible principles:

- Supply function, which provides material goods supply.

- Generation function, which provides the continuity of a country individual vital manifestations.
- Social and political function, which refers to social life interaction, relations between individuals and groups, groups and institutions, institutions and the society as a whole and vice versa.

Although these three functions are constantly refilled, even overlapping on some occasions, they still form part of any institution infrastructure. When splitting into super and infra structures all of them have an outstanding feature: the fact that they are public opinion builders and modulators. This is the time when sociology enters its formation period.

The opinion of a certain public is built through an individual counting process which adds up agreeing opinions. This appears in any collective situation and shows a quantitative process of personal opinions addition, as in an electoral act, a conference room or the spectators of a football match. Due to its popularity, the opinion of a certain public is fleeting, it is something circumstantially made and which lasts so long as the occasional motive determining it.

However, Public Opinion requires an authorised or qualified opinion, since in a certain way it shows a principle. It is not just a matter of number of individuals, as in the case of polls in which the opinion is expressed, with or without grounds, positively or not, of a certain motivation. In Public Opinion, it is necessary, apart from popularity, to try to influence on the opinion of a certain public. Once installed, Public Opinion lasts as an already shaped opinion, without prejudice of the intrinsic evolution it may purport. Public Opinion has historical importance: it is connected to the past and leads to the future, with which, in turn, it merges, creating a constitutive historical dimension. This inherent historicity of Public Opinion explains its stability and permanence as already made opinion, and comparing it with the opinion of a certain public we observe that the latter is always circumstantial, with or without integration at a historical level.

Those taking part in Public Opinion formation represent the social group whose interests are expressed in that opinion. This attitude is representative not only in the sense that they act as representatives or delegates of their own social group, but also in the most relevant sense, since Public Opinion depicts a historical period, forming culture, and at the same time, being part thereof.