



Media, viewer and storytelling: Subtlepowers.

Los medios, el espectador y la narración: Poderes sutiles.

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Sergio Carlos Ramirez Amador

University of Guadalajara (MEXICO)

CE: sergiocramireza@gmail.com / ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4007-4026

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ABSTRACT

Since the proliferation of the mass media, society has experienced drastical changes, one of them in regards of power. In this essay I analyze the power relationships between the mass media and their spectators, as well as their mechanisms and consequences. I sustain that this mechanism is the narrative understood as a way of deliberately choosing information with the purpose to provide aesthetic feelings to the events on the world. This manipulation of reality generates a power relation as far as the citizen lacks alternative ways of knowing complex social realities, generating an information monopoly, information that can be manipulated both in its content (facts) and in its form (narrative) to show the spectator something that is not always the case. This would generate changes in public opinion which could be easily instrumentalized.

Keywords: Power. Stocking. Politics. Aesthetics.

RESUMEN

Desde la proliferación de los medios masivos de comunicación la sociedad ha experimentado cambios importantes. Uno de ellos en materia de poder. En este ensayo analizo las relaciones de poder entre los medios masivos de comunicación y sus espectadores, así como sus mecanismos y consecuencias. Sostengo que este mecanismo es la narración, entendida como



una forma de selección deliberada de información con el fin de dotar de sentimientos estéticos los sucesos en el mundo. Esta manipulación de la realidad genera una relación de poder en la medida en que el ciudadano no tiene otras formas de conocer realidades sociales complejas, generando un monopolio de la información, información que puede manipularse tanto en su contenido (hechos) y su forma (narración) para hacer ver al espectador algo que no siempre es el caso. Esto generaría cambios en la opinión pública que puede ser fácilmente instrumentalizada.

Palabras claves: Poder. Medios. Política. Estética.

The Media, the Viewer and the Narrative: Its Subtle Powers.

The man of the XXI century is shown before a peculiar era. Despite suffering from fewer shortcomings, he always seems to need something more. With the movements of the century and its technological advances the circumstance of the common individuals has been dressed in new colors. Not only is the gap between the wise and the ignorant narrowing, but the powers of man are expanding. The sky is no longer the limit, but the stars. Naturally, life in this high-speed society modifies the customs of each culture. The citizen modifies his catalogue of ideas more regularly than in the past.

The changes of the century are not only material, they are also cultural. New power relations emerge from necessity. This essay aims to examine a power relationship exclusive to this era: that of the mass media and the individual. I intend that you, dear reader, accompany me on this journey in which, in an abstract way, we will study how this relationship has occurred, what is its mechanism, its conditions of possibility and, therefore, its consequences. For this, it is necessary to begin with the foundation that sustains this peculiar relationship that, I maintain, is none other than the narrativity of reality.

I will divide this essay into three sections: in one, with the help of Castells, I will analyze the type of power that, I maintain, the media have; in another, by the hand of Ortega y Gasset, I will analyze the conditions of possibility of such power that, I maintain, is found in the individual of the XXI century; Finally, from the hand of Aristotle, I will analyze the mechanism by which this power is manifested which, I maintain, is through the narratives. Without further ado, let's get started.



A preliminary inspection

Representation, it is often said, is the pillar of contemporary democracy. Despite its necessity, it doesn't seem entirely clear what exactly it means. This raises a question: what is it to represent? Taking this question, as such will not do much good, it must be reformulated. If representing necessarily involves a represented and a representative. Who is it that represents? In the development of these two questions lies the answer to the first.

In a partisan democracy, the representative manifests himself through the party or candidate who holds ideas and interests. This party is assigned legislative power (limited by other parties) to look after specific ideals and interests. From bills to voting on relevant issues. This is the reason for the party's existence. On the other hand, the represented is manifested in the individual who chooses such parties or candidates.

The characteristic of the individual in this type of representation is that he has a worldview, a system of values, beliefs, interests. It has to be considered something key: the individual chooses, yes, but why does he choose what he chooses? It is clear that the ideas of each one, that is, the worldview is what motivates. But how is it that it is worldviewed? Individuals wandering the world encounter their circumstance. The internal forces of a biological being are opposed to the forces of its environment. Individuals are born in a place, live certain experiences, breathing native airs; they create links with other people, they unite their lives. Ultimately, they seek to find meaning in the world around them.

The result of this task is a set of convictions about reality: "Before doing something, each man has to decide, at his own risk, what he is going to do. But this decision is impossible if man does not possess some convictions about what things are around him, the other men, himself. Only in view of them can he prefer one action to another, he can, in short, live." (Ortega, 1984, p.29). It is a fact that things do not speak for themselves, it is necessary to frame reality in a framework of ideas that gives it meaning, this is the principle that opens to hermeneutics, every individual interprets, and every interpretation requires a worldview.



Sometimes the line between worldview and identity is very thin, sometimes one is their ideas. Curious spirits will seek to forge their own worldview, but it is inevitable that their worldview will be influenced by other worldviews, usually inherited from the culture in which they were born. Castells will say "The construction of identities uses materials from history, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory and personal fantasies, apparatuses of power and religious revelations" (Castells, 2001, p.29).

He will elaborate on this concept by making the distinction between different forms of identity among them the one that concerns us: "Project identity: when social actors, based on the cultural materials they have, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, in doing so, seek the transformation of the entire social structure" (Castells, 2001, 2001, p.30).

With this in mind: the individual when deciding which candidate or party represents him, what exactly is he looking for? Of course, a party that is in accordance with what the individual autonomously holds, his project identity. The individual trusts that his interests are sufficiently aligned so that the action of these representatives in the legislative branch does not adversely affect the perceptions of the individual. In other words, worldviews must be compatible.

This seems to suggest that the voter carefully analyzes his reality and his representatives. But let us not fall into this trap. While this is the case for some, it is commonly the case that voters choose, rather, irrationally. This is because the worldview of the individual does not have to be systematic or rational. As Caplan (2006) will point out: voters choose based on what they perceive as the best, but they never stop to analyze whether this genuinely holds. Then perception is the key to voting and precisely this, perception, will be the object of the media.

The worldview of the individual is key when making decisions. When the individual chooses his party he tends to vote for the options that he perceives as the best for everyone, as indicated by Caplan (2006). But this perception has to be founded on a worldview, that is, on a series of beliefs about what the world is like. Certainly these perceptions do not have to be true, it is enough that they are beliefs, as Ortega would say:



Beliefs are what truly constitute the state of man. I have called them "repertoire" to indicate that the plurality of belief that a man, a people or an epoch is never possesses a fully logical articulation, that is, that it does not form a system of ideas, as it is or aspires to be, a philosophy. (Ortega, 1984, p. 30).

What does this mean in politics? The representative will hold certain general ideas with which to approach individuals and unite them under the same group. These ideas naturally have to appeal to events that voters perceive as urgent or necessary. Otherwise there would be a risk of not having popular support and losing to another representative who does appeal to the notions of voters as Caplan (2006) concludes.

The representative knows that political issues (budget, law, etc.) are complex and not in the popular interest. Therefore, if this politician tried to approach his voters only with rational justifications, voters would not pay attention. This political strategy tends to fail because the brain is not separated from emotions and, in many cases, these prevail over the valid or reasonable. This is the central thesis of *The political brain* book (Westen, 2007).

For this reason, the representative sees the need to use other rhetorical strategies to approach those represented (strategies that we will analyze later), which implies neglecting the rational aspect of his worldview to make it accessible to the public. The logical consequence of these problems is clear. the representative has to narrate a position to make it persuasive. What is the problem with this? The narrative does not have to be true or its ideas effective, they only need to be well narrated in order to enter the popular worldviews and become public opinion.

A subtle power

The ways of conveying ideas have changed. As we will see later, this change has profound consequences on the social fabric and the way of doing politics. Ideas have always been transmitted through the family, the school, the community, the market, the church; social ties. Little by little these



factors (which are nothing more than the circumstance of the individual) end up influencing the worldview of the individual. It is from the adoption of these ideas that an identity is born.

When it comes to politics, ideas are subtle protagonists, these are at the bottom of every political movement, beyond charismatic leaders. Political identity is an extension of personal identity, in Castells' terms, it is a project identity. What new mechanisms does this technologically advanced society possess to produce and reproduce ideas? We can say newscasts, reports, opinion programs, movies, radio capsules, web articles; in the end it all comes down to the same thing: media.

It is a fact that this novelty has illuminated the minds of many who in the past lacked access to all kinds of information, but this fact does not free us from the risk that these imply. The problem is deep and requires attention. On the one hand, the nature of the medium impacts the message, on the other, these media have owners. We call the latter the entertainment industry.

And it is appropriate to call them the entertainment industry, because the line between information and entertainment does not exist in an age where everything (from education to newscasts) has to be entertaining, at the risk of being discarded if you are not. Such a phenomenon was called by Postman "the era of show business" (Postman, 2001, p.68). These media do not transmit only information, they transmit messages. Information is the content of the message, but this information has to be conveyed in a way (form).

Every message, as packaged information, implies a matter and a form, a what and a how. It is common to believe that the what and how are different things, that every medium is suitable for every message, but this is not the case. Recalling Postman (2001) and McLuhan (1994): The media, being the form, condition the contents that can be transmitted, that is, "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1994, p.29). There are certain media that favor certain types of content, "you can not use smoke to make philosophy. Its form excludes its content." (Postman, 2001, p. 11)

Certainly the twenty-first century is dominated by the audiovisual. The specific medium, from television to cell phone, tends to the massification of images and their rapid distribution. This accelerated pace, of changing one image for another, in a short time, leaves little for the reflection of what has just been consumed. So how is it that a lasting impression is generated in these media?



Through aesthetic sensations. These media favor sensationalism because this, by focusing on emotions, has an impact as much or more significant than the contents of the message themselves. It is not surprising that series, soap operas and movies are what is most consumed in these media.

The human is emotional, no doubt. When we remember this fact, the consequences of the above stand out. The mass media show decontextualized realities and show them with emotional overtones. The use of music, images and slogans in political campaigns has been shown to have as much or even more impact on the success of the campaign than its content itself (Westen, 2007).

This fact explains why the preferred strategy of the politician in these times is the care of the image projected to the public, carefully selecting image advisors that allow him to show his most favorable face, in this case, the image will be more important than the relevance. As Postman will say:

In shifting from party politics to television politics, the same goal is pursued. We are not allowed to know who would be better off as president, governor or senator, but who has the image that can best reach and calm the depth of our discontent. (2001).

As Postman (2001) pointed out, radio, television and the internet (the latter has its details that we will analyze later) have modified the structure of transmission of ideas. Information is given to the viewer in a fragmented manner, divorced from its context, in large quantities and great speeds. It's certainly easy to get lost in an ocean of information. The human, as we have already seen, needs to frame so much information in some way in order to understand it. This is the function of narratives.

The mass media are not selfless spheres. Fashion stories propose fashion values, their heroes reflect an ideal of a new man, conflicts in stories mutate with each new social movement. If these ideas floated in the same space, with equal diffusion, there would be no problem because these ideas would be obliged to be discussed, to be purified. The problem arises when this industry (including the media) is monopolized, because, as we will see, the centralization of the media implies a centralization of power.



Why do I maintain that it is a monopoly? Perhaps the most appropriate word would be oligopoly because it is true that not every media is controlled by a single entity. But it is also true that the media are not entirely democratic because not everyone who wants to has the ability to spread their ideas to the general public. In these media we can see a limited number of worldviews that may or may not be in conflict. It's easy to get lost in a false dichotomy when there are only two or three big owners of the discussions. It is this phenomenon that I refer to when I speak of oligopoly in the media.

This oligopoly supports a special position among the other accumulations of power. In order to understand this position it is necessary to understand under what paradigm these media operate, which is none other than a revolution in the way of transmitting information. Castells will identify one of the main characteristics of the paradigm that this technological revolution meant: "the first characteristic of the new paradigm is that information is its raw material: they are technologies to act on information, not only information to act on technology, as was the case in previous technological revolutions" (Castells, 1998, p.105).

Following Bostrom (1983), the sources from which we obtain information about the environment, information with which we will make a perception of the world, are decisive when it comes to taking an attitude towards some event in the environment. According to this, sources are measured according to their credibility, a concept that is attributed to the source prior to the receipt of any information. Credibility is divided into trust and expertise. The first consists of the belief that this source has no reason to lie to the viewer and the second in the belief that these sources are qualified enough to talk about the subject.

These two qualities perfectly describe the perceived social role of the media. They are trusted to receive information about the realities that we cannot know, both for their apparent neutrality and for the personalities that usually expose these perspectives, but, remember that the sources are not a bridge between the subject and its environment, rather, they are interpreters of the environment. (Bostrom, 1983).



Calling them media would not be entirely correct, because their technologies are not simple bridges between reality and the viewer, but are producers of messages, information being the raw material to process, package and distribute. The mass media produce and reproduce narratives (discourses) with the peculiarity of placing themselves in reality. To cite a few examples: the news reports on certain facts, certain topics are discussed, data of certain people are revealed (data that affects the image of those involved), people do not take long to suspect.

The media has the power to choose how to represent reality, in other words, they produce reality. Consequently, they favor or disfavor some interpretations of reality, and how to doubt them? Well, the newscasts show evidence: images of reality, compromising photographs, signed documents. It is true that their evidence seems convincing, their stories coherent and their motives just.

But let's remember the weight that credibility has in the media, because credibility is attributed to the medium before receiving the message. This has a consequence and that is that the audience tends to place above the quality or legitimacy of the evidence the credibility of the source (Bostrom, 1983). Credibility is the backbone of media power

The work of these media is not that of research per se, but that of the manufacture of a product made of information, attractive and easy to consume. And the subject has to consume it with tranquility because how to doubt? As Adorno and Horkheimer have already pointed out: this cultural industry induces a state of passivity to the viewer because it motivates little or nothing to question the realities shown, but to the acceptance of what is already established (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1998).

If we consider that the media have an owner, and to that we add that the common individual can only have access to the information of his environment through the media, we find a power structure. By acquiring control of the media, inevitably, one acquires the power to modify public opinion through narratives (we will explore this mechanism later) that sustain worldviews related to the interests of those media. Sartori will make an important point regarding public opinion:

First of all, public opinion has a location, it must be placed: it is the set of opinions that is found in the public or in the public. But the notion of public opinion calls above all generalized



opinions of the public, endogenous opinions, which are of the public in the sense that the public is really the main subject. We must add that an opinion is called public not only because it belongs to the public, but also because it implies the *res publica*, the public thing, that is, arguments of a public nature: the general interests, the common good, the collective problems. (1998, p. 69).

Political issues are no exception, these are also disseminated through narratives and these narratives have an owner. As Sartori points out:

So how do you constitute an autonomous public opinion that is truly of the public? It is clear that this opinion must be exposed to flows of information on the state of public affairs. If it were "deaf", too closed and excessively preconceived as far as the journey of the *res publica* was concerned, then it would not work. On the other hand, the more a public opinion is opened and exposed to exogenous information flows (which it receives from political power or from mass information instruments), the more the public's opinion runs the risk of becoming "hetero-directed", as Riesman said. (1998, p. 70).

This is the power held by the media, that of public opinion. It is ultimately founded on a notion of what the world is (worldview). The state of the world can be presented in such a way as to make it seem that a certain course of action is necessary to change such a situation, this is the work of storytelling. Whoever has access to the ways in which this information reaches the masses has access to their opinion.

It is in public opinion that ultimately power manifests itself. As Ortega states

Command is the normal exercise of authority. Which is always based on public opinion - always, today as ten years ago, among the English as among the botocudos. He has never commanded anyone on earth, nourishing his command essentially from anything other than public opinion. (Ortega, 2012, p. 366).



Every successful political or social movement needs the sympathy and subscription of the masses, the power of public opinion is key to all political success, much more than the relevance of the proposals or the force itself.

The problem that arises from such an oligopoly is that of an accumulation of power by private groups with private interests. There is no guarantor that forces such an oligopoly to see for the common interest, but there is always the possibility of a particular interest sculpting the perception of the viewer. As Aristotle said: "Good forms of government are those in which one person, a few or many govern with an eye to the common interest; Governments that contemplate particular interests are flawed." (Aristotle, 1982a, p. 301).

Certainly the media are not governments, but they have undeniable power over them, as they can seriously influence the voter base that supports or despises a certain group or party. It is a *de facto* power.

This is evident on television, film and radio. But it is not so much in the so-called social networks. To some extent, they suffer from the same evils as traditional media, but their configuration is more complex. These networks, being private entities, reserve the right to regulate those interactions in their networks that they consider inappropriate. It is not surprising that in the terms and conditions that the user accepts when entering these networks they usually find so-called community standards that establish limits to what can be expressed in those networks. This, by itself, already represents a problem to freedom of expression.

However, there is a radical difference in networks and traditional media. The network is not unidirectional, it is a virtual space where multiple individuals share something of themselves, their ideas or their lives. Castells will say:

When, subsequently, digital technology made it possible to package all kinds of messages, including sound, images and data, a network was formed capable of communicating its nodes without using control centers. The universality of digital language and the pure reticular logic of the communication system created the technological conditions for horizontal, global communication. (1998, p. 77).



In the beginning, these networks consisted of text forums specialized in a topic or created with a sense of virtual community, that is, they were focused on some topic or interest (as Reddit maintains today). But technological advancement soon made it possible to transmit images and sound on massive scales. That's when social networks focused on personalities took flight (such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram).

In principle. Such a platform is ideal for discussion because there is no centralized control that decides what opinions should be distributed, but this evil did not disappear, it simply transmuted. Social networks are not used as platforms for debate and discussion, they are used as an expansion of the personal image. This point becomes clear when we observe that the common individual, when he decides to share something, shares his photographs, his tastes, his dislikes, his forms of entertainment and, until the end, his opinions. The social network is designed according to popularity, from this concept derive the problems of networks as discussion forums.

It is easy to realize this by the way in which such networks decide to highlight some opinions and bury others (who more visits, likes, favorites, shares hold, more visibility will acquire). There are those who can live by simply being popular on such networks. The characters with greater popularity tend to monopolize much more of that virtual space than the one that little participates in that game of the approval of the masses. This defeats any intellectual motive that a social network could have (saving specialized groups that decide to play under other rules) because the nature of a discussion is measured and extensive, it implies an effort to know the words of the other, as well as those assumptions that are imbued with such opinions.

If we add to this the personal nature (that is, focused on individuals and not on topics) of the social network, the individual acquires the ability to censor the other from his virtual space, it becomes easier to flee from such a conversation (blocking the individual or ridiculing him before the masses) instead of exploring his ideas. The power relationship is decentralized in terms of the ownership of the forum, but it is re-centralized in terms of the virality of opinion and it is evident that



virality does not equal rationability, there is a lot of room for *doxa* but little for episteme. The problem of public opinion raised by Sartori remains intact.

Before moving on to another topic, another subtle power held by the networks, or rather, the owners of the networks, must be explored. These networks are given free to the ordinary individual, but nothing is free in life. What kind of benefit would it have to sustain such a network? If it is assumed that the companies are private for profit, then it has to be economically remunerable. Really the good that is extracted is information.

This is not very difficult to check, so you have to review the types of permissions that social media applications on cell phones require. Information is extracted, it is argued, to know the habits, tastes and preferences of an individual, from where it is preferred to go to eat to the political causes that are supported. All this to deliver advertising according to that person. Certainly the product that networks sell is this data and there is no shortage of buyers! Well, what is more useful for a company than the knowledge of its market? If the individual's preferences are known, it is easier to manufacture products likely to be consumed by them.

Now let's remember that the media also manufacture products with the appearance of reality (later we will analyze this product) wouldn't you be tempted by this information? Political radicalization through networks is not a fiction, because it is not very difficult to convince the moderate by showing him certain realities endorsed by the traditional media. Information as a commodity is a problem. This aside, it is obvious that these problems have two roots. Yes, the media play a role, but the passivity of the twenty-first century individual is the very condition of possibility of all these problems.

The individual is not innocent

It is pertinent to focus attention on the media audience, as this plays its role. It is true that each individual forges his interpretation of reality based on his very intimate experiences, but the man who inhabits this follow is a different man. He did not carry the yoke of a lord in feudal times, he did not suffer the horror of slavery, he lives in a liberal democracy that gravitates around his opinions. In a



capitalist economic system that every fortnight provides him with pleasures, exotic commodities, status; in a world of consumption and production, where it is enough to give 9 hours of the day to enjoy comforts.

The world seems to revolve around the individual and his desires, because liberal democracy puts the individual at the center of the political game, likewise the economic system places at its center the individual, who with his interests moves markets, who votes with his money to the products that have to survive. This is not a calamity per se it is progress compared to fiefdoms or slavers, but it does not come devoid of vice, freedom easily turns into arrogance.

This inspection is not new, Ortega y Gasset carried out, in his time, an analysis of the consequences of this social organization. He will say: "My thesis is, then, this: the very perfection with which the nineteenth century has given an organization to certain orders of life is the origin of the fact that the beneficiary masses do not consider it as an organization, but as nature." (Ortega, 2012, p.312).

Following Ortega (2012), the civilization that the subject of the twentieth century inherited from the subject of the nineteenth century was structured according to two elements: liberal and technical democracy. For the development of these two, the subject of the nineteenth required an arduous intellectual discipline to know the principles of science that would soon be applied to the technique. Likewise, it took a deep introspection of society, human nature, political power and morality to come to the conclusion that every individual deserves his freedom, as well as a voice in the political arena.

This discipline could only come from a vital need of the men of that time. Social, economic and political pressures forced him to discipline his mind in order to generate the civilization that the individuals of the XX would enjoy. However, the individuals of the XX were already born with that civilization, as if it existed by nature (Ortega, 2012).

Being considered as nature, it is considered self-sustaining, always there. They enjoyed the benefits of the nineteenth-century heritage without the same intellectual discipline that made it possible. Without this discipline civilization can easily enter into crisis. The moral and economic



pressures of the past that were necessary to make the advances of this century possible are unknown. By considering these advances as nature, the individual enjoys their benefits without worrying about their principles, simplifying their culture and ignoring their history (Ortega, 2012).

But this is even more serious. As Ortega (2012) points out, The advance of the XIX was not just any advance. The nineteenth made all men equal, gave power to individuals who once lacked it, generating liberal democracy in which the vote of every man has the same value. On the other hand, the technique managed to raise the standard of living of the average individual considerably, opening the doors to places that were previously reserved for elites. The individual of the XX, at birth at this time, realizes that there are no moral or material restrictions to access pleasures and places, including intellectual and political fields.

Man does not encounter resistance, the political system puts him at the center of his work and technique provides him with everything he wants. This made the man of the XX an arrogant and lazy one, because he does not need to discipline himself in order to express his opinion or enjoy pleasures. As Ortega will say:

This leads us to point out in the psychological diagram of the mass man two first features. The free expansion of his desires and, therefore, of his person and the radical ingratitude towards what has made possible the ease of his existence. (Ortega, 2012, p. 310).

This free expansion of his desires does not require any discipline or effort, man can enjoy anything without being accountable to anyone. This is an advance, of course, but it will have its logical consequence in the intellectual world. This consequence will be called by Ortega intellectual secrecy:

I know that many of those who read me do not think the same as me. That too is very natural and confirms my theorem. Well, even if my opinion was ultimately wrong, there will always be the fact that many of those dissenting readers have not thought five minutes about such a complex subject. But believing himself entitled to have an opinion on the matter without prior effort to forge it, he manifests his exemplary belonging to the absurd way of being a man that I have called "Rebel Mass". This is precisely having obliterated, hermetic, the soul. In this case it is intellectual secrecy. The person encounters a repertoire of ideas within



himself, decides to be content with them and consider himself intellectually complete. By not missing anything outside of himself, he settles definitively in that repertoire of ideas" (Ortega, 2012, p. 319)

Ortega y Gasset's inspection, I argue, remains almost intact today. The individual takes his democracy and technology for granted because he was born with them. This makes it lazy of necessity, for a pleasant life requires infinitely less effort than in the past. This decrease in effort is not only physical, but intellectual. If the individual needs to know something, it is only necessary to take a mobile phone and write the question. Since their questions are usually mundane, the answers are usually simple. The individual settles for this simplicity and extrapolates it to all knowledge, including knowledge of the political.

Caplan (2006) will also have something to say on this topic. He will argue that, in political matters, the citizen is usually not only ignorant, but directly irrational. The citizen realizes that holding illusory ideas or beliefs does not represent any cost because the individual vote will hardly make a change. In this way, it is more attractive for the citizen to hold those ideas that make him feel better about himself, relying on his biases rather than on a careful reflection (because this does require effort and time).

It is assumed that the media tells him the whole truth, because he has no reason to doubt him. Doubting the world around you requires effort, it is not desirable. It is easier to believe those who specialize in informing us about what is happening in our world, assigning truth to the facts by virtue of the one who says it, not by their correspondence with reality.

Democratic societies need participation, it is true, but not every society makes good democracies because political issues require care and attention. The thousands of years of political literature are proof of the complexity of the fabric of human organizations, of how we traveled a hard road of wars and tyrants to achieve relative peace. One must be a specific type of person in order to adopt a democratic life, a society radically different from that of the man of the twenty-first century.



This man does not need to question his democratic life, because he lives surrounded by it, he believes that this democracy is self-sustaining, that it does not need attentive eyes, souls open to dialogue.

Civilization is not there, it does not sustain itself. It is artifice and requires an artist or craftsman. If you want to take advantage of the advantages of civilization, but you do not care about sustaining civilization..., you have been annoyed. In a two-by-three you are left without civilization. (Ortega, 2012, p. 334) .

Not only that, but it also takes an altruistic impetus in its interpretation of reality, lacking in such individual generations. A democracy, as Aristotle put it in the past, needs its rulers (the people) to see for the common interest, not for the private interest. But how to ask the man of the twenty-first century to do such a feat? If his whole life revolved around him, if the information always had it in the palm of his hand, how can he ask him to hesitate?

We have fire and gasoline. We have the combination of the media, so interested and the individual, so devoid of doubts. The explosion that will spawn this intellectual secrecy is inevitable.

And it is to be expected. Individuals cannot know all the realities, they have to obtain them from interested media, they do not have the time to question them. Naturally they will be easily manipulated, obliterated. The figure that this individual will take will cease to be that of a cultured man in democracy and will become that of a fool useful to the interests of the powers that facilitate his comfortable existence.

It is difficult to find a single cause for this twenty-first century individual to have moved his soul into such secrecy. Neither liberal democracy nor abundance alone explains this phenomenon. Sartori has already pointed out how the media supplanted abstraction by vision, diminishing the individual's ability to create ideas autonomously (Sartori, 1998). I think he is not wrong, because the ease of consumption of an audiovisual product leaves little space for reading that requires a degree of interpretation, understanding and abstraction sufficient to keep this lazy individual away. But something is certainly missing and I think I know it is.



Instrumentalized storytelling

It has been investigated in the media, it has been investigated in the audience (which is the object of these media), but it is necessary to investigate the gear that connects these two spheres: the narration.

It is evident that a good part of the worldview of the human being consists of aesthetic feelings. The experience of these feelings is not reduced to simple judgments of taste, but is lived by pursuing these feelings. It's no surprise that stories told in industrialized films gross millions each year. From Homeric poetry to comics of the last century, they have provided humans with heroes to follow, worlds to imagine and stories to tell. It is characteristic of the human being to tell stories.

The narrative does not stay in the realm of myth or fiction, the stories can also be told on pillars of reality (I say, it is a legend but this). Something so human, sooner or later, was going to find some way to instrumentalize itself. Given this reality, it is pertinent to ask ourselves how it is that political groups and parties present themselves to individuals? How do they justify their cause? Through speech.

Speech is the link between representative and represented. This mechanism has the characteristic of being unidirectional, that is, it goes from the representative to the represented. The discourse in these times is not given in forums, it does not go to the square to listen to the representative, but it is manifested in a virtual space strongly inhabited by the media. The discourse manifests itself not only through slogans or tedious advertisements, but also manifests itself in a whole process almost literary, a narrative one, what do I mean by this? Let's see: the media, what does it communicate? More than that: narratives.

Narration is, above all, an expressive structure, it is a way of telling events. Aristotle linked narration with the mimetic nature of the human being, arguing that poetry is made (meaning narration) imitating reality: "Epic and tragedy, as well as comedy and dithyrambic poetry and much of the auletics, speaking in general, are imitations of life" (Aristotle, 1982b, p.349)

The peculiar thing about the narrative is that it is covered with aesthetic feelings, as well as a background thesis that gives meaning to the narrative. The great literati characterize their thesis in



the form of characters and the relationships between them. A story is told in the eyes of some character, their struggles, their achievements, their aspirations are narrated. All this always from an aesthetic category: the beautiful, the sublime, the comic, the tragic, the disgusting, the amazing, the brave, etc.

It is under these categories that the viewer can relate to their characters. A brave, humble and determined character inspires the viewer empathy, support in his journey. Contrary to the grotesque, vulgar or malicious character that pushes the viewer to repudiate his actions. Aristotle would say:

Since human beings are the object of imitation they are necessarily noble or ignoble – since it can be said that the only two criteria on which the diversity of characters is founded are these and that men, in terms of their character, differ by virtue or vice – human beings will be better than us, worse or equal. (Aristotle, 1982b, p. 351).

A character is given prominence when it is implied that the narrative has the purpose of that character. However, the narratives go beyond the characters. In the narratives, more things than simple biographies are told, but also events, contexts and pasts that explain the character of the actors. These things, the events, characters, places, artifacts and little else are what we call the world of history. Aristotle will call this the unity of action and fable.

To constitute the unity of a fable it is not enough as some believe in it developing around a single character, many more still, innumerable things can happen to a person without, however, some of them constituting unity; so too, the actions of a person can be many without resulting in a single action. (Aristotle, 1982b, p. 364).

Continuous:

As in the other arts of imitation, imitation is one if one is its object. So also the fable, since an action is imitated, must imitate one that is unique, that is, capable of building a complete whole. (Aristotle, 1982b, p. 365).



Ruiz has already pointed this out, he will say regarding electoral or political speeches:

These are discourses in which there are different discursive forms that refer to information, explanation, argumentation, nomination, description, narration, etc., but in which a narrative line is identified that gives coherence and meaning to the discourse on a global level. In these cases, there is not necessarily a linear and temporalized succession of events, figurativization of characters and scenes, etc. On the contrary, characters with a high level of abstraction may appear, such as the homeland or freedom, and the narrative lines intersect and intersect in a fragmented and complex way. (Ruiz, 2019, p. 27).

The way in which the artist expresses his worldview in a narrative is through his characters and the world in which they develop. The story of a character usually condenses an action that gives unity and meaning to the story told.

The media can also be artists and indeed they are. It is assumed that the media transmit information that is consistent with reality, it is not unreasonable to say that they intend to show the reality of the world in which we live through news, opinion channels, documentaries, reports etc.

What do I mean by the reality or realities presented by these media? Those events (social, cultural, scientific) to which the viewer cannot have direct access and which contribute to the formation of the idea of the world in which one lives or, in Ortega jargon, circumstance. To the state of society, its shortcomings, its glories, its challenges; groups of people, their identity, their values, their struggles; the state of the markets, their participants, their crises, their causes. The Aristotelian idea of art as an imitation of life may have fallen into disuse in many forms of art, but in the case of the preferred narratives of the media, I consider that it not only remains, but goes beyond. The newscast does not imitate life, the newscast presents life.

This similarity in terms of the structure of the narrative has already been studied. Ruiz will note that:

In short, an electoral discourse always, on an underlying level, gives an account of a story, understood as a sequential set of transformations of some type of subject, situation, etc.



Transformations that occur that are explained or by happening and that are announced or predicted, etc. (2019, p. 31).

He will conclude that electoral discourses, as well as social movements, use a specific type of narrative called involucrative, of which he will say that:

The frameworks that develop in the discourses of social movements are clearly organized with a structure analogous to the involucrative narratives and their contents and functions are similar to electoral discourses. In both cases, the involvement of citizens in a collective action with common objectives and that take place in a public scenario where social, economic, cultural or political issues converge. (2019, p. 31).

Being an involving narrative, the viewer is invited to participate in the development of the narrative. As already said, the peculiarity of this narrative is that it is situated in reality, in this case, the world of narration and the real world are one and the same thing. When invited, through the presentation of specific information, the citizen to exercise an action (vote or go out to march) must be given a justification in the form of a conflict to be resolved.

The media has the power to choose the conflicts that will remain in public opinion. This endows them with a subtle power: the power to choose which stories to tell and which to ignore. This, consequently, grants the power to influence the worldviews of individuals. This is manifested in the concrete realities they communicate, transforming them into the world of storytelling where certain actors will develop; they take people, groups or entire peoples and transform them into protagonists or villains, endowing them with virtues or vices; they take the relationships between the manufactured world, its characters, even the narrator himself and transform it into the story that has to give meaning to that world.

Such a cautious selection generates aesthetic feelings in the viewer that will inevitably motivate him to support the protagonists and despise the villains, consequently promoting an acceptance of the theses that manifested in these characters. Said in an Aristotelian key, the realities



are presented as tragedies or comedies: "This is precisely the difference that exists between tragedy and comedy: The one tends to represent men better than they are and the other, worse" (Aristotle, 1982b, p.351).

The media, whether in the form of newscasts, opinion forums, social media or any similar medium, feed their viewer with these narratives. And it is not surprising that it is the favorite way to communicate facts, since it covers the interpretation of reality with aesthetic feelings, feelings that have great weight when making political decisions as has already been demonstrated (Westen, 2007).

The representative benefits enormously from the fact that his cause is more than a simple worldview, but that it is protagonistic, plausible and necessary. As I said before, the narrative assumes a world in which the characters develop. The artist manufactures the world and gives it meaning with the story that has inevitably been told.

The media have the power to build worlds in which representatives have to operate. Simple facts are not narrated in the newscasts, the facts that fit within the narrative that gives meaning to all other narratives are narrated. Ruiz will call these "Master Narratives" (2019, p.30). These narratives give credibility to the political discourse that legitimizes or delegitimizes a course of action.

We do not reproach the artist for covering the reality of aesthetics, because it is necessary for his artistic expression. It is often clear that whatever the artist represents, it does not have to represent anyone. Such realization does not happen with the media. Looking back at Aristotle, we see that the difference he makes between history and poetry allows us to better glimpse this fact:

From what has been said above it is also clear that the poet's job is not to really describe the things that have happened, but those that can happen, that is, things that are possible according to the laws of similarity and necessity. Indeed the historian and the poet are not differentiated because one writes in verse and the other in prose, the story of Herodotus, for example, could very well be put in verses and in this way it would not be less history than it is. (Aristotle, 1982b, p.365) .



Continuous:

The real difference is this: the historian actually describes events that have occurred, and the poet describes events that can happen. This is why poetry is more philosophical and elevated than history: poetry rather tends to represent the universal, history the particular. Of the universal we can give an idea in this way: an individual of this or that nature has to do or say things of this or that nature according to the laws of plausibility or necessity. (Aristotle, 1982b, p. 365).

The difference between the world of the artist and that of the communicator is that one is presented as the creation of an author, while the other is presented as the real world. For this the line between history and poetry is very thin.

Applying these concepts to the studies of Bostrom (1983) We would say that the purpose of the political narrative manifested in the media is to persuade (mold, change or reinforce responses) voters of a certain course of action. The media present the environment (world of storytelling) through newscasts, notes, reports, documentaries, etc. As these are the translators of the environment (real world) with a high degree of credibility, the average voter takes these media as a reliable source of information and forms their opinion based on the analysis and evidence presented by these media, beyond their veracity.

As I said before, the human being necessarily interprets his reality because things do not speak for themselves. These narratives weigh on the possible interpretations of the citizens and by extension, on their identity (as already explored by Castell in the first chapter). This is the mechanism that representatives use to generate supporters.

The problem is not per se the existence of the narratives, but their claim to reality. An individual can read a novel and decide to agree or reject its proposals, because that novel is the product of an author and the reader is aware of this. However, when a media outlet presents storytelling as reality (poetry as history) can one reject the proposal? If so, the individual would run the risk of holding false beliefs.



This construction of the narrative can be evidenced by the selection of crimes that have to be shown to the public, pointing to the group to which the criminal belongs, feeding the notion of protagonism-antagonism; the selection of which protests to show and which to ignore, expressing to the viewer which are just and courageous, which are ruinous and perverse; scrutinizing every word of certain representatives, showing which are perverse and immoral, which are measured and conscious; select which documentaries to produce, showing which groups we have to support, which to despise.

Following Ruiz (2019): in this narrative structure are printed interpretive schemes on reality (frames of reference). On the one hand, social problems, their causes and their culprits are shown (diagnostic framework). On the other hand, it shows who or who fights or should fight to solve such problems, as well as the courses of action they have to take (forecasting frameworks).

This has an important implication:

The articulation of diagnostic frameworks and prognostic frameworks generates the outline of a story. A story that, like any standard narrative structure, begins with a problematic situation that must be solved and with a distribution of roles over culprits, heroes, antagonists, etc. The final objectives and the actions that the protagonist collective subject will develop to achieve the mission that has been assigned to him are also indicated. (2019, p. 32).

It is true that the media build reality because it is from them that the ordinary citizen feeds to build the worldview of such a complex world. This is clearly a power relationship to the extent that these narratives shape public opinion, a sacred element in a democracy. I do not think there is any need to cite examples of this technique. The propaganda of twentieth-century authoritarian states is sufficient evidence of how an entire nation can be manipulated into believing a narrative: the capitalism-communism struggle and Aryan-Jewish antagonism are bitter memories.

This is the masterpiece of media manipulation, storytelling. It is no surprise that the media supports certain parties, reveals compromising information from their adversaries, upholds the fairness or unfairness of an act, speaks about the character of a representative, highlights their



virtues, and frames their discourse in the great history they have carefully written for years. The narrative is not exclusive to the media, political groups that are shown as the oppressed (protagonists) and show other entities as the oppressors (villains) tend to fall into narratives.

The problem with this way of telling events is epistemological. Narratives always have an end. In an Aristotelian key, truth is not pursued, but plausibility. Aristotle will say:

If a poet had to create about events that actually happened, for this reason he would not be less a poet; although among the events that actually happened nothing prevents that there are some of such a nature as to be able to conceive of them as they actually happened, but as it would have been possible and plausible for them to happen. It is precisely under this aspect, that of their possibility and plausibility that the one who treats them is not their historian, but their poet. (Aristotle, 1982b, p. 366).

The great literati tell stories in worlds that do not exist to communicate something to the reader, just as political groups and the media send a message through their narratives. These aesthetic feelings will inevitably motivate the viewer to choose such representatives whose story is being told.

The difference between the writer and the media is simple honesty. The writer creates his worlds or borrows them from reality, the media will maintain that the world of storytelling is reality and that the moral and aesthetic conclusions that derive from that story are as real as the world we live in. One aims to show, another to demonstrate. The viewer is aware of this when reading a book, that the theses derived from history or the ends to which it tends are the product of the author, but he is not aware that the conclusions derived from a means of communication are also the product of the media, not of reality.

A vote of no confidence

The media has a subtle but significant power in the political game, for they have the oligopoly of narratives that inevitably shape the worldviews of unwary viewers. What to do in the face of this chimera?



The power of the media is only possible thanks to the trust or credibility you have in them. While it is true that, sometimes, the information expressed in the media can be true and disinterested, it is no less true that it may not be. Any truth released by the media must be considered, at best, provisional. It is healthy to be skeptical of reality, even if it is not the most comfortable. Knowing the way in which a narrative is constructed gives weapons to the individual to find narratives in speeches, like someone who learns a martial art to be able to defend himself from others.

Certainly a democratic life needs individuals skeptical enough to doubt its sources, but altruistic enough to want a common good. This good must be achieved by refining ideas, contrasting, not discarding. In the end, as Rousseau will say: "The people unfailingly want their good, but they do not always understand it. The people are never corrupted, they are often deceived and that is when they seem to want evil." (Rousseau, 1985, p.58) .

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