

**THESES OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

**POLITICAL MANIPULATION**  
Exposition of the Theory and Characteristics of its History

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### *Subject of dissertation*

The subject of dissertation is a well-known phenomenon, a feature of current politics that is mentioned and blamed a lot: manipulation. A talented politician who is not really restrained by moral scruples manipulates people in order to seize and keep power. The manipulating agent can also be a group of people who enter into coalition with the same aim. The next step is when almost the democratic system itself calls for manipulation, so manipulation actually is the specific feature of the system. Less people arrive at the result that manipulation is such a key element in this system, such an impersonal operation, which is expanded on everybody, everybody, even on the powerful manipulators themselves. They are only cogwheels in the operation of the Whole. The dissertation also deals with the other widespread notion that the exclusiveness of manipulative totality is an exaggeration. The fabric of the system is not so tight that it would completely eliminate the rationality of the individual. The dissertation gives a detailed description about a theory which considers the manipulative system or totality (almost) autocrat. It says that the civilization of the modern industrial production shapes the whole society, culture and man in its likeness with the help of manipulation through different channels. Out of these channels the effect of modern mass culture, in wider sense, including popular art, is given a highlighted role. It follows from this opinion that not only the dictatorships of the 20th century were totalitarian, but the democracy is totalitarian, too, as yet. We can see in the modern mass democracy that the personalized, but in fact impersonal power dominates the whole society and the totality of the drives of people. The two main representatives of this theory are Herbert Marcuse and Theodor W. Adorno. The lines of philosophy, social theory and culture criticism are interlocked with each other and this interlocking should be considered even if we examine their life's work from political philosophical aspects.

Besides its interdisciplinary feature, the theory of manipulation is a dialectic theory, and, as such, it is loaded with internal tensions and controversies. The definition of these controversies is one the tasks of the dissertation. It should also be asked, whether the theory points out its own controversy and whether it reflects to this controversy. The response is definitely yes. In regards to this, it can be mentioned that the most frequent phrase in the text of the theory is „paradox”. The next question is whether these paradoxes can be solved or not. They cannot be solved on the basis of the theory, but it is not the objective of the theory. We have to deal with such a neo-neohegelianism which does not intend to reach dialectic synthesis, because these ideas would be the justification of the current conditions for it. The theory of manipulation is a big NO to the existing conditions. According to the theory it is the most important, but besides this, there are no principles defined on the basis of which the institutions should operate in order to avoid the manipulation becoming the key factor of the system.

### *Method of exposition*

The dissertation tries to describe the theory of Marcuse-Adorno not by the traditional linear history of ideas. Due to the interdisciplinary feature of the theory, **Part 1** reviews the aspects of everyday and scientific use of the concept of manipulation by facing them with the theory of manipulation. In this chapter I untie the problem of manipulation from the actual history of the theory development. Then in **Part 2** I deal with the historical aspects of the theory development. It is followed by the examination, in which I draft those historical processes which had defined the place of the concept of manipulation before the concept itself was introduced. Finally, in **Part 3** I review the main critics concerning the theory of manipulation.

## **1. The concept of manipulation**

### **1.1. Everyday concept of manipulation**

Manipulation, in ideal case, is successful, if the manipulated party at his/her own sweet will performs the action determined by somebody else. This notion describes an asymmetric interpersonal act. The effect of exposing the modern advertisement and the manipulative advertisement on the development of everyday concept of manipulation. Exposed asymmetry in politics: manipulative totalitarian dictatorship. Manipulative tendencies in democracy and the counter-cultural movements that expose them. The involvement of manipulation in everyday thinking has been deepened by different works of art. Implementation of hermeneutic circle and the communication triangle in the process. Important artistic and philosophical metaphores (Orwell, Huxley, Adorno, Marcuse and others), *Les caves du Vatican* and *L'assassin menacé*: action theory of a novel and a picture. One of the much condemned effects of everyday concept of manipulation: indifference and disappointment from politics.

### **1.2. The scientific concept of manipulation**

#### **1.2.1. Rhetoric**

Characteristics of a classical science and its modern career. Morris and Gadamer about rhetoric. Rhetoric as the tool of political deliberation, breaking with rhetoric as possibility of political manipulation. Triple judgement of the role of renaissance in the development of modernity. Interpretation of Skinner Hobbes and three types of political arguments: rhetoric, anti-rhetoric and instrumental rhetoric. Different content and meaning of (neo)classical and current rhetoric. Elements of the renaissance rhetoric. Three phases of Hobbes' work of life on the basis of his relation to rhetoric. Program changes of *scientia civilis*. Rhetoric concept of Leviatan. Importance of redescription and redefinition. Instrumental rhetoric as one of the manifestations of instrumental reason.

#### **1.2.2. Speech Act Theory**

Austin's standard theory about constative utterances and performative utterances through the examples of totalitarianism, with regard to manipulation. General distribution of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Searle about illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Criteria of illocutionary acts, damage and outwitting of criteria in manipulative communication. Highlighted role of perlocutionary acts in manipulation. Manipulation is the hiding place of perlocutionary intention. The manipulation, as perlocutionary speech act has not any conventional-institutional rule set. Informative analysis of communication situations with more than two actors. Speech act theory for the examination of interactions between speech and society. Social interactions and communication space: perlocutionary acts of the social system. Text act theory and theory of manipulation. Critique of representatives of manipulation theory about the analytical language philosophy. Manipulation theory as text act theory, as the most radical and gravest theory of perlocutionary acts untied from and not measurable with individual intentions.

#### **1.2.3. Theory of Action**

Max Weber: theory of action in order to understand modernity. He defines universal types and categories but does not believe in methodology and philosophy of history. His method attracts followers anyway and his theory of action has philosophical relevances. The complexity of

the concept of modernity, modernity as simultaneous development of different components of rationalization. Basic concepts of typology by Weber: action, subjectively intended meaning, social action. Typology of social action on the basis of rationality. Parson's Theory of Voluntarist action. In the interest of saving the integrity and rationality of the individual, he revises the utilitarian-positivist action theory of classical liberalism. Normative order and unit act; dual, simultaneously objective and subjective feature of norm. Theory of manipulation: dialectics of (ir)rationality and decay of voluntarism. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *One-Dimensional Man* dissolves the ambivalence with which Weber and Parsons regarded the development of instrumental-strategic rationality: this rationality becomes the medium of social repression. The rational-irrational pair should be set up at the same time about the instrumental purposive rationality, as one of the types of individual action, and about the system, which is built together with these actions and later defines them. The preference of objective reason as against to the subjective reason by Weber. The concept of norm by Parson makes no sense because the manipulative universe eliminates subjectivity.

#### **1.2.4. Conspiracy**

Conspiracy theory and methodology of social science. The essence of the theory by Popper. The issues of conspiracy are closely related to the debate of methodological individualism and methodological collectivism. These two schools explain social phenomena differently and draft different alternatives against conspiracy theory according to their methodological principles. Classical definition of methodological individualism. Threefold demarcation of methodological individualism. Counter-intentionalism as the alternative offered by methodological individualism against conspiracy. Difficulty of separating methodological individualism and collectivism in institutionalism built on the basis of situational logic by Popper. Filtering theory by Elster and manipulation theory. Ruse of historical reason as the suggestion of collectivism against conspiracy. Preliminaries of Hegel's explanation at Kant. Analysis of not expected and not intended effects of acts by Hegel. Mystery of universe spirit that became unbalanced with itself. Ruse of historical reason and manipulation theory, conspiratory temptation of manipulation theory

#### **1.2.5. Moral Distinction**

Modern political science and propaganda. Issues of transitions between manipulation and non-manipulative persuasion, when it is important and when not? When our moral belief cannot be reconciled with manipulation. The new science of politics does not include such a conviction. Lasswell about the value-free propaganda and the realistic science of democracy. Strauss about the crisis of modern political thinking and responsibility of political science in the development of this crisis. Manipulation theory about propaganda as communication technique. Different evaluations of techniques in theory, rejection of value-neutrality of technique. General distinction of manipulation and persuasion in the ethic of conviction. The problems of monologicality. Actual distinction of manipulation and non-manipulation with the help of the concept of fiction. The dual judgement of Kant's philosophy comes from the manipulation theory. On the one hand, this philosophy is realized by the manipulative universe, on the other hand, the dialectisation of this philosophy can create a theoretical chance to break the manipulative universe.

## **2. Intellectual History of Political Manipulation**

### **2.1 Development of the theory of manipulation**

#### **2.1.1. Marxism**

Creation place of two historical phases – development of manipulation theory and development of modernity – and the concept of political manipulation. Essence of the history of Marxism: alternation or parallel existence of crisis and renaissance periods, and even their overlapping sequence. The crises of Marxism from the end of World War 1 until the 1960s. Late capitalism as the highest level of capitalism. Aversion of the generation of Marcus and Adorno from the science and act philosophy of orthodox Marxism. Experiment of Lukács to solve the theoretical crisis of Marxism and its impact on Frankfurt School. Example of Adorno's music philosophy. The publication of *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* was a milestone in the history of Marxism. The work: blessing and curse. Marcuse's controversial relation to Marx's concept of labour from the early papers to the *One-Dimensional Man*. The paradox possibility/impossibility of liberation. Proletariat exists no longer. Limits of philosophical elitism. The transcending possibility of art. Marcuse's and Adorno's different evaluation of counter-culture and student movements. Marcuse: outsiders within the system, hippie is the new human race? Repressive desublimation. Comparison of Marcuse's utopia with Nozick's metautopia.

#### **2.1.2. Heideggerianism**

The impact of Heideggerian philosophy can be detected in the two main texts of manipulation theory: *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *One-Dimensional Man*, in spite of the fact that the former one does not refer to Heidegger at all, the latter refers to him only once. It does not mean, however, that Marcus and Adorno have the same judgement about Heidegger but we cannot say, either, that their judgement is completely or significantly different. I try to explain this general note by examining the two works one by one. Marcuse: inauthenticity and one-dimensional. Heidegger-follower, secrets of the master's impact, desire for concrete philosophy, failed trial of synthesizing Marxism and Heideggerianism. Leftist Heideggerianism? There are important parallels in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, especially in the chapter about *culture industry* with the discussions about not-actual existence in *Being and Time*. In spite of this, following World War 2, Adorno was very critical about the Heideggerian ontology. This critique intensifies until hostility in paper titled *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, then it softens to a fairer judgement in *Negative Dialektik* in which ontology is described as the preliminaries of negative dialectics. Characteristics of negative dialectics and the narrowing of practical possibilities of philosophy.

#### **2.1.3. Critique of Culture**

Using the concept of culture and civilization in manipulation theory and the past of these concepts (Kant, Weber). Features of relation between Spengler and manipulation theory. Cultural conservatism in manipulation theory: the old is better than the new. It is not really popular in literature: three typical interpretations and their evaluation. Manipulation theory and spirit of consumerism. Consumerism is a derived group of phenomena but it has significance. Evaluation of this group of phenomena in enlightenment. Relations between ethos of production and ethos of consumption in the development of modern capitalism. Consumerism promises self-fulfillment to the individual but this promise is manipulative in the consumer society. Consumption, according to the manipulation theory, has typically created the society of not the individuals but the conformity, where the emancipatory effect of consumption is either very doubtful or, in principle, out of question. Paradox transcending and

liberating possibilities of autonomous art on the basis of *Dialectic of Enlightenment, One-Dimensional Man* and *Ästhetische Theorie*

## **2.2 Theory of Manipulation and the Tradition of Political Philosophy**

Following the description of the manipulation theory, looking back on the history of modern Western thinking, it seems that all the considerable achievements have more or less prepared for the currently existing. The history of political thinking involves those tendencies which enhanced the development of modern totalitarian political systems – either dictatorial or democratic ones. On the other hand, however, those reflections which criticised these tendencies could be observed from the early modern ages. Specifically the dualism is realized in the judgement of the notion and social institution of public sphere. The essence of Habermas' model of public sphere and its relation to the theory of manipulation. I introduce the relation between the manipulation theory and the early or classical modern political philosophy with the help of Habermas' public sphere concept and some other analyses which are partly based on or partly related to Habermas' concept. Radical enlightenment and dominative rationality: effect of Cartesianism and Spinozism. English model: debates in the second half of the 18th Century, significance of Burke. Kant: public sphere and dialogicity. Hegel and Marx: critics of the bourgeois society. Tocqueville and the totalitarian democracy. The concept of repressive tolerance, as the manifestation of problematic relations connected with the traditions of political philosophy and something that leads to the judgement of manipulation theory.

## **3. Critique of the theory of manipulation**

Taylor was right to define the starting premiss of manipulation theory: people do not act rationally, not even rationally to a certain degree, but irrationally due to the impacts of society-level manipulation. The Parsonsian critique underlines and very efficiently judges the deterministic feature of manipulation theory. The judgement simplifies the fabric of the theory in order to reveal its insupportableness. The rightfulness of simplification cannot be disputed but the result of the judgement is very salutary. The introduction of critique from a more general point of view: the theory of manipulation drafts the ancient need and also misconception of human thinking: what are all the things in the world made of? The reply to this question ties the theory to the Marxist determinism. Why does Marcuse decide in the favour of one-dimension theory? Parson's multi-dimension theory as an alternative. Parson's system theory does not deny that manipulation can have a role in winning the acceptance of political power, but denies the exclusivity of manipulative universe, instead it suggests the mutual determination of multi-dimensional exchange model. Habermas' system theory also deprives the manipulation of its allmightiness and, on the basis of the considerations of action theory, it attributes a much limited competence to the manipulation as against to communicative action. The manipulation is sentenced to dethronement, as a derived type it has lost its favoured system-integrating role. Communicative power of lifeworld and the civil society. The manipulation theory is a complex philosophical theory concerning the whole society and culture. Habermas criticizes this complexity as reductionalism when he reveals that the instrumental reason is the derived, then absolutized operation of communicative rationality. Instead he offers the complexity of communicativeness. Hans Robert Jauß, however, applies the complexity of communicativeness to the art, and judges the manipulation theory in this relation, concentrating primarily on the book of Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie*. Basically we face an aesthetical critique here, but both the criticised theory and the criticising one has political connections. According to the reception aesthetics, the negation should be balanced with two central categories of art's communicative

experiences: identification and enjoying understanding, in order to ensure some kind of a social function to the art. The manipulation theory considers the man a social being, but as the object of systematic manipulation, it does not consider him a rational actor. The theory of communicative acting returns the subjective individuality to the individual, which can be practiced in the communication performed with other systems that are related to the personality system. Another critique of manipulation theory should also be considered. This critique starts from the fact that man originally is not a social but a solitary selfish being, and much less rational than it is thought by the theory of communicative rationality or other theories of act. This critique starts from a plausible interpretation of Hobbes' political philosophy. The society of distrust as a formation limiting the manipulative universe.

### ***Results of examination***

Starting from the 1970s, the political philosophy set out on other ways than those on which Adorno and Marcuse went. As the result of this, the prevailing conditions are not considered a completely closed manipulative universe and the people are not regarded stupefied beings deprived of their individuality. Its aim is to draft theories and principles on the basis of which the non-manipulative system can be constructed. It is right but the gloomy vision of manipulation theory should also be considered because those phenomena which were exaggerated and absolutized, mostly still exist in our days. We also have to agree with the analyses criticizing the manipulation theory which attribute significantly less influence to manipulation than Adorno and Marcuse. The problematic consequences of manipulation theory originate from its totalistic feature. The critiques limit this totalistic aspect, therefore the disadvantageous consequences also fall down. It does not mean, however, that there are no other bad consequences. All the political philosophies, that have emerged so far, should calculate with them.