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Coin Propaganda and Communication*

Introduction

Propaganda is a popular subject of research both in archaeology and history. The concept is used in studies of many past cultures. Despite this, scholars studying the subject rarely refer to the findings of propaganda theorists and of experts in modern-day propaganda. As a result two basic adverse effects occur. First, archaeologists and historians are unable to appropriately label and classify propaganda phenomena with reference to the classifications established by social scientists. They rarely use terms like agitation and integration propaganda, which have proven useful in debates by propaganda theorists. This sometimes results in questioning the legitimacy of the use of the term propaganda for historical studies outside of the period of late modernity. Second, the lack of knowledge regarding all stages and components of the process of propaganda, leads to an exclusive focus on the content of propaganda messages only. Thus, other important aspects of the propaganda process are often ignored or treated superficially. The aim of this article is to address both issues by offering a review of models of communication and propaganda, by introducing the model of the process of propaganda created by Jowett and O'Donnell¹.

1. Theory of Propaganda

Studying propaganda is a complicated endeavour due to the diversity of social processes involved. In the words of Qualter²: 'Propaganda, to be effective, must be seen, remembered, understood and acted upon'. We can, therefore, distinguish several stages crucial to the communication process of propaganda. First of all, a propaganda message must draw the attention of its recipients. What caught our attention should subsequently force us to think about it. At this second stage, motives that guide a recipient become important, as well as the role of quality and content of communication. This is when a receiver assimilates the content of the message and contemplates its meaning and begins to wonder about his or her reaction. The last phase in the propaganda communication process is

the adoption of a fully or partially conscious attitude towards the message³.

Repetition is crucial in the propaganda process. It is based on the mere-exposure effect: a psychological phenomenon by which a positive change of emotional attitude towards an object is caused by increased contact, even if the contact is not fully conscious⁴. More recent studies demonstrated that this effect can go both ways – reinforce positive attitude or aversion – depending on what the original attitude toward the object was⁵.

All this has significant effect on studying propaganda. On the one hand, it extends the study of propaganda 'into a study of communication media, of [their] relative strengths and weaknesses'. On the other, it compels a thorough examination of the cultural and social context of the process of propaganda.

This brief overview of the process of propaganda clearly shows that, an exclusive focus on the content of messages and their interpretation significantly limits studies of past propaganda and our understanding of it.

2. Propaganda and communication

The model of Jowett and O'Donnell (Fig. 1) is essentially a model of communication, but created specifically for the study of propaganda. It reflects a long tradition of creating such models initiated by Aristotle, who created the first simple model of communication known as the Aristotelian Triad⁶. According to Aristotle the process of communication consists of three basic elements: a speaker, a subject and a person addressed (Fig. 2). Interestingly, Aristotle distinguishes two types of listeners: judges and observers⁷. The former are the true recipients of a communication. Hereby, incidentally, Aristotle introduced the concept of a *target group*. The observers, on the other hand, have no power to decide. All they can do is assessing the speaker's proficiency. Only in the twentieth century was this issue revisited by scholars inspired by the emergence of new mass media. The further development of the ideas of Aristotle simultaneously occurred in two separate areas of expertise: mathematics and sociology.

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¹ Jowett - O'Donnell 2012, pp. 289-306.

² Qualter 1962, p. xii.

³ Thompson 1999, p. 84.

⁴ Zajonc 1968.

⁵ Bornstein 1989.

⁶ Arist. *RH*.1358A-1358B.

⁷ Arist. *RH*.1358B.

On the one hand, the mathematician, Claude E. Shannon presented his own model (Fig. 3) in 1948⁸. Shannon focused on the physical aspects of the process of communication. Thus he omitted entirely the issue of the meaning of the message. Nonetheless, his model – known as the Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication – became an inspiration to social scientists. The model consists of five basic elements: information source, transmitter, channel, receiver and destination. An information source is a person or a group responsible for selecting the information to be sent. A transmitter is a person or a device that encodes the selected message. A channel is a medium through which the encoded message is transmitted. A receiver is a person or a device that decodes the signal and reconstructs the original message. A destination is a person or a device for which the message is intended⁹. A source of noise that distorts the original signal is an additional feature of the model that affects the process. As a result, the output signal (from the transmitter) is not identical with the one that reaches the receiver¹⁰. Despite the fact that in Shannon's approach noise and interference are purely of a physical nature (no cultural factors included), this element of his model attracted the attention of social scientists. The simplicity of this model makes it easy to apply in studies of different types of communication. The omission of the meaning of the message and the human factor are, on the other hand, an important disadvantage for its application in the humanities and social science. Additionally, due to its linearity, it ignores recipients' reaction and possible feedback.

At the same time, a sociologist, Harold D. Lasswell also worked on the problem of communication. Lasswell, who also studied propaganda, asked different questions than Shannon. He was more interested in the meaning of a message. Lasswell's communication model (Fig. 4) can be treated as a direct descendent of the Aristotelian Triad and its development. It can be reduced to answering several questions: who, says what, in which channel, to whom and with what effect?¹¹ Lasswell's model shares both advantages – simplicity – and disadvantages – linearity – of Shannon's approach.

The first non-linear model of communication is known as Schramm and Osgood's Circular Model of Communication (Fig. 5). W. Schramm worked with the concepts of Shannon and Weaver and added a feedback loop to their model recognising the interactivity of the process of communication. This way a sender and a receiver alternately play both roles. In addition, Schramm drew attention to the process of interpretation (decoding) of the message.¹² Schramm speculated on how accurately symbols can be transmitted, how

precisely symbols are translated into meaning and to what extent the meaning of a decoded message is identical to the one intended by the sender. In his papers Schramm took into consideration the cultural context of the process of communication. According to him, unanimity of understanding the message by the recipient and the intentions of the propagandist depends on sharing the same cultural codes by the two parties. All these questions are crucial for the understanding of past propaganda, especially for the analysis of archaeological sources.

3. Processual Model of Propaganda

All three models may be helpful in studying past propaganda, especially the process of communication of individual propaganda messages. However, they are not adequate for creating a holistic description of a propaganda campaign. To achieve this aim it is necessary to apply a more general model that does not exclusively focus on communication, but that at the same time is created specifically for the purpose of studying propaganda. The Processual Model of Propaganda by Jowett and O'Donnell certainly meets these conditions. The model can be presented in two ways. First, in a graphical form (Fig. 1) that visualizes all the connections between the elements of the process. Second, as a set of questions that need to be answered in order to obtain a comprehensive description of the propaganda campaign. The questions can be grouped to create a ten-step procedure of propaganda analysis. According to the creators the plan takes 'into account the following questions: To what ends, in the context of the times, does a propaganda agent, working through an organization, reach an audience through the media while using special symbols to get a desired reaction? Furthermore, if there is opposition to the propaganda, what form does it take? Finally, how successful is the propaganda in achieving its purpose?'¹³.

The first step is to describe the ideology behind the propaganda campaign. It is necessary to examine 'a set of beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours, as well as (...) ways of perceiving and thinking that are agreed on to the point that they constitute a set of norms for a society that dictate what is desirable and what should be done'¹⁴. The analysis of ideology is all the more important because a propagandist seldom promotes content that is not already in some way ideologically rooted in a society. Since propaganda is deliberate in its nature¹⁵ a propagandist has to have a clear goal in mind. Identification of the purpose of propaganda campaign is therefore essential for studying it.

The second step of studying a propaganda campaign is to analyse its context. Understanding the issues that are

⁸ Shannon 1948.

⁹ Shannon 1948, pp. 380-381.

¹⁰ Shannon 1948, pp. 406-407.

¹¹ Lasswell 1948, p. 37.

¹² Schramm 1954, pp. 5-6.

¹³ Jowett - O'Donnell 2012, p. 290.

¹⁴ Jowett - O'Donnell 2012, p. 291.

¹⁵ McClung Lee - Briant Lee 1939, p. 15; Doob 1948, p. 390; Qualter 1962, p. 27; *contra* cf. e.g. Ellul 1965, p. xv.

obvious and therefore can be omitted in the analysis of modern propaganda – like social and political system – become extremely important in studies of past cultures. Without it the attempt to determine the aims of propagandists is futile. Only after analysing these issues is it possible to ask more detailed questions about the context.¹⁶ Depending on the culture (i.e. the quality and quantity of source material) some of these questions are unanswerable. Nonetheless, answering as many of them as possible should be one of the primary goals of propaganda studies. Capturing the historical context and myths rooted in a culture are also very important at this stage of research.

The next step is to identify the propagandist. This matter is simple, when the propagandist is publicly known. Sometimes, however, the identity of the propagandist is concealed, in which case the identification might be problematic. First, the source of propaganda has to be determined. Usually it is created and distributed by an institution or an organisation, with the propagandist as its leader or at least an agent. Although an unknown identity of the propagandist makes the study more demanding, usually it is not concealed so well that it cannot be revealed through the analysis of the ideology, purpose, context or the content of propaganda messages.¹⁷

The following stage of propaganda analysis is the description of the structure of propaganda organization. At this point it is crucial to remember that, although 'successful propaganda campaigns tend to originate from a strong, centralized, decision-making authority that produces a consistent message throughout its structure'¹⁸ the propaganda organization does not have to be centralized or even formal¹⁹. It is hard to find any kind of real propaganda organizations in the past before late modernity. Therefore, scholars usually deal with the informal structure of the organization. Moreover, the organization itself is rarely established specifically for the purpose of propaganda activities. Usually it consists of collaborators and supporters of the propagandist that do not form an organization in the strict sense.

The next step is to find a target group. Usually a propaganda message is intended for a group of recipients that is the most useful for the propagandist if he or she is successful in influencing the attitudes of its members²⁰.

The sixth stage of propaganda analysis is to describe the media that were used by the propagandist, including the ways in which they were utilized. In the case of studying past cultures the focus should be on the characteristics of the media with attention to their advantages and

disadvantages²¹. After describing the media it is necessary to turn to propaganda techniques used by the propagandist. Using lists of basic propaganda techniques is helpful at this point²². This allows not only to classify propaganda messages properly but also results in a much better understanding of mechanisms of propaganda than simple content analysis.

The next step is to analyse the audience's reaction. It is important that usually there is no point in studying the reaction to individual elements of the campaign. What matters is only the analysis of a response to the whole campaign. The most important thing is to look for changes in the behaviour of the target. Additionally, it is also crucial to search for traces of assimilation of the propagandist's language and ideology by the target²³.

An important element of the analysis of a propaganda campaign is to determine whether or no there was a counter-propaganda campaign involved. If so, it also needs to be briefly described with a particular emphasis on the form that it took²⁴.

The last part of Jowett and O'Donnell's examination procedure is to evaluate its effectiveness. The most important question at this stage of the process is, whether or not the propaganda campaign was successful, i.e. whether or not the propagandist achieved the objectives. It needs to be determined whether or not all the aims were attained. In the case of a failure it is crucial to reflect on possible causes. The measures used by the propagandist and their impact on the final result also have to be evaluated. Last but not least, it is important to consider whether the success could have been achieved without propaganda or not²⁵. Evaluating the outcome and analysing the audience's reaction are the most difficult parts of propaganda analysis in an archaeological context. They both become almost impossible to study without written sources and inscriptions. Often we have to be satisfied with only circumstantial evidence²⁶. Sometimes the only available alternative is to undertake a laborious analysis of the spread of the themes characteristic for the propagandist in arts and crafts²⁷. However, the results of this kind of study are disputable, especially when the promoted theme is not distinctive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the knowledge of theories of propaganda is crucial for the study of the subject in all historical contexts. Only this way can we extend our understanding of this

¹⁶ Jowett - O'Donnell 2012, p. 292.

¹⁷ Jowett - O'Donnell 2012, p. 293.

¹⁸ Jowett - O'Donnell 2012, p. 293.

¹⁹ O'Shaughnessy 2004, p. 4.

²⁰ Rogers - Shoemaker 1971, pp. 218-220; Jowett, O'Donnell 2012, pp. 295-296.

²¹ Jowett - O'Donnell 2012, pp. 296-298.

²² IPA 1995, pp. 218-222, Pratkanis - Aronson 2004, pp. 96-97, 183-184.

²³ Jowett - O'Donnell 2012, p. 305.

²⁴ Jowett - O'Donnell 2012, pp. 305-306.

²⁵ Jowett - O'Donnell 2012, pp. 305-306.

²⁶ Kopij 2015a, pp. 20, 364-370; Kopij 2015b.

²⁷ Cf. Mikocki 1997.

important social and political phenomenon that was more or less present in all past societies. Moreover, only this way we can catch the attention of social scientists and provide them with new, unique data and a long term perspective on modern propaganda. This can lead maybe even to the improvement of the social-scientific understanding of the phenomenon, especially since in my observation their knowledge of past propaganda is very limited and it lies on our shoulder to change this.

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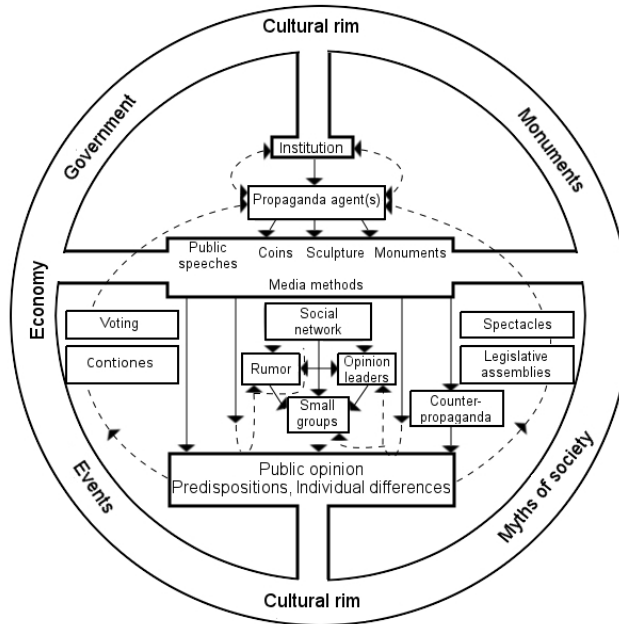


Fig. 1 Model of the Process of Propaganda for the Roman Republic.

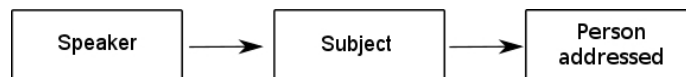


Fig. 2 The Aristotelian Triad.

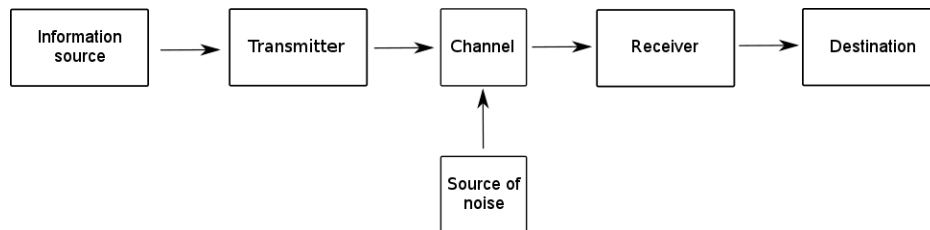


Fig. 3 Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication.

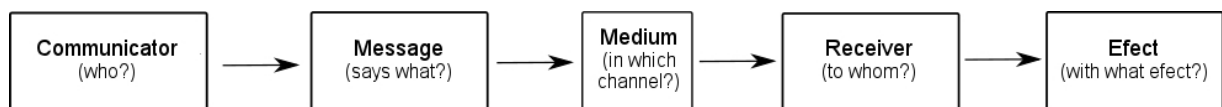


Fig. 4 Lasswell's Model of Communication.

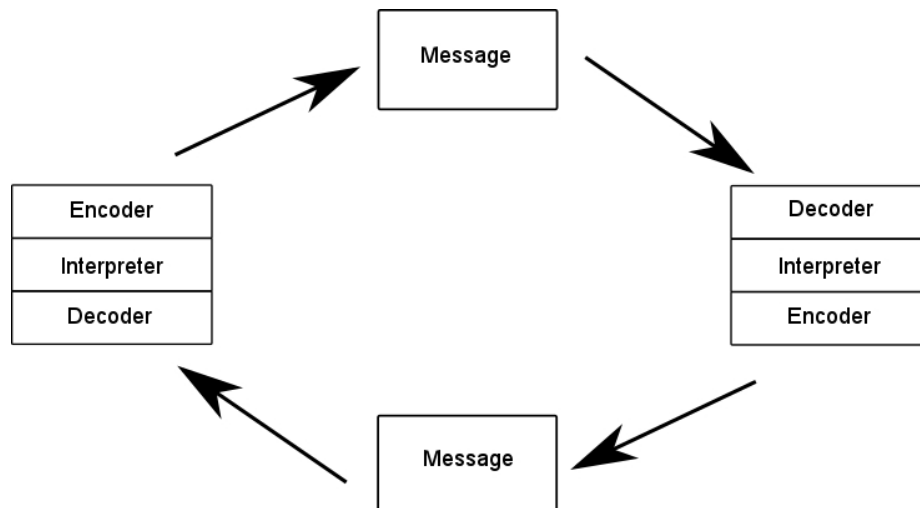


Fig. 5 Schramm-Osgood's Circular Model of Communication.