

The Use of Language to Manipulate People

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Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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We have encountered day in day out language-using manipulators in practically all areas/sectors of life. In one particular instance, we regularly hear them over the radio and see them on TV. We read their messages on the pages of dailies and magazines, even in posters that line-up walls of public places. The Internet is full of websites that banner the captivating ideas of these thought influencers. The term we use to specifically refer to their kind of game is advertisement. This is the basic intent of an advertisement: To attract, fascinate and ultimately persuade people to dig into their pockets for the amount needed to satisfy the desire that has so far been created in their minds by the power of advertisement. This is manipulation at its most subtle and sophisticated refinement.

Nowadays, with the advancement of cybertechnology, professional advertisers have literally at the tip of their fingers all conceivable tools to come up with the best presentations of product promotion in all forms of the available media. Striking logos, snappy slogans, attention-grabbing illustrations, mellifluous jingles, eye-catching photos, among others, conspire altogether to create a powerful advertising stunt, so powerful that it can knock out analysis and reason in an instant. Using the classic Aristotelian categories of persuasion modes or artistic proofs, this is a case of how *pathos* (appeal to emotion) exerts a significantly tremendous edge over *logos* (appeal to reason) and *ethos* (appeal to a person's credibility and ethical character). Manipulation of this type is so easily effected because its operators have already mastered the art of handling the general tendency of people to succumb to what their "hearts" dictate at the expense of what their "heads" would reasonably tell them.

This is humanity at its most prevalent and persistent configuration: a creature of emotions. And the modern – as well as post-modern – commercial sphere has taken advantage of this seemingly perennial reality to its extremest point, full steam ahead, so to speak. Within the warp and woof of the human fabric, the *pathos* reigns supreme and is deaf to the call of *logos* most of the time. It even has the forceful motion of a whirlwind to bypass and ignore the wisdom of the purveyors of *ethos*. The *pathos* is, therefore, the central arena where the ebb and flow of manipulative undertakings function with clockwork precision.

But there is nothing new in this consideration. As an emotional being, humanity has always been the subject of manipulation since time immemorial, i.e., long before the age of advertising. Well concatenated words that constitute a delightful message can instantly – i.e., spontaneously – capture the heart of an individual person. The head equipped with its reasoning power has to get through a more tedious process of coming up with a clear-cut and rational/reasonable decision on whether to accept or reject something presented before it. Besides, the individual who is supposed to be at the disposal of both heart and head has a much easier predisposition to utilize the former and set aside the latter. As has been observed time and again, it is the heart that easily gives in – even caves in – to the pleasing

lines articulated by an apparent persuader like an irresistible confectionery offered to a child by someone who wants to win her/his friendship.

Friendship is basically a matter of the heart and could breed manipulation on the wrong side of its broad layout. It starts with a proposition along the line of amity that in many cases gets deeper so that it could even reach a high degree of intimate connection. And once the target has already been taken over, that's the point where manipulation sets in. A well-stringed set of pleasurable words can easily disarm and capture the emotional framework of an individual and put her/him in a situation of non-resistance. Again, this is nothing new to us even in a large-scale scenario wherein the power of a minister's preaching becomes a manipulative tool to gather together unquestioning believers in the context of a religious assembly. This is not advertising but all its components run parallel to its commercial counterpart.

Many religious assemblies – whether you call them “fellowships” or “churches” – in the present modern dispensation have gained the notoriety of being called manipulators of the first order as their leaders have transformed themselves into multi-millionaire and billionaire high rollers who own luxurious mansions, travel by land in their chauffeur-driven limousines and visit their overseas congregations on their sophisticated private jets. And it is a known fact that all their riches are drawn from the ten percent of the incomes sweated out by their hardworking members. This shows how powerful manipulative words are as these preaching comen put them all together in the language of a homily that they deliver from the pulpits of their churches' sanctuaries “Sunday in Sunday out”.

But why specifically zero in on the religious preachers when these guys have their exact kins in the political arena? We see the same manipulative acts among politicians during the campaign period prior to an election. They all want to get elected and in their campaign sorties, it is not unusual to hear the manipulative promises of these political thugs whom the electorate tends to give in and give up their votes when election day comes. But it does not stop after the election. Those elected officials continue to use the power of political rhetoric to further deceive their constituents with more promises despite the fact that those they had promised during the campaign period haven't even been implemented, much less fulfilled. However, in this particular scenario, what is so strange is the reality that the people who have been manipulated in the past continue to allow themselves to be manipulated more.

In the final analysis, it is with a certain degree of logical accuracy to conclude that the majority of the people in the world have the general tendency to let themselves get manipulated in whatever life condition they are located. This reality is sustained by the dictum that human beings are predominantly creatures of *pathos*, i.e., people who find it much easier to cope with life's complexity by way of emotion rather than by way of reason. But on a more serious note, the more honest-to-goodness question is, Is that really the best way to cope with life's reality with all its complexity and difficulties?

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