

LIE IN POLITICS

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Abstract: *This article aims to emphasize that lie has always been a vital and fundamental political tool. What is new is its theoretical metamorphosis in alternative truth. The essential question today seems to be, "What is true anymore? The political arena finds itself second in the military field, in relation to the terms of preponderance of lies and tolerance towards it. In this context the importance and the philosophical significance of the debate on the epistemological status of post-truth, alternative facts or counterfeit facts should be very well understood and known. If in the political sphere the lie seems to have found its rightful place, ranging from the gross falsification of reality to the "benign" lying through omission, this is because there are well-established and time-driven discursive strategies.*

Keywords: *lie, political actor, political speech, public opinion, intentionality*

1. INTRODUCTION

The main reason politicians lie is because their audience does not want to hear the truth. People want to hear what they want to hear. When two candidates hold their speech, and one of them tells the truth and the other only what people want to hear, the second one will win the election.[1]

Most citizens do not trust governments or parliaments, and most of them despise politicians and political parties believing that their government does not embody the will of the people. This includes advanced democracies as well, for numerous public opinion polls show that public trust in governments, public institutions and political actors has declined substantially in the past three decades. Why is it so? Surely due to dissatisfaction with certain policies and the state of the economy and society. Public opinion polls show that political mistrust can be predicted with the utmost certainty based on the perception on lie and corruption.[2]

Benjamin Franklin is the one who, at some point, being disappointed with politics, made a statement that was based on a careful observation of gaming interests in the sphere of governmental decisions. This statement highlights the limits of the false discourse: you can fool everyone for a little while, you can fool a part of the world forever, but you will not be able to fool everyone forever. His judgment adapts very well to our times, as demonstrated by those who have transformed lie into an effective practice to achieve particular purposes. All stratagems imagined over time have provided a considerable historical career, but it would seem that they were never able to effectively expose their discourse as they could in the media age.

2. TYPES OF LIES

In order to better understand the reasons for this success, first it is necessary to state out the existence of two different categories in which the discourse of those who practice the intentional lie fits:

-The first category serves the immediate interests of the lying one

-The second category targets the altruistic and charitable lies

The political lie fits in the second category. Political actors have in mind the important gains that are related to the access of controlling the strategic assets. For them, misinformation is defined as a source of data with preferential character from which it is possible to obtain a maximum of potential advantages in relation to the ignorant mass.

Lying can serve charity only when referring to "public lying", aiming to calm community worries. Lie is useful to society when its concern is to serve the common interest and not the personal interests.

This kind of situations are numerous and they maintain the illusion that the existence of lie in politics is a necessary evil, and those who practice it are acting as such based on the conviction that in this way it protects the superior interests of the community it governs.

Often, however, the difference between the concept of political wisdom and lies told by the political leaders is difficult to notice, because the ambivalence of the political power consists in this kind of amalgamation of the public interest with the private or the group interest. From the point of view of group interests, the ultimate purpose of lie is to save forces by manipulating the symbols instead of making use of their actual and direct nature. When a political leader gives reassuring statements to citizens, in secret he can organize an aggression against the public interest.

The mechanism of misleading consists in an exercise to eliminate the opponent's suspicion, so as when he should oppose a decision that could seriously harm its interests, he would be unprepared. The group interest has in mind a very important economy of means that could be wasted by trying to impose by force their unilateral will. So, from this point of view, there are two types of public lie: the tactical and the media.[3]

The tactical lie implies a deliberate dissimulation of the intentions of a person or a group of people that are left unknown to the opponents, forcing them to make bad decisions and thus being able to surprise them with certain decisions that concern them. Dissimulation involves not only a tactical silence on the part of those who practice it, but even a change in their behavior in order to not betray their intentions.

Media lie requires a form of mediation in promoting the group interest. More specifically, it is the image of the opponent, and not the opponent himself that it is targeted and the method by which he will be removed from the race involves the public opinion to denigrate certain behaviors, attitudes or values that are considered conservative or directed against the interests of the community.

When lie is inserted into a media discourse, it becomes an effective way of intoxicating public opinion with false interests and false enemies.

There is a strong and truthful motivation in favor of a false speech. Almost always, the political actor invokes the excusable lie, armored with solid arguments to exonerate itself. The preservation of secret has always been one of the main concerns of those in power. If in the past governance issues were in fact a matter of initiation in the mysteries of power play, they have now become the pretext of a direct relationship between public authority and citizens. The media offers a great deal of support to this dialogue through its technical possibilities to put face to face the protagonists of this relationship.

Secrets have disappeared and transparency has become real, but only in regard to the means and techniques used to guide the political action.

This is because, behind closed doors, the real goals and interests pursued by the leaders remain a never-dying occult reality. The mystery surrounding the power would disperse when society itself would cease to be a perpetual unknown for those who decide its interests.

The purposes, targets or objects of lies can be those facts, intentions, beliefs, opinions, values, or ideologies that possess the ability to substitute each other in order to rebuild reality in accordance with the aims pursued by those who are at the origin of the lying speech, or which show the ability to use the consequences of this practice in the world of the political life. To counter the verifiable nature of this type of discourse is difficult in most of the circumstances that involve attributive goals, value judgments, mentalities, ideas, conceptions or attitudes marked by a profound political subjectivism.[4]

If the lie misrepresents facts, where their interpretation is univocal, their direct observation is the most convenient way to find significant discrepancies between reality and its discourse.

When the speaker asserts a reality, he knows all too well what he intends to communicate: to respect his promise of transparency and honesty or to deliberately breach it. If the other is ignorant of these intentions he would formulate only certain conjunctions on the sincerity of that discourse. However, if someone is accusing him of lying, the lie can be appreciated more as a particular form of an intentional process, therefore the veracity of the discourse involves taking into account a certain ethos and a system of values that can characterize the context of its course/ progress

The problem is that values cannot be considered neither true nor false as long as they are viewed more as purposes and less as realities or facts. When we talk about justice, freedom, good, etc., we cannot question their demonstrability, because they are mainly highly biased options. Still, one can lie preserving the resemblance of values, just as Ceausescu was trying to persuade Romanians that the assertion of Western products is an act of great patriotism that serves their most personal interests.

At the same time, neither can opinions be considered completely true, nor completely false, being, in principle, things that are questionable and possibly disputable. However, a lie can be told either by promulgating ideas and opinions without really sharing them, only for pragmatic reasons related to the relationship with the reference group, either by deliberately publishing fake results of a public opinion polls. In both circumstances, the adopted behavioral model has in sight the practicing of a subjective opinion that respects the demands of the silence spiral, involving less the promotion of lies and more its acceptability.

3. WHAT IS POLITICAL ETHICS?

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the concept of “ethics” refers to the establishment and analysis concept of right or wrong behavior, “being concerned with what is morally good or bad, and being applied to any system or theory of moral values or principles.”[5] On the other hand, as stated in Cambridge Dictionary, “politics” refers to “the activities of the government, members of law-making organizations, or people who try to influence the way a country is governed”, but also “the job of holding a position of power in the government” and “the study or the ways in which a country is governed”. [6]

Raymond Polin studied the relation between ethics and politics he stated that “ethics meditates, defines and appreciates, in good and in bad terms, the intentions of the acts and works of an individual considered in himself or considered in relations with the others individuals.”[7] Regarding the Raymond Polin phrase, ethics is actually a moral theory, a “practical theory”, which point out the moral practices, the moral actions, the moral relations, a moral behavior, principles, rules of practical conduct, human beings are freely interact inside differently social groups from their society.

The politics is more the way in which a country or a society is governed, so we can say that the politics is the practice of governing the human societies.

Politics is a human activity and it is fundamental in building societies which are built on laws, rules and defining values for the communities. Politics “requires a high level of responsibility and commitment from citizens, political parties, parliamentarians, government executives, the judiciary, the media, business, ONGs, and religious and educational institutions.”[8] Considering some research about the trust of people in national institutions and authorities, in any countries, we see that the confidence is at a very low level. One of the biggest problems is the corruptions and the fact that the common interests are not that important, but politician special interest is on top of the list. Of course, that there are politician that seek the common good and fight in national and international level for their convictions, but the majority of individuals consider that ethics in politics is a sort of contradiction, mainly in practical activity.

4. OPINION POLLS

When we talk about public opinion polls, the situation changes radically when they no longer appear as a simple summation of individual opinions, but they are presented as a social fact loaded with significance at the level of a entire social reality. In this case, distinguishing the truth from the lie urges us to identify the source that mediates them so as to find out the nature of the intended intentions and purposes. Normally, the hypermediatization of public opinion polls that take into account the dynamics of the voting intentions of the population exceeds the strict methodological framework of sociological and political theories, thus entering the territory of the persuasive discourse of electoral propaganda by choosing the moment of publication in accordance to the position occupied by the sleeping partner in the top of the political preferences of the citizens. This process goes beyond the cognitive endpoints of testing the public opinion to step into the sphere of the most competent practices of political manipulation and misinformation.

In the disputes between politicians, strong arguments appeal to public opinion polls, and contesting the results vulgarizes the value of an important sociological technique when it does not corroborate their perception regarding the electoral reality. To insist on the fact that the opinions of many are one and the same with their beliefs or political convictions is an unlawful way of replacing reality with the desirable expression of this reality, to which the political actors interested in dominating the field of electoral disputes in the period between campaigns resort to. From this point of view, a conviction is appreciated as being true so far as it belongs to the party's adherents and supporters, or is considered false if it belongs to the political opponents. So, one can lie either by mimicking adherence to an idea or conviction, or by displaying a false respect for it, but public opinion polls are not capable to substitute opinion with belief.

Lastly, we are entitled to talk about lie every time certain objects of thought, such as beliefs, convictions, ideas, opinions, values step in.

However, the condition under which we can talk about it is to constantly report it to reality and not to thinking, thought, on which it is very difficult to express a pertinent point of view, because it involves some complex processes of a subjective nature which concludes by ingraining a relative character to any product of knowledge and from which lie derives more arguments in favor of its veracity and truthfulness than in favor of its falsity.

If realities are hard to know and see, they can instead be more easily deformed as they become more complex. This complexity always gives birth to complications of comprehension, especially where there is a lack of adequate means to understand the nature of the social action purposes.

We can say that the possibility of lying is directly proportional to the absence of testimonies and competent witnesses of events that take place in a hectic social reality, especially a reality that is in constant change. Almost all the time the lie refers to the past, and only occasionally to the present, these situations being associated with apocalyptic projections, depending on certain interests that always are 'up to date'. But most often the lie refers to the future. That is because the risk of being refuted is directly related to the improbability of many variables, variables that no one can inspect and examine does not even want to subordinate.

Nowadays, the ethical effect is more present than ever in all the field, causing aspiration and collective practices in term of ethics. At the beginning of the 20th century it was stated that morality refers to the whole character of the man, thus representing all the human action, the moral and the social aspects considering being almost identical.

But, the 20th century is characterized by mistrust in ethics and morality, postmodernist thinking "has caused the existence of any standards, principle and moral values with claims of universality". [9] But, the end of this century, ethics is brought to the forefront by more and more ethical debates, gaining a global reach, Gilles Lipovetsky affirm that "The 21st century will be ethical or not at all". [10]

With the risk of repeating ourselves, what matters most is its practical value for the present, and less the recognition of some prognostic merits that it could reclaim.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The political lie is very often present in political programs, electoral campaigns and even in government programs. For example, the story of "The Contract with Romania", the one released by CDR leaders during the election campaign from 1996, became very shortly after the elections a cause of mistrust against the governors. Later on, to these promises that have proved to be false, the same governments did not hesitate to add other bold terms to Romania's EU accession process, the future on their side once again. They relied, as always on the fact that the population is in a blur and not very well informed in regard to what it can mean for it the entry into the EU. Thus, it is insinuated that getting out of poverty is no longer exclusively in the hands of the Government, but depends on the decisions taken in Brussels, and thus the sacrifices made in this regard are less visible internally. It was sufficient to announce the invitation of Romania to the negotiations of admittance that took place in Helsinki, so that the circumstance could be presented as a historical moment and a succession of a long-step process worthy of the internal sacrifice.

Currently, exceptions are the electoral programs, regarded with limited trust even by their authors. Very few are the ones who venture to develop extremely optimistic scenarios to eradicate the existing economic reduction, in order to avoid future embarrassing situations, when they could prove to be as false as is possible.

At least, for the upcoming campaign, they could be a barrier difficult to overcome in regard to obtain a new government mandate.

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