

THE TECHNOLOGY OF CLASSICAL DISINFORMATION – PREMISES

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Abstract: In this first section, an exegetical approach is used to conceptualize disinformation both as an incidental phenomenon (involuntary or unsystematic) and as a deliberate practice (a calculated, intentional act). Here we examine the functions of language in relation to decision-making processes and trace the incremental evolution of disinformation—from untruth and lying to deception—as a subspecies of falsification. By utilizing the method of genus proximum and specific difference, the study seeks to derive rigorous definitions and concepts.

The methodological analysis will further investigate disinformation techniques, prioritizing the environments in which they operate, including oral communication, radio, television, the Internet, and institutional frameworks. These technological means are to be examined through both normative and descriptive lenses, highlighting the critical importance of lexical tools and the power of suggestion.

Keywords: *disinformation, lie, propaganda, untruth, language.*

Functions of Language

Constitutively, at the basis of any form of communication lies a language, whether verbal or non-verbal (gestures, images, inarticulate sounds—such as an alarm—etc.). The use of language in an effective manner makes possible the transmission of a message from sender to receiver, who will decipher the substantive content of the message through the psychological process called understanding. Thus, from a semantic point of view, language fulfills four elementary functions (Stoianovici et al., 1990): informative; descriptive; expressive; and argumentative.

The informative function ensures the transmission of data in an organized, systemic, and integrative manner, relative to the needs of the subjects. Through it, statements of a normative or imperative character are communicated, such as instructions, for example.

The descriptive function expresses attributes and classifications, outlining in a rather subjective or relative way the objective reality to which it refers.

The expressive function of language operates communication by virtue of the transmission of verbal and paraverbal information: voice inflections, onomatopoeia, gestures, facial expressions, etc.

The argumentative function is the result of combining the first three functions (considered primary) for the purpose of persuasion, of influencing someone's perceptions and actions.

At the level of common perception, the definition of disinformation is based, in part or in whole, on the following statement: "disinformation is information that is deliberately erroneous or misleading" (Larousse, Webster, DEX). Analyzing this definition, we obtain that disinformation operates communication through the same means as information, but its content is deliberately misleading or contaminated with untruth. The natural consequence is the distortion of the perception of the individual or group being disinformed, and the influence exerted on their decisions and actions based on false premises (De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1999).

Consequently, disinformation will assume all three primary functions of language, but implicitly, by masking premeditated deception, it will conceal the argumentative function.

The applicability of this practice is found par excellence in the possibility of influencing decisions, through the interference of the interested party or parties in the commitment of decision-makers to a particular point of view.

Modes of Decision-Making

There are four ways (Stoica, 2006) in which decisions can be made, each with its advantages and disadvantages:

The autocratic (or despotic) approach: In this model, responsibility for the decision rests exclusively with the leader. The main benefit lies in the speed of execution, a critical factor in moments of crisis or major emergency. However, the weak point of this style is the increased risk of error, since the decision does not benefit from the control and filtering mechanisms specific to collective analysis.

The democratic approach: This is based on the principle of the will of the majority. Its main advantage is the involvement of a large number of decision-makers, which increases legitimacy and commitment to the established objective. Its principal drawback is the possibility that a minority will be marginalized, generating potential tensions within the structure.

Compromise: This method is often used as a fallback solution, in which the decision-making process follows the line of least resistance. Although it facilitates the unblocking of a situation, compromise risks offering a mediocre solution that does not directly address the core of the problem requiring resolution.

Consensus: This is considered the most effective modality in terms of results, as it involves the agreement and contribution of all parties. Although it generates a maximum degree of ownership of the decision, the process is marked by an extended duration, being the slowest form of decision-making procedure.

Disinformative practice may be perceived, when it concerns the decision-making process, as an argumentation in bad faith, given that both practices aim to produce controlled changes in the perception, commitment, and activity of individual or collective decision-makers, often by exploiting the mechanisms of unconscious information processing (David, 2004). In order to better highlight the specific character of this type of action, we shall further follow the incremental evolution of several related species within the register of informational falsification.

Untruth

We emphasize that untruth corresponds rather to the terminological variation misinformation than to disinformation, both terms being translated into Romanian as *dezinformare* despite their evident semantic difference. It represents the most rudimentary expression of informational falsification in communication. From the point of view of manifestation, untruth may be classified as voluntary or involuntary, in both cases not constituting an action of a properly misinformative nature.

In the study of the informational phenomenon, untruth is identified as the first step of distortion, which can be classified according to the presence or absence of intention.

Involuntary untruth is considered the linguistic equivalent of error proper. In this situation, the communication process is flawed without the parties involved pursuing this outcome, both the sender and the receiver being affected by the erroneous character of the conveyed data.

On the other hand, voluntary untruth manifests itself within metaphorical or allegorical forms of expression. In these circumstances, the meanings of the terms used migrate from their literal sense to different contextual nuances, as happens in figures of speech, jokes, or subtle irony (Rusti, 2005).

A particular manifestation of assumed untruth is invention or convivial fabulation. From a theoretical standpoint, this is clearly separated from the concept of lying, being evaluated rather as an instrument of social interaction than as an act of informing. Although it is a product of will, invention does not aim at maliciously altering reality, but at strengthening human bonds and establishing a favorable atmosphere between dialogue partners. The essence of invention lies in the absence of the desire to convince; the one who uses it does not claim to be believed, nor does he seek to obtain personal benefit by underestimating or deceiving the interlocutor.

In conclusion, the fundamental trait that defines untruth in all its forms is the absence of premeditation to deform factual reality or to distribute in bad faith false data concerning other persons. Therefore, since it lacks the essential element of malicious intentionality, untruth

taken in isolation cannot be included in the category of disinformation proper, which by definition requires a calculated purpose to deceive.

The Dynamics of Dissimulation: Lying as an Instrument of Influence

There are numerous perspectives from which lying can be theorized, but the central element essential for its identification is the divergence between the mental representations of the sender and the message he chooses to transmit. At an elementary level, this process presupposes a deliberate action to mislead another person, using any available channel of communication or form of social interaction.

From an operational standpoint, lying may manifest either through direct contact with the intended recipient or through intermediaries. These secondary transmitters may act in full knowledge, becoming accomplices, or may themselves be misled, becoming unconscious vehicles of the false message.

The *raison d'être* of lying lies in the attainment of specific ends by the subject who uses it in relation to the object targeted. These objectives are inseparably linked to the interests of the one who dissimulates, which may be directed along two main axes: on the one hand, securing and maintaining certain values or interests against any unauthorized external interference (Axante, 2005); and on the other, accumulating and expanding material assets or spiritual resources.

The effectiveness of this endeavor is supported by the capacity of lying to adopt various roles. It may function as a substitute for physical force, when dissimulation is used to avoid open conflict (Rotaru, 2005), or it may have positive valences on individual destinies when it does not cause harm to the parties involved. A notable example in this respect is the use of suggestion in contexts such as the placebo effect or the Hawthorne phenomenon, where the simple act of communication influences observed reality. At the same time, lying may also be used for exploitative purposes, generating advantages for the sender at the expense of the one misled.

On a broader scale, the integration of lying into the mechanisms of functioning of fundamental institutions, such as the state, may become a method of coordinating and regulating social behavior (Rotaru, 2006) and the flows of citizens' thinking. In certain specific circumstances and over limited periods, establishing an equilibrium based on managing these distorted pieces of information may ensure stability in power relations within society.

The Analysis of Veridicality and the Psychological Foundation of Acceptance

From a psychological perspective, the success of any act of distorted communication depends less on the accuracy of the data than on the strength of the trust that the sender manages to project. Veridicality

should not be confused with objective truth; rather, it represents the capacity of a message to be perceived as authentic. The one who resorts to dissimulation makes a deliberate effort to generate this appearance of honesty, relying on the fact that individuals have a natural predisposition to validate information that harmonizes with their own expectations, desires, or prejudices.

This cognitive vulnerability is exploited through messages that do not necessarily address reason, but operate at the level of unconscious drives. When information resonates with the deep structures of the psyche, the critical capacity of the receiver is diminished, making an objective evaluation of the informational material almost impossible.

Thus, although lying constitutes a primary method of disinformation through the use of untruth to alter representations of reality, it remains particularly rudimentary, as the spectrum of informational manipulation is much broader. The success of this process fundamentally depends on the management of the perception of truth (veridicality), demonstrating that controlled changes in the collective mindset can be achieved even in the absence of a brute falsification of data, simply by exploiting mechanisms of credulity and the expectations of the targeted subjects.

The Duality of Disinformation: Distinctions between Verbal Falsehood (the Lie) and the Process of Deception

Although in everyday language the terms “lie” and “deception” are used interchangeably or perceived in a causal interdependence, they define distinct analytical realities that underpin different mechanisms of disinformation. When rigorously analyzed, the two concepts overlap only partially and coincidentally, most often being juxtaposed and acting complementarily, generating a synergistic effect when integrated into complex strategies of influence. In order to decipher the effectiveness of this functional fusion in the dynamics of disinformation, we may attempt to nuance the points of contrast between the two complementary elements.

A first fundamental distinction must be made between deception viewed as a strategic act (practice) and deception viewed as a finality (result). The present analysis focuses on the mechanism itself and not on the consequence of being misled, since the final state of “being deceived” may be the product of a wide spectrum of causes, including unintentional error, punctual lying, or complex manipulation strategies.

Within this conceptual hierarchy, lying is defined strictly as a manifestation of a linguistic order. Regardless of the medium of transmission—whether direct or mediated interaction, written or oral communication—lying remains conditioned by the use of a verbal code to propagate deliberately falsified information.

In contrast, deception may be interpreted as a higher form of strategic refinement. While lying requires an explicit statement that

contradicts reality, deception may rely on much more subtle techniques, such as selective omission or presenting the truth in a context that deprives it of credibility. Thus, deception has a pronounced processual character. As research in the field of psychological security emphasizes (Ognev & Russev, 2005, drawing on Hopper & Bell), deception transcends the lexical sphere and may be carried out through gestures, symbols, or the performance of social roles. Its essence does not lie in the volume of transmitted data, but in the capacity to maintain a coherent image that serves the objectives of the one who initiates it.

The cardinal objective of any such action is the conquest of the receiver's trust. In the case of fraud, the success of the strategy follows a psychological gradation of credibility, structured on three levels of depth:

The level of unconditional acceptance: This represents the stage in which a presumption of good faith is established. The sender manages to simulate honesty so convincingly that the target eliminates any critical barrier, the interaction unfolding within a framework of apparent transparency.

The level of ideational consensus: At this stage, trust surpasses the simple acceptance of the person, the target fully internalizing the viewpoints or value judgments proposed by the deceiver.

The devotional (supreme) level: This represents the maximum stage of trust, bearing the imprint of fanaticism. At this point, influence over the victim's behavior is absolute. Even if the falsehood is exposed by irrefutable evidence, the one who has reached this level of control can reinterpret the obvious facts, convincing the target that reality is otherwise. Here, truth ceases to be a property of objective facts and becomes a subjective projection of the source, invested by the victim with infallible authority.

The efficiency of this process is guaranteed by the exploitation of the effect of frustrated expectations. Based on the tendency of the human psyche to predict reality according to the principle of greatest probability (related to parsimony reasoning or "Occam's razor"), this mechanism speculates on cognitive automatisms. The swindler introduces an element of strategic surprise: while the target of disinformation anticipates the natural and most logical course of events, the distorted reality is discreetly constructed behind the scenes of this appearance. Deception thus becomes a form of psychological diversion in which the target of disinformation, attempting to reduce a new situation to an already known and familiar pattern, paradoxically becomes an involuntary accomplice in his or her own victimization.

Consequently, deception is configured as a specific disinformative modality, distinct from lying in that it does not consist in the brute modification or destruction of data, but in redirecting the attention of those targeted away from the real purpose of the communication process. This mechanism may be realized through two fundamental strategies: the

use of the half-truth, consisting in providing factually correct but incomplete information with the intention of fragmenting the receiver's perception and incapacitating a unified representation capable of detecting falsehood; or the instrumentalization of the complete truth, offered in a manner that diverts representation of the phenomenon without the subject becoming aware of the influence.

In the first case, the half-truth derives its effectiveness from its contrast with direct lying and its capacity to camouflage itself behind fragments of truth. Since this practice does not involve explicit falsification of information, even a small truth may completely conceal a great lie. Thus, the procedure—which could be regarded as a deliberate omission—manages to simulate honesty, presenting itself as complete and good-faith communication, although its defining trait is precisely the concealment of essential variables necessary for correctly deciphering causal relations. The technique is based on the idea that a half-truth will never reveal itself as such, the disinformant making constant efforts to maintain the appearance that the data offered are exhaustive and that any subsequent deduction must rely exclusively on this limited set of information.

The second course of action rests on the assumption that reality, even when presented in its entirety, may still be insufficient to provide the correct measure of a phenomenon. This approach proves effective when the target expects to be lied to, when the target group is a priori suspicious, in which case offering the pure truth leads to the paradoxical effect of discrediting it, or when information is transmitted in a manner that diverts perception from logical meaning toward other collateral significations. In this context, the disinformative function is taken over by the expressive component of language, which comes to transmit a message different from the verbal one, resulting in hybrid communication, at both verbal and paraverbal levels, where the final representation of the target is the product of the simultaneous processing of both data streams.

From the perspective of the instruments used, deception manifests as a phenomenon of interaction, where the essence is not simple action upon the other, but dialogue between the parties. Under the cover of formal truth, these means allow the disinformant to camouflage or fragment negative elements, to disproportionately promote positive aspects, to silence unfavorable facts under institutional pretexts such as state secrecy or confidentiality, and to exaggerate the benefits of a promoted endeavor in order to provide solid justification for his actions.

At the social level, deception fulfills precise strategic functions, representing an instrument for protecting interests both personally and collectively, serving to maintain balance between communication structures when interests are incompatible and thus avoiding open conflict. Sometimes this is also the reason why a deceptive action, although it may be instantly detected and exposed, is nevertheless maintained in a state of indefinite latency. At the same time, it may

constitute the central function of institutions dedicated to information management, being a means of struggle for power that allows the avoidance of direct confrontation with an adversary. Ultimately, deception becomes a pillar for preserving the status quo, blocking access to information that could generate change through the use of restrictive clichés such as “classified” or “top secret.”

Disinformation may therefore be achieved both through communicative means, by transmitting false data (lying), and through informational means, by transmitting true data in a way that distorts representation of the phenomenon in question (deception). Integrating the two techniques of meaning diversion into a single unit nevertheless yields too broad a spectrum of “dishonest” practices. In relation to these “related” practices, we shall define disinformation by genus proximum and specific difference.

Conclusion: Disinformation – Genus Proximum and Specific Difference

At the end of this article, we shall nuance the differences between disinformation as a technical process proper and other related species. Following a Volkoffian tradition, we shall mention propaganda, advertising, and intoxication—all three, together with disinformation, fall under the same umbrella of actions aimed at influencing the perception and representations of a subject, and share the same passion for morally debatable means.

Propaganda seeks to promote certain ideas or persons, and for this purpose it does not matter whether untruth, lies, or deception are used. What constitutes the distinctive element in relation to disinformation is that propaganda never pursues a hidden goal; its objective is exactly the one it displays: to convince (even though most often the target of propaganda is the irrational) that a certain thing is good or bad.

Like propaganda, advertising involves transmitting a message to as wide an audience as possible, a message whose purpose is not to inform but to influence the receiver. Therefore, it is irrelevant to the achievement of this purpose whether the message is true or false, in good faith or malicious. What matters is the promotion of a certain product for economic reasons. Unlike propaganda, which claims to convince, advertising seeks only to seduce. However, no matter how disinformative it may be when it attempts to induce someone to buy a product through lying or deceptive practices, advertising does not hide its true goal (the economic one) and therefore cannot be considered disinformation.

Intoxication, in military terminology, represents the action of insinuating and transmitting information to the enemy so that his representation of the true state of affairs is disturbed and influenced in the direction determined by the operator. It represents the genus proximum of disinformation both in terms of the means employed and the manner of

pursuing the goal (covertly). The specific difference lies in the target of the two actions: in the case of intoxication, the target is a specific person (a military officer or other decision-maker) or a small group of persons, whereas disinformation targets a mass of individuals, being in itself an efficient means of mass control.

Vladimir Volkoff proposes three distinctive elements in accordance with the three related species: manipulation of public opinion—otherwise, if it operates strictly at the individual level, it is informational intoxication; diverted means—otherwise, if there is coincidence and alignment between declared aims, real intentions, and the means used, it would be propaganda; and socio-political objectives—otherwise it would be advertising.

Therefore, the definition resulting from the combination of the distinctive characteristics is the following: “Disinformation is a manipulation of public opinion, for political purposes, using information treated with diverted means.”

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