



TRUTH, REPRESENTATION, INTENT and DECEPTION IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Ümit İnatçı

We need to understand, “advertising & marketing” –which are the most effective tools, applied by brand colonialism– through what kind of visual rhetoric tries to communicate with the masses using the *truth, representation, intent* and *deception* notions. Popular culture affects the preferences of the masses concerned with their lives; since we are not utopist anymore; we should think properly about the probability of impossibility... To be abstinent in a way, ontologically means to be absent; just because we lost the sense of awareness as a project of self construction. To be critical against aggressive advertising is obviously a political and ideological declaration. As a key-not speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the necessity of consciousness that is indispensable, nowadays to be guarded against a banal materialist consumption.

It is difficult –even impossible– to make a decision as to where to locate the ‘moment’ in the history when and in which circumstance there is a need for communication. Thus, based on this, it is not appropriate and unnecessary to talk about an ‘arche’; the first relation to communication. We humans, -different from animals- with an instinct formed by the need to communicate with other subjects (I mean inter-subjective communication), we try to relate our existence with time and location. Humans, who take their body as the center, signify the place where they are located in order to prove their existence. Paleolithic cave drawings represent the concrete examples of his/her signification. We don’t know about the earlier times, inter-subjective communication could have started by signs leaving a stone somewhere or putting a wood whatever it is; here, we are talking about the practice of constituting a memory based on visual sense. From here, it is possible to reach this bare naked truth: communication first developed visually and then multiplied under various forms.

With the emergence of language and invention of writing, we observe that communication is converted into a vehicle of authority. However, we cannot say that visual image’s system is secondary to writing. On the contrary, visual appears as the upper language of what cannot be said. To begin with ancient civilizations, like Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations, visual images were used to ascribe mystery sought to represent the truth. When we ask ‘What was the representation of reality in relation to the existence of Gods?’ we realize that, we have to diagnose the intention. Reality is



unquestionable; when we look at the intention of what represents reality, we face the rhetoric of what sets out to deceive us about reality; because that is the visual work (painting, sculpture, frescoes, etc.) in front of us. In praise of almighty, we put a distance between ordinary and extraordinary, transcendental. On the one hand, access to the almighty becomes the sole aim of life; on the other hand, comprehending that the supreme is inaccessible illustrates the power of sacrifice and hence delusion of metaphysical power. The state of sacrifice for the name of truth represents the natural power of the authority that represents the truth.

When we reach modern times, the meaning of words, truth, representation, intention and delusion are not functionally different. Again, virtual and synthetic forms of visibility, which hold a significant place in the banal materialism fed into daily circulation of values to be represented as powers of truth, is transcendentalism itself. Neoliberal rules which sought to lead the mind into failure against passion created a 'market empire' and to this end it also sought to create a devoted army in order to keep itself afloat. In this context, visual rhetoric on which advertising leans upon has to create its own 'almighty'. Rhetoric is an effort to convince on the truth fed by evidence; yet, if or when we ask whose 'truth', we realize that we are encountered with the 'ethics of truth'. However, when the real intention is creating an object for devotion over convincing, the truth that visual rhetoric used in advertising and marketing is actually a spread of sector's iconography of deception. Producing necessary visual images to capture the minds of consumers in order to set up a devotion army from them is like being Catholic missionaries. First, producing the causes and objects of belief, and then engaging people who need this as an object of devotion is rather sectarian community design. In this case, advertising and marketing's attempt to activate visual communication and passivizing masses via the image of glory of religions show symmetrical similarities.

It is not difficult to understand how insidious and cynical the slogan "Freedom instead of Equality" put forth by neoliberal economical mind is (Look at Brain Rape Network, Armand Matterland, Ayrinti Publications). Market which seeks globalization through advertising and marketing entrepreneurship together with communication technologies towards cyber market formed devotion not freedom and thus inequality. When an individual lacks his own pillar of justice, it is not difficult to be under the influence of a deception strategy. Equality is among those who have their own autonomous entity. Here, at this point, we can talk about individual's deception. The devoted one is the one who is deceived. The devoted one lacks his/her chance of being equal with other



individuals power which is passivized him/her. This is the proof that market hegemony is converted into exploitative state.

Special effort put forth by advertising and marketing, in the milieu, in which capitalism is most competent and enabling, on visual rhetoric is not certainly in vain. Representation's replacing the truth constitutes an important part of this hegemonic initiative. Since representation reinforced with synthetic visuals seeks to sabotage analytical thinking, the receiver is not the subject anymore; it has been converted into a passive object of attempting to convince. Centralizing the single location of individual and converting him/her into a mass devotion element, instead of representing the truth converts it into the focus of power. In today's situation in which advertising, marketing and mass communication systems are integrated, the power of communication discipline which is geared towards deception is focused on goods-consumption are strengthened. Showing preference to 'mass conversion' and 'producing followers' are better concepts and should be preferred to 'mass communication' or 'public relations'. Every devotion milieu has its followers and religious sheiks. Market mechanism suggested by neoliberal system has a similar function. Each brand's search for stereotyping has the aim of producing an army of uniforms from the masses. Under the name of freedom, brands that merely carry the notion of freedom to masses, they become the most effective force of mass conversion mechanism, just like totalitarian regimes.

Advertising and marketing companies' aim to establish brand colonialism integrating freedom notion with beauty and truth concepts is not a coincidence. Creating a milieu of acting in simulation is the obvious target of brands. Thinking that, the real is not in itself, on its own, but in the ideal locks of the individual in a subjective structure. It is proved that the human mind lacking objective base easily convinced at subjective structure, especially at the visual rhetorical level. In Meyer's book on Rhetoric (look at Meyer, M. Rhetoric, Dost Publishing, 2009) we are encountered with a concept centered definition of rhetoric. Ethos which is considered as the image of me (I, ego) signifies the character, life, aim, preferred virtuousness. OK, don't we need to look at the location of ego, which seeks to convince the masses with nice words, from the perspective of intention? If Pathos is the sense of convincing the target mass that s/he seeks to, in this case, where can we locate the truth which is the object of the senses? If Logos is located as the regulatory of the link between the one that constructs the meaning and one that perceives the meaning, don't we need to ask what is the value of knowing that comes from the object which is the material of subjectivity? If Rhetoric is a means for reaching the truth, why does the visual rhetoric used in advertising and marketing apply to lies in



order to attest the truth of the brand it has chosen? Or is lying converted into a regulatory authority which captures the place logos?

This text that I constructed with doubt as well as pessimism on questioning the attempt of convincing applied by the iconography of the neo-liberal market can be conceived as an attempt of deconstruction of pre-text times. Postmodern determinism, constituted by truth, representation, intention and deception in visual communication, is converted into social engineering which stereotypes the human life. Today there is a need for new enlightening, utopic, radical mind instead of neoliberal mind which is in need of adding 'post' prefix to modernism. In the times when the seeds of modern thought were sown, at night, illuminations were realized by petrol lamps. Today, in the cities, which have light carouse with neon lights, darker heads are going around. During these times when nights shine as much as days, it is not hard to see how obscurantism rules over our lives as has never been before. Representation which is presented to us as truth is nothing more than a reflection (Delusion) which aims to distance us from truth. The extent to which delusion represents the truth depends on how truth is distilled from utopia and is simplified to what is possible. In this case, doesn't delusion constitute what is possible? In my opinion, the problem is that we don't have a utopia... Don't we need utopia more than any other time now that the skill of replacing the rusty by vanishing is wasted away?