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THOUGHT CONTROL AND THE PROPAGANDA FILM

by

DONALD ALBERT PETERSON

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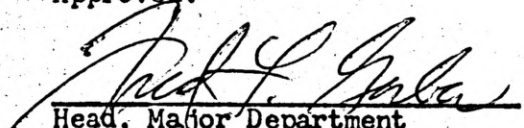
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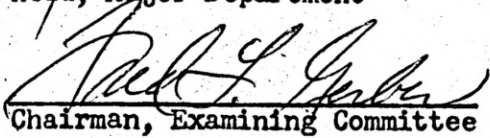
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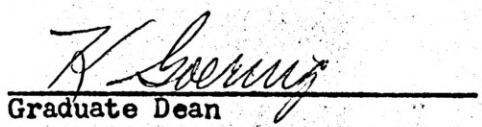
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Approved:

  
Head, Major Department

  
Chairman, Examining Committee

  
Graduate Dean

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title .....	i
Vita.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Figures.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1	
Definitions.....	3
Chapter 2	
Formation and Change of Attitudes.....	6
Chapter 3	
Film Characteristics.....	28
Chapter 4	
Film and Propaganda - American.....	36
Chapter 5	
Film and Propaganda - Nazi Germany.....	44
Chapter 6	
To Be Or Not To Be - Manipulated.....	57
Literature Cited.....	60

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  
Primary Forces in Action During Attitude Formation.....11

Figure 2  
The Basic Functions of Attitudes.....13

Figure 3  
Effects of Motion Pictures on Attitudes.....34

Figure 4  
Structuring the Nazi Reality with Film.....54

## ABSTRACT

This paper, based on literary research, considers the possibility of thought control by means of motion pictures.

The first half of the paper covers the elementary theory of thought control showing how attitudes are formed and changed. The major principles of formation, emotional pressure and suggestion, are related to the secondary principles, thought climate, mental mechanisms, and social structure. These principles are all influenced by the Law of Primacy. Attitudes are difficult to change because of their early formation and also their intercorrelation which prevents piecemeal change. There are many devices and techniques that can be used to change thoughts. Change is measured by the change in subject action. As long as the message is delivered with an eye to the existing attitudes and intellectual level of the audience, change is possible. The attempt must be made in a manner so that the audience will pay attention. Within the limits of Value Screen and early formation, attitudes can be changed.

The second half of the paper considers motion pictures and its uses for propaganda. It is pointed out that film is an art medium and as such is subject to the control of the artist and what he wants to say. How America and Germany used propaganda films during World War Two is discussed. This points out how different governments influence the use of motion pictures for the same end of building public morale.

America supported and justified the elementary rightness of the war with film. The American section points up the need for an educated public.

The German example shows how totalitarian governments can control the influences of film with a complete takeover of the communication media. This section points up the methods that the Nazis used to gain acceptance for their ideas. They utilized regular film techniques as well as specialized techniques such as lietmotiv and polyphony. The Epic Structure and dramatic effects also played a part in their film making. There is a brief analysis of Triumph of the Will.

Films have a varying degree of success when trying to change attitudes. When done properly, though, a film can encourage new thoughts and help influence the changing of old ones.

What this paper calls for is more film education so that people can know and understand the forces that affect them when they view a film. Thus they would be able to recognize and effectively combat attempts at thought control.

## INTRODUCTION

Before the advent of modern psychology and before the full impact of the Korean Prisoner of War Camps broke upon the Free World, the control of men's minds was considered subject matter for the science fiction writers. But, what many people were unwilling to realize then and even now is that the human mind can be enslaved to the will of a trained person.<sup>1</sup>

The knowledge that the human mind can be influenced, tamed, and broken down into servility is far older than the modern dictatorial concept of enforced indoctrination.<sup>2</sup>

The control of the human mind is not a mere physical domination. Rather, it is the power to displace a person's individuality, replacing it with an alien occupant.

A trained person controlling the mass media is in a position to control the mind. Man's relation to the world and his fellow man is dominated by his speech. As he learns to think in the words and speech figures that he has, these gradually condition his outlook on life and the world. It is through the mass media that he learns his speech symbols. Thus, the person ...

...who dictates and formulates the words and phrases we use... is master of the mind.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Joost Meerlo, *The Rape of the Mind* (New York, 1956), p. 35

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 46-47.

The mass media can be a potent weapon in the right hands.

Free men in a free society must learn not only to recognize this stealthy attack on mental integrity and fight it, but must learn also what there is inside a man's mind that makes him, in many cases, actually long for a way out of the responsibilities that democracy and maturity place on him.<sup>1</sup>

Since the motion picture is part of the mass media it is natural that efforts would be made to utilize films for thought control. Such films, propaganda films, have been made with varying degrees of success.

This paper, drawing from a body of research by other scholars for support, will discuss the theory and application of thought control with specific relation to motion pictures.

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<sup>1</sup>Joost, Meerlo, The Rape of the Mind (New York, 1956) p.36

## CHAPTER 1

### Definitions

In discussing a subject as broad as Thought Control it is necessary to approach the subject with an understanding of some common terminology. The definitions of these terms have been synthesized from several sources and are as accurate as possible for our use.

An Opinion is briefly held. A reflection of current public feelings, it is directly observable because it is verbally expressed. Opinions are easily changed due to their superficiality. Sometimes opinions are considered verbal expressions of attitude.<sup>1</sup>

While an opinion is brief and easily changed, an Attitude has long life and is not necessarily verbalized. When an attitude is verbalized it becomes an opinion. At that time it is held up to public examination and becomes a target for change. Rooted deep in the character traits or distinguishing qualities of an individual,<sup>2</sup> an attitude is more of a predisposition to respond.<sup>3</sup> Attitudes include beliefs, a conviction or persuasion of truth, but not all beliefs are attitudes.<sup>4</sup> So, there may be a conviction within the subject that will not encourage a predisposition to respond. Attitudes then are normally expressed by non-verbal

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel Kantz, "The Functional Approach", The Public Opinion Quarterly, Summer 1960, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup>J.A.C. Brown, Techniques of Persuasion (London, 1963, p. 55)

<sup>3</sup>Kantz, Op. Cit., p. 168

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 168

behavior that is by an action. When determining attitudes they must be inferred by a second-hand observation of what the subject says and does.<sup>1</sup> In order to measure attitude change, a measurement of the action change must be made.

When specific attitudes are organized into a hierarchial structure<sup>2</sup> that becomes a filter surrounding our personality it is known as a Value System. A Value System is constructed by each individual and messages passing through this screen are affected by it.<sup>3</sup> That is to say, as a message passes through the screen we selectively perceive only those parts of the message that have, or that we want to have, meaning for us.

The process of Indoctrination is regulation of the stimuli affecting an individual in order to change his attitudes.<sup>4</sup> The key word to this method is "regulation". When submitted to indoctrination an individual is allowed access only to that information or only to those areas that the regulating agency desires. The process of brainwashing used in enemy concentration camps is an example of indoctrination with which most people are familiar. They are also acquainted with an example closer to home in the form of the process of education.

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<sup>1</sup>William Lassey, Notes on Lecture in Communication Science.

<sup>2</sup>Kantz, Op. Cit., p. 168

<sup>3</sup>Lassey, Op. Cit.,

<sup>4</sup>Eugene Kinkead, In Every War But One, (New York, 1959) p. 31

The key word for a definition of Propaganda is "deliberate". This activity involves the deliberate attempt to control the attitudes people hold. Emotional pressure is fundamental to this process.<sup>1</sup> There are several types of propaganda involving the specific effect to be accomplished but always at the heart of the propaganda scheme is the intent to change attitudes. J.A.C. Brown sums up the essence of propaganda as

...The attempt to control people's attitudes, often in irrational directions (and always, we might add, by irrational means).<sup>2</sup>

Limited by the prevailing interests of society, the social trends and prejudices, because a message outside these limits may not attract public attention to stimulate emotion, propaganda is encouraged by ignorance of the facts relating to the issue and by the flows of social current outlined above.

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, Op. Cit., p. 12

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 20

## CHAPTER 2

### Formation and Change of Attitudes

Since attitudes, according to definition, are deep seated in a person's character when change is attempted it is usually directed at the attitude level. It is only at this level that any degree of permanency is achieved. This chapter discusses how attitudes are formed and how those attitudes can be changed.

The basic law of attitude formation is the Law of Primacy which states that the earlier experience is more potent in its effect since it influences how later experiences will be interpreted.<sup>1</sup> Attitudes arise from three basic sources. Using the Law of Primacy they are placed in the following order:

- (1) The child-parent relationship.
- (2) Association with individuals and groups.
- (3) Unique and isolated experiences in life or similar experiences repeated throughout life.

The attitudes that develop during the early years are the most resistant to change. These are hard to affect by propaganda except when using special techniques.<sup>2</sup> Teachers, priests, and parents all have a limited power to create the conditions or thought climate within which a man thinks. Although it is still uncertain as to what the extent of this power is, the Law of Primacy shows that if these contacts are made early in life they will definitely have

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, Op. Cit., p. 39

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 55

some effect on the person's attitudes.

Social structure is also an influence on attitudes. We take our standards from one or more reference groups. These groups may be the same as the main membership group and usually are, though this is not always the case.

In relation to social class, for example, a family may be in the economic sense members of the working class yet take the middle class as their reference group thus creating a situation potentially full of tension for themselves and their associates.<sup>1</sup>

When tensions like this arise attitudes are formed or can be changed if one has the insight to recognize the situation's potential. It was this type of tension correctly analyzed and used by the Communists that led to the overthrow of the Russian Czar.

Attitudes develop through unconscious mental mechanisms. These mechanisms are reactions or responses to our frustrations. They come from a desire to make our life more comfortable by changing our attitudes toward an unpleasant situation. We can understand a great deal of what is known as public opinion if we look at it as a series of reactions to adversity.<sup>2</sup> These reactions or mental mechanisms are catalogued as Rationalization, Displacement, Projection, Compensation, and Conformity. Rationalization occurs when we pretend that the way the situation is now is best, it could

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, p. 63

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 68

be worse, or when we give foolish reasons for acting on an impulse. Displacement is the term used to define a thwarted goal being replaced by a substitute upon which the original emotion can be taken out. Attributing to others the impulses we do not wish to recognize in ourselves is the process of Projection. Identification is the opposite of Projection. In Identification the individual aligns himself with the person concerned and believes himself to feel likewise.

Support springs from identification. To bring<sup>1</sup> about identification is the goal of propaganda.

If the propagandist can get the subject to identify with him then the subject will find himself believing as the propagandist wants him to. When the original drive is frustrated and Compensation occurs another goal is sought which was not involved in the original drive. Conformity is, of course, the drive or desire to be like other people.

The two fundamentals of attitude formation are emotional pressure and suggestion. Our basic motives are emotionally conditioned.<sup>2</sup> Emotions like love, anger, fear, hope and guilt shape attitudes. Any other feelings, emotions, and sentiments that can be made useful, will also help to form attitudes. Emotion

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<sup>1</sup>Fritz Marx, "State Propaganda in Germany" in Propaganda and Dictatorship (Princeton, New Jersey, 1936), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Brown, Op. Cit., p. 23

and suggestion work together. There is good evidence that the arousal of any strong emotion like a person's feeling of inadequacy or guilt may make the individual more suggestable.<sup>1</sup> This holds true even if the emotion is directed initially against the person trying to change the attitude. For instance the people who go to a revival to scoff but then remain to pray.<sup>2</sup> In some instances (e.g. health information) fear becomes less effective in producing conformity than straight facts and figures. However, emotion is extremely potent in drawing attention to the message. In this case fear becomes a double-edged weapon not only to gain attention but also to produce the desired change. Another emotional pressure is prejudice. Prejudice is a way of thinking about the world. It has been estimated that fifty percent of the prejudiced attitudes find their basis in the need to conform to custom--to keep up the traditional pattern.<sup>3</sup> What happens to people who step outside the traditional pattern was illustrated graphically in the motion picture A Time for Burning. A white minister stepping out of traditional white behavior to try to encourage an understanding of Negroes in his community was forced to vacate his position. The influence of prejudice is by way of the existing group attitudes rather than by the child rearing patterns.

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, p. 24

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 24

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 57

Figure 1, page 11, depicts on a chart these primary forces of attitude formation and their relationship to each other.

When a stimulus-situation is made to stand out from its competing stimuli the situation becomes perceived. Perception related to attitude formation has two principle points--Simplification and Repetition. Simplification is the process of making a situation easier to grasp so that individuals can feel they understand it even though the situation may have been a mystery before. In other words, it is brought within the range of perception. By using repetition as a perceptual device the communicator increases the probability that the situation will be perceived. The situation is brought into sharp focus due to the repetition. Perception can also work against the propagandist. Experience has shown that people, if they know what to expect can erect a perceptual defense (inner resistance or value screen) which keeps them from being influenced.<sup>1</sup>

Attitudes have structure and dimension. Structurally an attitude includes two different cores--the affective and the cognitive. The affective part is the feeling of liking or disliking. The cognitive or belief segment contains elements describing the object of the attitude, its characteristics and the relations the attitude has to other objects.<sup>2</sup> The cognitive core is also the belief component.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Meerlo, Op. Cit., p. 50

<sup>2</sup>Kantz, Op. Cit., p. 168

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

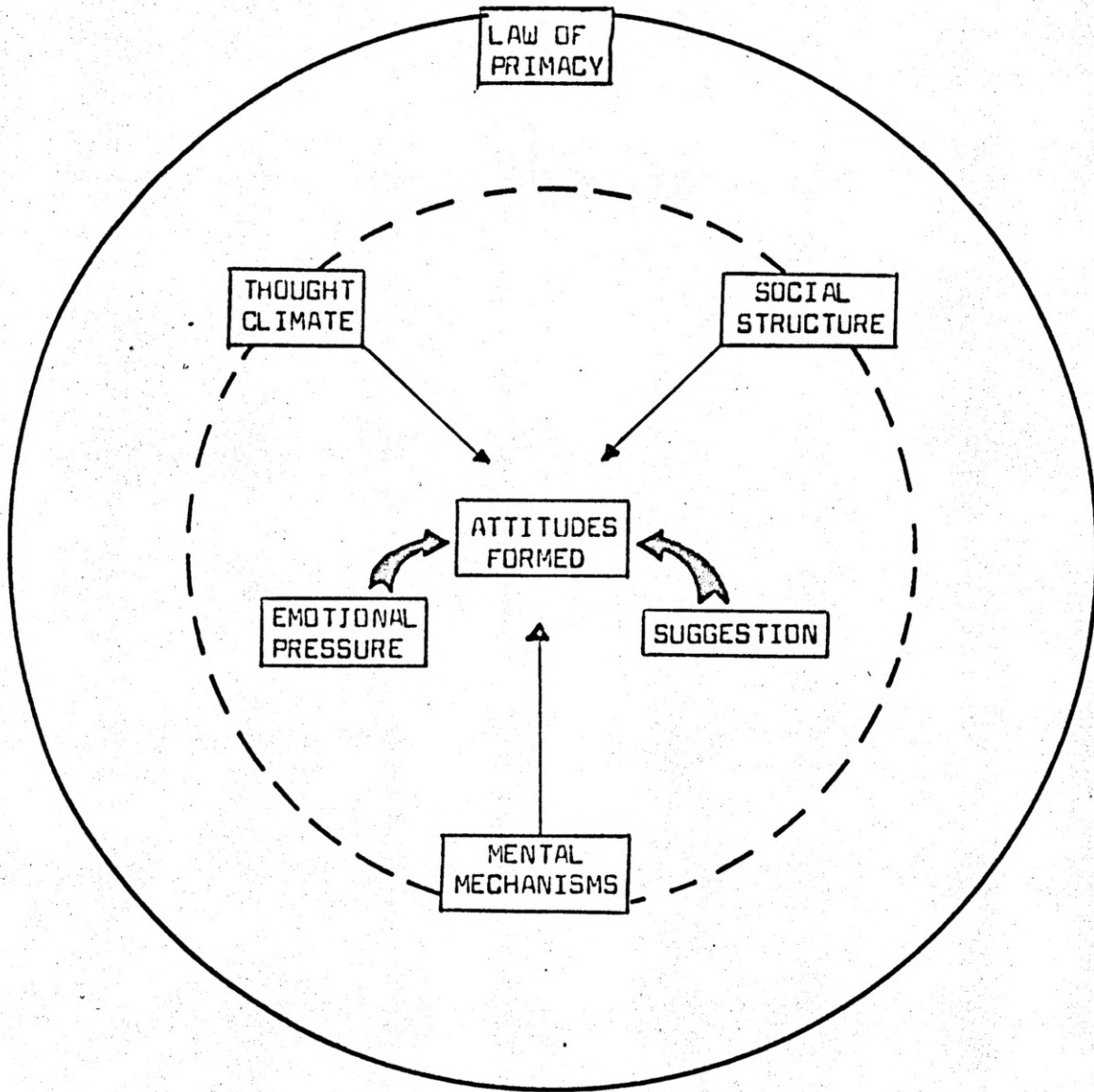


Figure 1

Primary Forces In Action  
During Attitude Formation

efforts should be directed primarily toward the belief component. However, the effort could be directed toward the feeling (affective) component. Since the two components are interlaced, an effective change in one will have the result of change in the other.

There are several dimensions to attitudes that play roles during formation and change. One dimension is how specific or how general the attitude is. Another is the strength or intensity of the affective component. Differentiation is the number of beliefs contained in an attitude. The assumption here is that if an attitude is of simple construction it will be easy to change. The dimension of Centrality is connected with the role that an attitude plays as a part of the value system. As part of the value system, an attitude is closely related to the individual's self-concept. An attitude at this central core is hard to change. The last dimension is the number and strength of the attitude's linkages to a related value system.

If an attitude is tied to a value system which is closely related to, or which consists of himself, then the appropriate change procedure becomes more complex.<sup>1</sup>

Attitudes have four basic functions--Adjustment, Ego Defense, Value Expression, and Knowledge. Figure 2, page 13, shows determinants of formation as well as the arousal and change conditions in relation to the type of function.

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<sup>1</sup>Kantz, Op. Cit., p. 168-169

Function	Origin and Demand	Arousal Conditions	Change Conditions
Adjustment	Utility of attitudinal object in need satisfaction. Maximizing external rewards and minimizing punishments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Activation of needs</li> <li>2. Salience of cues associated with need satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Need deprivation</li> <li>2. Creation of new needs and new levels of aspiration</li> <li>3. Shifting rewards &amp; punishments</li> <li>4. Emphasis on new &amp; better paths for need satisfaction</li> </ol>
Ego Defense	Protecting against internal conflicts & external dangers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Posing of threats</li> <li>2. Appeals to hatred &amp; repressed impulses.</li> <li>3. Rise in frustrations.</li> <li>4. Use of authoritarian suggestion.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Removal of threats</li> <li>2. Catharsis</li> <li>3. Development of self-insight</li> </ol>
Value Expression	Maintaining self identity; enhancing favorable self-image; self-expression and self-determination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Salience of cues associated with values.</li> <li>2. Appeals to individual to reassert self-image.</li> <li>3. Ambiguities which threaten self-concept.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Some degree of dissatisfaction with self.</li> <li>2. Greater appropriateness of new attitude for the self</li> <li>3. Control of all environmental supports to undermine old values</li> </ol>
Knowledge	Need for understanding, for meaningful cognitive organization, for consistency and clarity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reinstatement of cues associated with old problem, or of old problem itself</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ambiguity created by new information or change in environment.</li> <li>2. More meaningful information about problems</li> </ol>

Figure 2

The Basic Functions of Attitudes

(from Kantz, "The Functional Approach", p. 192)

There are three factors that affect the opinions of an individual. The first of these is intellectual ability. This includes learning ability (learning more and remembering more), critical ability (recognizing prejudice in your own thinking which makes it harder to resist a sound interpretation), and the ability to draw inferences (arriving at an interpretation that was not part of the original communication). Another factor is the individual's initial position. This position determines the degree of acceptance, though there is always more acceptance in the direction of the communication, and the kind of communication that will be most successful, whether one-sided or two-sided. The third factor is the relationship between change and time elapsed after the communication. It seems as though recall of specific material tends to become general after a time lapse.<sup>1</sup> Numerical pressure on opinion, conformity, has caused a concealing of opinion rather than individuality in making decisions.<sup>2</sup>

To understand formation is also to understand change. The person who knows how attitudes and opinions are formed has the basic knowledge to realize how they may be changed.

Attitudes are difficult to change for two reasons. First,

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Hovland, Arthur Lumsdaine, and Fred Sheffield, Experiments on Mass Communications (New York, 1949), p.265-275

<sup>2</sup>William Sargent, Battle For The Mind (London, 1957), p. 33

Since attitudes arise at an early age and since the earlier impressions are the most fixed (Law of Primacy) they become personality traits. Secondly, each item of an attitude is correlated with many other items and therefore cannot be changed in a piecemeal fashion.

However, attitudes exist in varying depths and hence in the degree of modifiability ease. The most shallow depth is the statement of an opinion only once, on a single occasion. This can be changed rather easily. The next level is the repeated statement of an opinion. As we have seen, repetition imbeds the idea more strongly; therefore, this level becomes slightly more difficult to change. Also,

Opinions which people make known to others are harder to change than opinions which people hold privately.<sup>1</sup>

The reason for this is a human foible that binds a person once a statement is made to defend his position against opposition to his line of thought.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the more times he is heard making this statement, the more he will be determined not to back down. The third level is the correlation of separate attitudes on the same issue. More difficulty will be encountered in effecting a change at this level because ideas are interwoven to

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert Abelson, Persuasion (New York, 1959), p. 31

<sup>2</sup>Lassey, Op. Cit.

support each other. Level four is the most difficult to change. Here attitudes are inter-correlated to form a higher concept which is termed a Primary Social Attitude. This is the region of the basic personality and is extremely resistant to change.<sup>1</sup>

When changing attitudes, audience reactions to the communicator are important. Often what an audience thinks of the message may be directly influenced by what they think of the person trying to persuade them. The effectiveness of persuasive communication is increased when some of the views held by the audience are expressed by the communicator. The motives that the audience attributes to him will affect his success at influencing it. This is known as credibility. Reactions to him are dependent on the cues that he gives the audience as to his credibility and intent. If a communicator has high credibility there will be more change in the desired direction than if his credibility is low. The time that this is most effective is probably immediately after exposure to the message rather than later on. Reactions to the communicator will also depend upon how expert and trustworthy the audience considers him to be. Small wonder then that the master manipulators display traits of empathy and emotional subtlety.

The communicator who would attempt to control thought must of necessity have knowledge of his audience and how

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, Op. Cit., p. 55

they react. We are all governed, to a degree, by our unconscious and by the conflict between our reason and our emotions.

To the extent that we are the victims of unchecked unconscious drives, to that extent we may be vulnerable to manipulation.<sup>1</sup>

In a world that assails the individual with confusing stimuli, it is necessary to have knowledge. People who have an understanding of themselves and are willing to accept danger and challenge prove more able to stand up against an attack on the mind.

In order to tame people into the desired pattern, victims must be brought to a point where they have lost their consciousness and mental awareness. Freedom of discussion and free intellectual exchange hinder conditioning. Feelings of terror, feelings of fear and hopelessness, of being alone, of standing with one's back to the wall, must be instilled.<sup>2</sup>

The pressures of daily life today are impelling more and more people to seek some sort of easy escape from responsibility and maturity. It is very difficult to stand up against these pressures.

The discussion so far has concerned the individual. Hitler wrote that propaganda "must perennially address the masses alone".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Meerlo, Rape of the Mind, p. 73

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 49

<sup>3</sup>Marx, Op. Cit., p. 16

Therefore, the group and the crowd are also matters to be considered when changing attitudes. The major difference between the two is that groups are considered more realistic in their ideas than crowds. Crowd behavior is short lived and usually the individuals do not interact as persons since they are unknown to each other. Apart from the division between the leader and the people being led, the crowd is unorganized and unstructured. The effects of the crowd on the individual are of temporary nature but in the direction of primitive and often destructive behavior. However, groups are characteristically exactly opposite. Group influence is prolonged and often permanent. They have a definite structure and the individual members are usually known to each other. The group is more inclined to be led in the direction of creative and rational action. What this means, then, is that the crowd draws out primitive attitudes while the group creates new attitudes that are more realistic.<sup>1</sup>

If an audience participates it will help to overcome resistance to the communication message. This occurs because participation helps draw the audience together to interact as persons. The more that an individual can feel he is part of the group, the more he is open to mass suggestion. The common longings and desires of the crowd increase the individual

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, Op. Cit., p. 68

suggestability of the members thus making the crowd rather easy to influence. As he feels more a part of the group the individual tends to identify with the rest of that group as well as the leader. This reaction eases the leader's job of holding the people in his grip. Hitler in Mein Kampf said that the leader can count on increasing submissiveness from the masses or crowds.<sup>1</sup> It can readily be seen that a communicator desiring to control the minds of men has a potent weapon in his hands if he understands and effectively utilizes crowd tendencies coupled with the weaknesses of the individual.

Suggestion, as was mentioned before, is a major force in change and one of the propagandist's main weapons. By means of suggestion people can be completely changed.<sup>2</sup> Given enough time and utilizing subtle suggestive penetration resistance can be broken.

Through systemized suggestion, subtle propaganda, and more overt mass hypnosis, the human mind in its expression is changed daily in any society.<sup>3</sup>

Disturbances cause impaired judgement and heightened suggestability. These disturbances can be deliberately induced or

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<sup>1</sup>Meerlo, Op. Cit., p. 144

<sup>2</sup>Leonard Doob, Propaganda: Its Psychology and Technique (New York, 1935) p. 66

<sup>3</sup>Meerlo, Op. Cit., p. 73

can be implanted into people's minds.

Various types of belief can be implanted in many people, after the brain function has been sufficiently disturbed by accident or deliberately induced fear, anger or excitement.<sup>1</sup>

An application of this principle is the utilization of a quiet period between acute tensions. Terror is built up, then at a breathing spell, the psychological action causes the defenses that were built up against the fear to drop. At that time propaganda becomes double effective; e.g. the period of the Munich appeasement made good use of this technique of fractionalized fear to condition minds for its acceptance.<sup>2</sup>

Anxiety is aroused within an individual to bring about the desired mental collapse that is necessary before ideas can be implanted into the subject's brain. The individual is made to sense a real or imagined guilt and a conflict of loyalties. When these are strong and prolonged enough it brings on the collapse of the mind.

Suggestion can be achieved by the manipulation and control of the stimulus-situations.

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<sup>1</sup>Sargant, Battle for the Mind, p. 128

<sup>2</sup>Meerlo, Op. Cit., p. 168

Suggestion results from the manipulation of stimulus-situations in such a way that, through the consequent arousal of pre-existing, related attitudes there occurs within the mental field a new integration which would not have occurred under different stimulus-situations.<sup>1</sup>

Two other patterns of suggestion are hypnotism and negative suggestion. Hypnotism is a conditioned response. That is, the person under the influence of a hypnotist is carrying out actions suggested by others. This conditioning finds application in our everyday life where we almost automatically carry out the actions suggested by others in response to a stimulus such as a word or tone of voice. On the other hand, negative suggestion is the opposite response. In this, there is every attempt to thwart the suggestions of the detested source.

It is important to remember three things about suggestion.

- (1) The most potent influence is the gradual alteration in the social climate arising from unconscious adjustments to technical change.
- (2) Suggestion is frequently the release of an already existing pattern within the individual rather than the creation of something new.
- (3) The inducing of an emotional stimulation is very important to suggestability.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sargant, Op. Cit., p. 54

<sup>2</sup>Brown, Op. Cit., p. 75-77

The intent to secure the receiver's belief or an attempt to gain acceptance is known as Persuasion. A persuasive purpose underlies statements of fact, a dimension underlying all observations. Speech always has a persuasive dimension. Factual statements direct attention, structure perception and are suggestive of a specific way to view reality.<sup>1</sup> In the case of persuasive communications the effects tend to wear off in time.

There are some specific techniques used in the changing of attitudes:

The use of stereotypes. Defined as the fixed impressions of people, they are impervious to real experience.

The substitution of names in order to mold the context to mean what the manipulator wants it to; e.g. Capitalists for United States.

The selection of fact which is good for the point of view being stressed while throwing out the rest.

Outright lying.

The Big Lie and the phoney slogan at first confuse and then dull the hearers, making them willing to accept every suggested myth of happiness.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>David Berlo, The Process of Communication, (New York, 1960), p. 234

<sup>2</sup>Meerlo, Op. Cit., p. 136

The Big Lie and monotonously repeated nonsense have more emotional appeal in a cold war than logic and reason. While the enemy is still searching out a reasonable counter-argument to the first lie, the totalitarians can assault him with another.<sup>1</sup>

By repeating a statement enough times the audience will eventually begin to believe it to be true. Pavlov's Device stated that is assumptions and suggestions are repeated mechanically, this will reduce opportunity for the communication of any dissent and opposition. Pavlov considered this to be the simple formula for conditioning of the masses.<sup>2</sup> The hammering of propaganda can lead to apathy and indifference, a popular reaction which can become fatal. The use of repetition prolongs the influence of the communication.

Never argue but make bold assertions. If a communicator asks for an extreme opinion change then he is likely to get more actual change.<sup>3</sup>

Pinpoint the enemy, be he real or imagined, that is frustrating the will of the audience. Something is handy then, for use as a scapegoat to push problems onto; e.g. the manner in which the Germans used the Jews. This exploitation of resentment,

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<sup>1</sup>Meerlo, Op. Cit., p. 101

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 47

<sup>3</sup>Abelson, Op. Cit., p. 84

hatred, racialism, and political fury, by playing on feelings of deprivation and dissatisfaction, brings people under the propaganda spell.

A myth is an attitude or belief of general nature that can find acceptance with most members of a particular audience.<sup>1</sup> It is more than likely incapable of proof or disproof. A myth is a way of explaining the world and its problems. Myths are descriptive of a large portion of our beliefs and provide reasons for many actions. To reach the widest audience, a propagandist will concentrate on myths with universal appeal. If the audience is more narrow then a specific approach is necessary.

Appeal to an authority figure can be made. We all have an early conditioning to submit to the parent or parent-substitute. This early conditioning makes us particularly prone to submit or even copy the later example.<sup>2</sup>

Human beings are naturally susceptible to inconsistency. To take advantage of any inconsistency aroused, an influence must be exercised over the listener's decisions. This influence is gained through source credibility which usually must be earned by the persuader. Inconsistency is easy to create. An assertion

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<sup>1</sup>William Hummel and Keith Huntress, The Analysis of Propaganda, (New York, 1949), p. 18

<sup>2</sup>Brown, Op. Cit., p. 24

is made that something which the listener believes to be true is not. After the inconsistency is produced, the persuader, utilizing his influence, channels or directs the alleviation of that inconsistency so that the desired change occurs. Goebbels was not alone in his belief that it was the

...highest manipulative skill to detect rumbles of disaffection before they broke cover, even within individual consciousness, and to provide outlets in harmony with managerial goals.<sup>1</sup>

The communicator arrives at a position to channel the results by one of three methods. First, is the forced acceptance of the communicator as a credible source under threat of punishment by society. Second, the voluntary willingness by the audience to attribute source credibility or third, by research, find one of the target's beliefs which will make the one you are trying to change seem inconsistent. Then work from that inconsistency.

One of the tools of mental coercion is fear. Our social behavior is greatly influenced by the hidden and silent fears. The need to identify with a strong leader is fortified by fear. Manipulation can be achieved by playing on the present fears or by creating new ones,--If a leader will gain acceptance, if he can show that he has the solution to the fears of the audience, or that he is stronger than those fears. Such was Hitler's manner of operation.

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<sup>1</sup>Harold Lasswell, "Communications and the Mind", Control of the Mind, (New York, 1961) p. 249

Art, including motion pictures, has an influence that will allow everyone to be taken in for the purpose of the propagandist. Art is form and as such it gains attention. It is impressive and suggestive. It can organize prejudices. In order to be an influential propagandist, one must also be a good artist, otherwise the work can end up ignored because it did not meet present standards of taste or form.<sup>1</sup>

When involved in trying to change attitudes, suggestions will probably fall on fertile ground as long as care is taken to deliver the message with an eye to the existing attitudes and the intellectual level of the audience. It is effort wasted if propaganda does not reach the audience. Persuasive attempts must be made in such terms that people will listen, read, or watch. It has failed if the people turn away.<sup>2</sup> Since an attitude can be defined as a predisposition to respond, changes in attitude can be measured by measuring changes in action. This is the easiest to measure. Emotion, also a measure of reaction, is easy to perceive and use.<sup>3</sup> However, even with all of this data there are certain limits to changing attitudes. The fundamental limit

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Lumley, The Propaganda Menace (New York, 1933), p. 111

<sup>2</sup>Hummel, Op. Cit., p. 57

<sup>3</sup>Lasse, Notes

is the early development of that rigid system of beliefs and attitudes termed a Value Screen.<sup>1</sup> Another limit is that character traits arising in early years are extremely resistant to change and are virtually impervious to propaganda.<sup>2</sup>

Mental backbone and moral courage go deeper than the intellect. Fortitude is not a physical or intellectual quality; it is something we get from the cradle, from the consistency of our parent's behavior, and from their belief and Faith.<sup>3</sup>

So by practicing the theoretical principles outlined in this chapter and within the limits stated or as much as one can bend the limits, attitudes can be changed.

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<sup>1</sup>Iassey, Op. Cit.

<sup>2</sup>Brown, Op. Cit., p. 55

<sup>3</sup>Meerlo, Op. Cit., p. 281

## Chapter 3

### FILM CHARACTERISTICS

Motion pictures assist the individual in structuring his world. It is a psychological as well as aesthetic principle that all of us must structure our world.<sup>1</sup> Without this principle it is impossible to understand the nature and results of film's impact on culture. The principle expresses the organic relationship between cinema and life. Movies offer an opportunity to express the inherent basic meanings in man's relationship to himself, his environment and to society. There is no limitation to a passive reflection of those meanings for they may be interpreted both dynamically and creatively.

The cinema, a creative medium, is no different than any other art in that the creator manipulates his medium to say what he wants to say and thereby expresses himself to the world.

As one film-maker put it:

I don't think anything is true, because when you decide to make a film, the fact that you choose a certain subject is an aesthetic decision, and whom you point the camera at, when you turn it off, everything. Even before you reach the point of cutting. So it's still art, it's still control, manipulation.<sup>2</sup>

This manipulation has its effect on the attitudes of the audience.

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<sup>1</sup>Franklin Fearing, "Influence of the Movies on Attitudes and Behavior", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, November 1947, p. 79

<sup>2</sup>Ernest Callenbach and Albert Johnson, "The Danger is Seduction: An Interview with Haskell Wexler", Film Quarterly, Spring 1968, p. 14

There has been research done and the evidence from that research has shown that regardless of a film's character, be it documentary, musical, western, or realistic, it still has some measurable effects on specific attitudes of those people exposed to it.<sup>1</sup> However, the effect on the audience may not be the one intended by the film-maker. This is getting into the matter of intent which involves the whole propaganda field.

There are several factors that can be used in motion pictures to create or change meaning. These are called the plastic media of film because they can be molded to make a desired statement.

Lighting of the scene can be used to (1) reveal mood, (2) reveal setting or locality, (3) reveal subtleties of characterizations, (4) direct attention, and (5) be an abstract symbol.

An unusual camera angle can be used for propaganda purposes. It is startling to see something in an unusual way that is yet true to nature. This concept holds the possibility of turning shots into contrived-reality pictures.<sup>2</sup> The shot can transform a realistic character into a symbol with a propaganda message yet still remain realistic. For instance, suppose a small man in stature is to be portrayed as a strong leader. The camera angle in this case will be low, shooting up, to give the impression of

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<sup>1</sup>Fearing, Op. Cit., p. 78

<sup>2</sup>Siegfried Kracauer, Theory of Film, (New York, 1960) p. 56

strength. The shot still shows a real man but when viewed from that angle he will appear to be a pillar of strength because we are looking up to him. Experience and research has shown that the pictorial meaning is retained longer. That is pictures speak louder than words. Film propaganda, then, is very effective in the guise of a documentary because it is supposed to be true. The spectator viewing such a film is convinced that he is in the presence of irrefutable truth because people tend to believe that pictures taken on the spot cannot lie.<sup>1</sup> Pictorial meaning is inferred rather than being directly stated as in the verbal commentary.

Commentary (Narration) in the film sequence can pick out and emphasize the important points or counterpoint them.

Music can also change the meanings in a film. This can be accomplished by using different types of music and rhythms to either reinforce or counterpoint the desired effect within the film.

In editing, cutting the film and putting all the parts together, the combinations are endless. During this process the manipulator can truly mold the film to say what he wants it to.

Film is a handy medium to practice the technique of repetition. It has the ability to be shown time after time to

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<sup>1</sup>Kracauer, Op. Cit., p. 161

insure good exposure to the ideas contained in the film. Within the film itself, the constant repetition of subtle associations may have a telling effect. This is true even in the commercial motion picture.<sup>1</sup>

Film lends itself rather well to the technique of building terror then dropping off to a quiet period. During the quiet period defenses built up against fear are down and a propaganda point made at that time is extremely effective.

Since film images lower the spectator's critical faculties, it is always possible to select and arrange them in such a way that they adjust his senses to the idea advertised. They need not refer directly to it; on the contrary, the more they proceed by indirection--showing events and situations seemingly unconnected with the message they impart--the greater the chance that they reach unconscious fixations and bodily tendencies which might have a bearing, however distant, on the championed cause.<sup>2</sup>

Opinionated films can have an effect on people of higher intellectual ability.<sup>3</sup> The better educated people are more favorably influenced by presenting both sides of an argument while the less well educated are more influenced by a presentation using supporting arguments for one side only. Also, it seems that with films arousing emotions there is distorted recollection.

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<sup>1</sup>Doob, Propaganda, p. 373

<sup>2</sup>Kracauer, Op. Cit., p. 160

<sup>3</sup>Hovland, Experiments on Mass Communications, p. 162

During recall there is an overemphasis on information toward which the audience is favorable. But, there is forgetting or ignoring of information that arouses their dislike or hostility.<sup>1</sup> Changes in opinion of a general rather than a specific nature may show increasing effects with lapse of time.<sup>2</sup> The influence of pictures, though long-range and extensive rather than immediate and particular, does help to shape our values and social beliefs and partially our behavior.<sup>3</sup>

The phenomenon of sedimentation is very important. It is the slow and almost imperceptible process by which the motion picture shapes attitudes. The moral sense silts over unless you have a well made value screen through home training and religious conviction.<sup>4</sup>

Film can either lull the mind or induce a condition of hysteria. The major evil, its regular use, has the habit-making power to satisfy imagination out of a can.<sup>5</sup> With a lulling of the mind film can reduce false values to a constant and consistent

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<sup>1</sup>M. D. Vernon, The Psychology of Perception (Baltimore, Maryland, 1962), p. 105

<sup>2</sup>Hovland, Op. Cit., p. 275

<sup>3</sup>Hummel, Op. Cit., p. 11

<sup>4</sup>Frank Gettlin and Harold Gardiner, Movies, Morals and Art (New York, 1961), p. 161

<sup>5</sup>Charles Morgan, Liberties of the Mind (New York, 1951), p. 50

overemphasis on the particular suggestion that the world can be made beautiful and that once this is done life has been lived. It is a comfortable, consoling and thought numbing idea.<sup>1</sup> In this manner film becomes the opium of the masses, sniffed until discontent is lulled into oblivion.

The business of the writer or the film-maker is to transfer the reader or viewer from one world, his own, to another, the world created by typography and film. That is so obvious, and happens so completely, that those undergoing the experience accept it subliminally and without critical awareness.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 3, page 34, illustrates the points discussed on how motion pictures affect attitudes.

The Russian propaganda films of the 1920's in conveying the upheaval of the masses depend doubly on cinematic treatment for perception of the vast emotional and spatial conflict.<sup>3</sup>

In 1934 the Movie Industry of the United States mobilized against Upton Sinclair to defeat him in an election for Governor of California. They ran "newsreel" footage depicting the feelings of the people against him. These "real people" were

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<sup>1</sup>Gettlin, Op. Cit., p. 163

<sup>2</sup>Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (New York, 1964), p. 285

<sup>3</sup>Kracauer, Op. Cit., p. 58

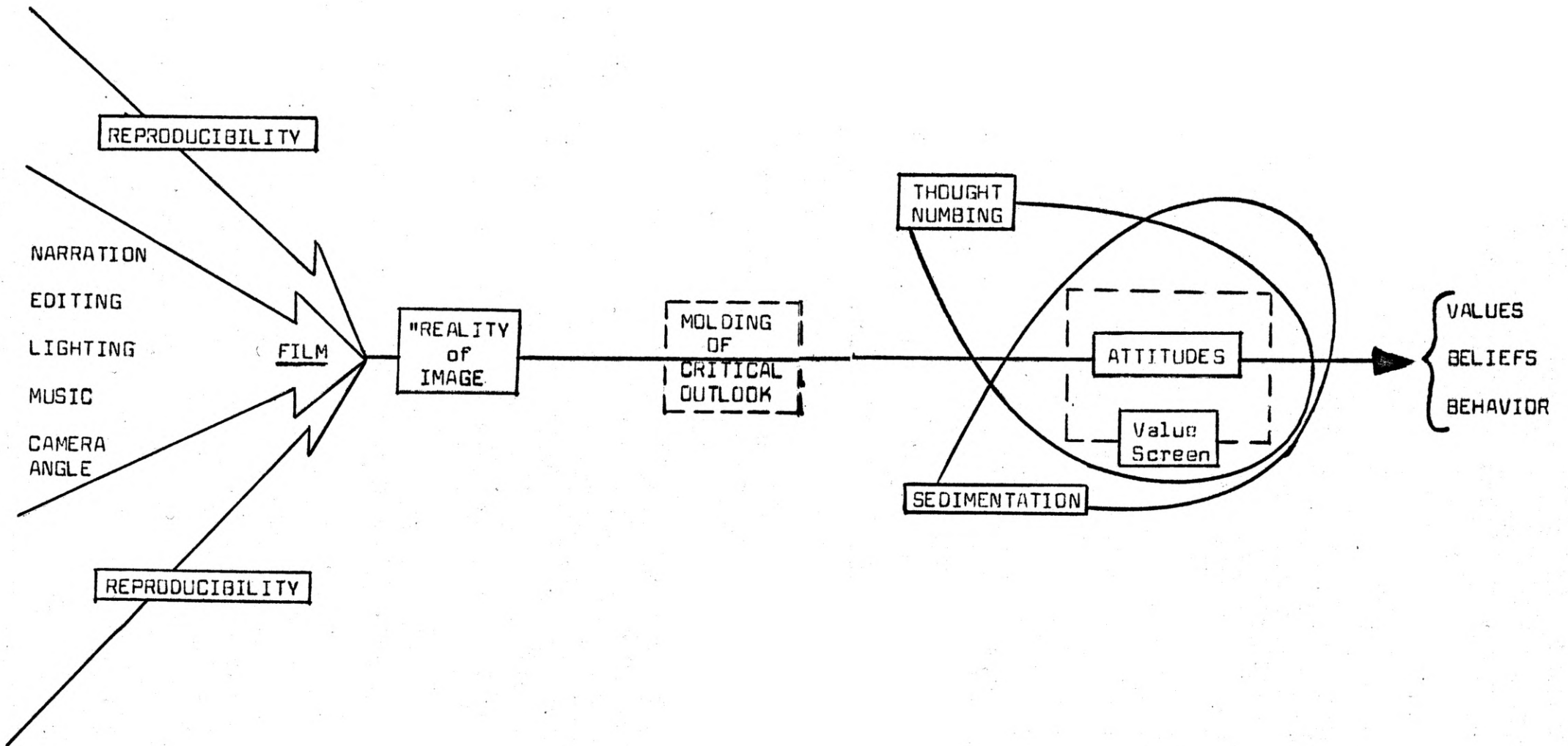


Figure 3  
Effects of Motion Pictures  
on Attitudes

actually actors. About this incident he said that:

Hitherto the movies have maintained that they could not do any kind of "educational" work; their audiences demanded entertainment, and they could have nothing to do with "propaganda". But now, you see, that pretense has been cast aside. They have made propaganda, and they have won a great victory with it, and are tremendously swelled up about it. You may be sure that never again will there be an election in California in which the great "Louie Bee" (Louis B. Mayer - then head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios) will not make his power felt.<sup>1</sup>

Propaganda, according to definition, is a deliberate attempt to control the attitudes people hold. Whether or not a work is termed propaganda depends on the intentions of the creator (deliberate attempt) and the intellectual commitment of the people (do they believe it?) to whom it is directed. Effective propaganda, as we know, supplements reasoning power with insinuations and incentives that influence emotions rather than reason. Films can do this.

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<sup>1</sup> Upton Sinclair, "The Movies and Political Propaganda" in Film and Society, Richard D. MacCann (ed), (New York, 1964), p. 84

## Chapter 4

### FILM AND PROPAGANDA - AMERICAN

Motion pictures, as part of mass media can work to form opinions and attitudes about something of which people have no preconceived notions. This is the basis of propaganda. Mass media is concerned with bringing about that ideal of state of mind in the public known as high morale. Morale is the unity of purpose that a nation seeks to instill in its people. It is improved by thoroughly informing the public so that there is sympathy and understanding for the objectives as well as the methods of a war. The propaganda film tries to canalize the inner emotions of the audience toward a state of high morale.

We simply know...that movies do have an effect upon the formation of children's attitudes with respect to certain social questions. We have a limited scientific measurement of the propaganda power of the movies, the first that has probably been made of any type of art. Science here confirms what is an ancient and generally accepted opinion among men of experience that works of art, particularly literature and the stage are potent media of propaganda. Whether for good or ill is a question that can be answered only in the particular case in terms of the merits of each side of the issue toward which the propaganda is being directed...<sup>1</sup>

So, if an American views a film, like the Why We Fight series, propaganda is all right. But, if the same person were to watch Triumph of the Will, a Nazi propaganda film, that would disturb

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<sup>1</sup>Mortimer Adler, "Research the Immature" in Film and Society, Richard D. MacCann (ed), (New York, 1964)  
p. 86

him. And yet, both films are for essentially the same purpose-- raising public morale. So it becomes a matter of viewpoint when we discuss propaganda films.

Satisfied with entertainment films, it was not until the crisis of 1936-1937 that there was any concern in the United States about the potential of the screen for propaganda. The March of Time was a monthly film journal produced during this period by Louis de Rochemont. Following the editorial policies of Time, Life, and Fortune magazines it combined newsreel footage with recreated events. The emphasis was divided between the inherent drama of an event and a dramatic technique of presentation.

The March of Time had aesthetic shortcomings but its distinctive style punched home information with maximum intensity and interest. The editing was functional and closely tied to the narration. Points of view were spoken by authorities and personalities straight to the camera giving the series a personal approach. Dramatic reenactments became an important part of its technique. From this brief recapitulation of techniques used in producing The March of Time we can see many points mentioned previously as identifying a work of propaganda.

Time and motion offer an opportunity for presenting men in action. From this theorem stems the idea of the reality film in contrast to the story film. When it was discovered that the conflict of human will could be revealed, the presentation of

social crisis and its outcome could become as much a valid function of the reality film as the idea of climax and resolution in the story film. The idea re-creating events was put to use by the producers of The March of Time in order to reveal social crisis.

This technique (re-enactment) established, for the first time in factual film, an interpretation of reality which extended beyond the making of visual records and the selection and arrangement of those elements within an event best suited to a dramatic narrative. For the first time in a visual medium a journalistic record of an event admitted the validity of a reconstruction of reality.<sup>1</sup>

The issues portrayed by the series were real issues of the day and, of course, had not reached a resolution when they were presented to the public. The controversial issues treated were not given resolutions but rather possible outcomes. The inconsistency was not easily accepted. An unresolved crisis is not compatible with journalism. The implicit argument was that the picture was like a word—a symbolic reality. The film was not a display of facts but rather within the conscience of the reporter it was a faithful reflection of the facts.

The question of impartial reporting of the news rested, then, upon whether what was purported to be reality had a basis in fact and was the result of a sincere attempt to present it in a compelling fashion.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. William Bluem, Documentary in American Television (New York, 1965) p. 36

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 38

Re-enactments are interpretations of an event. Interpretations involve making value judgements, whether consciously or unconsciously, about what is seen. By skillfully manipulating his value judgements, the film-maker can give an event different meaning. This is exactly what the producers of The March of Time did. They used what passed for news reporting to build their own images.

We cannot assess the impact of The March of Time on American public opinion during the later thirties but it proved how effectively "objective" reportage can be tailored to falsify what has been seen by the camera-eye.<sup>1</sup>

Before the Second World War the government co-operated with, but did not commission, Hollywood films depicting the glamour of military life. After the declaration of war, Hollywood's stock villains became stereotyped Germans and Japanese. The brutality of these nations was exposed, denounced and exploited. During the war Hollywood films rarely sought to glorify the war or make it an adventure. The traits brought out by these films were that the GI was just an average American who disliked killing and regimentation and had the ability to do deeds of heroism when his country needed him. They also played up the melting pot aspect of American culture. During this period, the War Department was willing to co-operate in full with the

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<sup>1</sup>John Lawson, Film: The Creative Process (New York, 1964), p. 128

production of films that could be used as recruiting posters or as publicity for the services. For this co-operation, the Hollywood directors showed a persuasive image of war that trod a thin line between glorifying the conflict and merely giving assent to it. The directors source material for American troops in action was the combat newsreels and the documentaries made in the War Zones. Hollywood was then forced to match this realism in the studio-made versions of the war. These versions were apparently toned down and sugared up for the public. James Agee commented on this in 1943 when he said that civilians had little chance to learn from the cinema because they were not presumed brave enough to get the facts. He goes on by saying that after watching Hollywood films for the previous decade, civilians were used to accepting this deprivation and insult in a docile manner to the point of even resenting people who tried to treat them as intelligent human beings.<sup>1</sup>

During World War Two, Hollywood directors left the studios to enter the service and work with the Army Signal Corps or comparable agencies of the Navy and Air Force. Long used to turning out story films, these men had to retrain for documentary type filming. The list of these directors included such well-known

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<sup>1</sup>James Agee, "So Proudly We Fail" in The Nation October 30, 1943, p. 509

men as Frank Capra (Why We Fight Series, 1943-1945), John Ford (Battle of Midway, 1944), John Huston (Battle of San Pietro, 1944), and William Wyler, (Memphis Belle, 1944). The films produced by these men for the various services never pictured the war as glamorous or heroic but rather as a necessity for the preservation of democracy. They used powerful images coupled with thoughtful commentary to make the facts dramatic and significant. The democratic ideals that were implicit in these films belonged in the spirit of the men who made them.

The Why We Fight Series, directed by Frank Capra, was a block of orientation films designed to explain to the American soldier the causes of World War Two and the progress of the war up to America's entry. The series drew material from newsreels and combat footage that had been shot at random on the front lines. Why We Fight illustrates the power of the film medium. The ideas expressed were saturated with emotion and devices were developed to solve the problem of dramatizing factual material. Capra made use of images (sound, music, and narration) in counterpoint to take on new meanings which were molded to the idea of the film. Editing was a definitive factor in the conception and execution of Why We Fight. Capra showed that in a compilation type film, the film sequence has no meaning until

a point is created and then the filmed clips are fitted into proper sequence within the larger concept.<sup>1</sup> Capra revealed how this type of film, the compilation film, could be used as a weapon.

The "Why We Fight" films had marked effects on the men's knowledge of factual material concerning the events leading up to the war (World War Two). The fact that the upper limit of effects was so large - as for example in the cases where the correct answer was learned well enough to be remembered a week later by the majority of the men - indicates that highly effective presentation methods are possible with this type of film.<sup>2</sup>

But, these films were made expressly for the service man. James Agee commented on this saying that the effect was to widen the already existing gap between an informed soldier and the uninformed civilian who never saw these films though he too needed to learn from them.<sup>3</sup>

Americans, as much as anyone, were manipulated by means of film. Emotions were played on. The film industry, by utilizing their media, justified and supported the elementary rightness of the war even though it was not glorified. This was a deliberate attempt to get the people of the United States to back the war

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<sup>1</sup>Bluem, Op. Cit., p. 59

<sup>2</sup>Hovland, Op. Cit., p. 64

<sup>3</sup>Agee, Op. Cit., p. 509

effort and to raise patriotic fervor. But, the public was handed a sugared image in contrast to the one given the fighting man. The need for an educated public is terribly clear if we are to survive as a nation.

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## Chapter 5

### FILM AND PROPAGANDA - NAZI GERMANY

Nazi Germany was chosen as an example of a totalitarian government and its control and use of motion pictures.

It is desirable to have a basic understanding of some of the views held by the Nazis and to realize that these affected the propaganda film. The desire to re-establish Germany as a colonial power in order to prove by possession that she had arrived again as a world power was a large motivating force in Nazi propaganda. The desire for revenge for the harshness of the Versailles Treaty, which followed their defeat in World War One, burned hot in Germany's heart. The treaty became a major propaganda point in the following years.

Totalitarian rulers have complete control of the communication media. They outlaw individual or critical opinion and establish themselves as the only source of knowledge. The elimination of any outside sources of information and opinion completes the closure.

Given these conditions, the dictators have only to marshall such psychological devices and emotional appeals as are needed to produce mass responses of desired characteristics and intensity.<sup>1</sup>

Being a totalitarian government, all the communication media

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Wanger, "Movies with a Message", The Saturday Review of Literature, March 7, 1942, p. 12

in Germany were controlled and directed with one end in view-- converting people to the Nationalist Socialist Creed. Also, the media were to prevent any relapses into more liberal ways of thought. With all of the communications media at their disposal, the Nazi Party was virtually unopposed. They could say anything they desired and never have it challenged. With the exception that it was not possible to make a statement to an audience that that audience knew to be untrue.<sup>1</sup> This did not prevent making the untrue statement to an audience that was unaware of the facts.

The real and lasting appeal was to the half hidden frustrations and discontent of the German people rather than to materialist considerations of rational self-interest.<sup>2</sup> This was probably stemming from the harsh treatment Germany received with the Treaty of Versailles. They took away her national pride and her lands leaving her frustrated and embittered. Using the principle of appealing directly to the emotions and not to reason the Nazis could play on these frustrations. It was previously mentioned that to change attitudes a knowledge of the target's existing emotions is necessary and that there must be a concrete and identified enemy. They used these points to good effect.

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<sup>1</sup>Lindly, Fraser, Propaganda (London, 1957), p. 75

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58

It is still considered a mystery how Hitler persuaded many intelligent people in Germany to regard him as little short of a god. Yet Hitler never concealed his method, which included deliberately producing such phenomena by organized excitement and mass hypnotism, and even boasted how easy it was to impose "the lie of genius" on his victims.<sup>1</sup>

The specific emotions that Hitler appealed to were:

- (1) National self-respect.
- (2) Personal self-assurance.
- (3) Self-pity (for the treatment of the Versailles Treaty).
- (4) Fear (Germany was surrounded by her enemies).
- (5) Appeal to arrogance (Germany was the Master Race).

Hitler put to good use the tactic of assertion that was mentioned before as a technique of persuasion. He often said that you never argue--assert--and repeat the assertion until all doubts are stunned into agreement. By the time Hitler got done, the surrender of the people was part unconscious, part willing, and even enthusiastic.

The Nazis used the cinema to picture themselves exactly as they wanted to be seen.<sup>2</sup> They glorified Germany as a dynamic power. There were two types of film used to portray this picture -- the newsreels and the documentary film.

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<sup>1</sup> Sargent, Op. Cit., p. 142

<sup>2</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler (Princeton, 1947), p. 280

All theaters were required to show official newsreels and documentary shorts. By 1939 this took up as much as forty minutes of a theater's program.

It was through these ingeniously, insidiously clever renderings of the "realities" of the Nazi world that Goebbels sought, and held, the German mind and soul.<sup>1</sup>

The documentary films were the crowning achievement of the Nazi film-makers. Though they are repugnant to us as Americans, it is impossible not to admire the high technical intelligence and subtle cleverness that went into their production. Behind the pictorial realism of the films was a corps of technicians who had been trained to distort and transform reality into the official version of what was truth. Subject matter for the documentaries delved into all aspects of Nazi life, the top echelon party meetings, the Olympic Games, the Air Force and the Army. The Nazi film-makers were becoming so proficient at presenting their own version of reality that special editions of the films were made for export and were tailored for the individual country.<sup>2</sup> A good example of this was the film Olympia (1937). A documentary about the Olympic Games, it was prepared in different versions for the participating nations with generous footage of their winners and Nazi officials ever present as smiling sportsmanlike hosts.

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Knight, The Liveliest Art (New York, 1957), p.211-212

<sup>2</sup> Knight, Op. Cit., p. 212

Politically, the documentary films served to emphasize the dominance of the Army over the Party. In this way Hitler kept the Army satisfied. The war was described as part of a larger historical and political process. Perhaps the biggest political coup in the films was the image of Hitler. He was portrayed as a war lord or, at times a war god.

The Nazis used the propaganda film to advertise the martial virtue of the German soldier (notice the contrast with the image of the American soldier as portrayed in the American film). He was brave, technically skilled and possessed much perseverance.

The screen character of the German soldier was built using indirect methods. They pictorially criticize the alleged qualities of the enemy types. Since contrast was an established principle of the Nazi film the naive spectator quite naturally attributes the opposite qualities of character to the Germans.

The Nazis manipulated topical events to achieve their own meanings. The implications from these manipulations were that the western democracies appeared as evil powers animated by the desire to destroy Germany while suggesting a sadly wronged and innocent Germany who was only defending herself by attacking them. These manipulations give the impression that the war and Germany's

triumph were not accidental events but the fulfillment of a historic mission, metaphysically justified.<sup>1</sup>

Propaganda was used by the totalitarian German Government in an endeavor to destroy independent opinion and do away with reality based on an acknowledgement of individual values. In other words, they wanted to sterilize the mind while at the same time pressing it into their service so that there was no place and no will for intellectual heresy.<sup>2</sup>

To achieve their propagandistic intentions with motion pictures, the Nazis utilized several filmic devices. Two of these were the leitmotiv and polyphony. A leitmotiv is a marked phrase or short passage of music that is associated with or expressive of a certain idea, person, or situation, and accompanies its reappearance. It is used to organize the composition and stress propagandistic intentions within the visuals. The Nazis recognized that the illusions of the visuals reach much deeper than an assertion. So, attacks on the enemy are carried out less by verbal statements than through pictures and the synchronization of pictures and musical themes to provide a counterpoint meaning which gives the visuals more strength.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, p. 288

<sup>2</sup>Siegfried Kracauer, "Propaganda and the Nazi War Film" in Film and Society, Richard MacCann, (ed), (New York, 1964,) p.71

<sup>3</sup>Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, p. 280

Polyphony is the blending together of commentary, visuals and sound to achieve a total effect resulting from the different meanings of the different media. The structural task of this technique is to prevent escape by alienating the audience from reality. The propaganda currents rise alternately or jointly from the three media and impose a kind of psychic message that the alienation occurs. This alienation is a total involvement with the screen where the mental reality takes precedence over the physical reality. It is this mental reality that the film-maker wants the audience to believe.

The use of polyphony in a film was exploited by editing. The commentary expresses in words the ideas that cannot be commented on visually. The pictures often assume an independent life that pursues its own course rather than paralleling the narration. A formal narration can be shaped and then counterpointed with visuals. The visuals make use of the fact that pictures make a direct appeal to the subconscious and nervous systems. For instance in Triumph of the Will the use of pure forms like the mass ornaments with torchlight sparkling through cloth banners in the foreground and rows of raised arms converging on Hitler's car as it passes between them. These images, vaguely reminiscent of abstract paintings, reveal how pure forms can assume propagandistic functions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kracauer, "Propaganda and the Nazi War Film", p. 73

In rendering physical existence, film tends to reveal configurations of semi-abstract phenomena. Sometimes these textures take on an ornamental character.<sup>1</sup>

Another device that was utilized was the contrasting of physical differences. For example, close-shots showing Negroes intercut with those of Germans. Also, the Nazis used captured enemy film but it was cut in such a way as to be used against the country of origin.

Most films of fact affect the audience not so much through the organization of their material as through the material itself. If they are loosely composed and more concerned with the depiction of reality than with the arrangement of the depiction.<sup>2</sup>

Imaginative strategy based on adequate diagnosis would prescribe a corresponding depth or structural approach to the existing literary and visual world.<sup>3</sup>

The Nazis made that diagnosis and proceeded to structure their approach, not to the existing world, but, to the world as they wanted to portray it.

The Nazi films excell in solid composition. They reduced individuals to derivatives of a whole more real than all the individuals of which it consisted. Compositional tricks were used to manipulate the spectators mind. Low angle shots suggesting

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<sup>1</sup>Kracauer, Theory of Film, p. 54

<sup>2</sup>Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, p. 289

<sup>3</sup>McLuhan, Op. Cit., p. 71

an image of heroism was one of these. Another was the suggestion of a dynamic power by moving the camera along maps depicting German advances. This implied control besides revealing that they recognized no reality other than their own pattern of conquest.

The hero of the films was Nazi Germany imbued with the traits of the old mythical heroes. The Nazis, in doing this reinforced the tendency of the German people to think in anti-rational, mythical terms. The Epic Structure was used in the films to reinforce this tendency. According to the Law of Epics, the war was a her's struggle for liberation. Everything was portrayed in black and white. The characters were attributed with a mythical lust for destruction. France was an evil spirit. England was the devil incarnate and Poland his wicked helper. An example of the Epic Structure in use is the opening to Triumph of the Will. Hitler's plane is moving through towering clouds accompanied by music befitting the gods, the clouds break, and the city waits peacefully below for its god and conquerer to descend. The Nazis were not concerned with reality. They used it for propaganda by placing it in a film when and where they wanted to suit their propaganda purposes.<sup>1</sup>

They made an attempt to obtain dramatic effects by organization. The drama was needed to compensate for the lack of

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<sup>1</sup>Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, p. 292

reality in the films. This dramatization produced artificial thrills in the audience. The Nazis used the technique of intermissions or vacant spaces between the power centers of the plot. This is an application of the previously mentioned principle of lowered defenses after built up tensions. Dramatic devices were used to compensate for the missing documentation.<sup>1</sup> These devices were delay, elliptic narration, and triumph. They delayed the happy ending to build suspense. Elliptic narration is used in conjunction with the polyphonic technique; e.g. after a speech about the forthcoming action there follows a series of unrelated, unexplained visuals which tend to shock the distracted viewer--then follows the announcement of Nazi victory. Triumph is adorned and savored to the fullest extent. It is equated to the old triumphal processions.

Thus the Nazis, using a faked reality built from the real life of the people and passing it off as genuine, alienated the people from reality and treated their souls as prisoners of war.

Figure 4, page 54, illustrates how the Nazis built this faked reality by using motion pictures.

Triumph of the Will (1937), is a prominent example of the Nazi propaganda film. Goebbels and Hitler both realized that it was very important to transmit the enthusiasm of the Party members at Nuremburg to the millions of ordinary Germans who would not

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<sup>1</sup>Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, p. 294

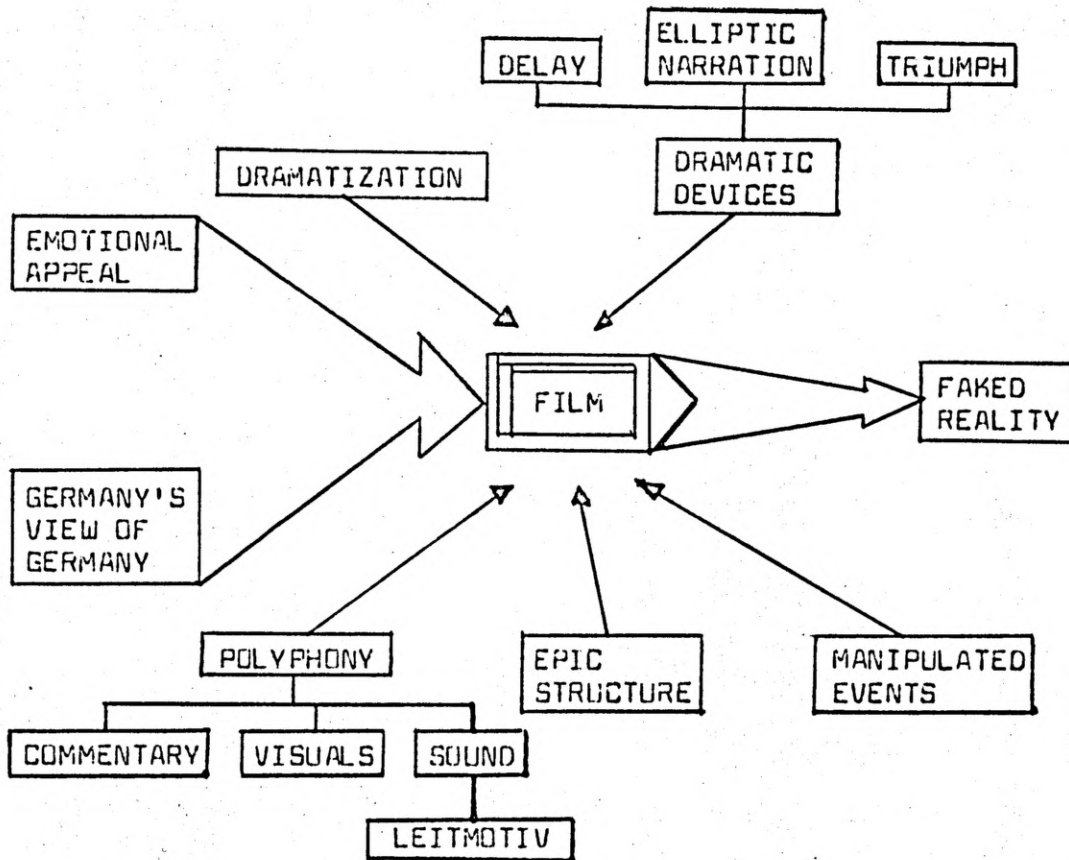


Figure 4  
Structuring The Nazi  
Reality With Film

be there. Triumph of the Will, ordered into production by Hitler, became the film record of the First Party Convention at Nuremberg and also a means of transmitting to the German people the emotional fervor of hard core Nazism.<sup>1</sup> This film was supervised by Leni Riefenstahl, an able director and brilliant editor. Even though we can look at this now with a jaundiced eye and wearisome feeling we must also realize the hysterical effect that it had on audiences in Germany, a people who wanted to believe in the god-like quality of the Fuehrer who elevated Nazism to a religion.<sup>2</sup>

Leni Riefenstahl maintains that the film is historical because it reflects the truth of that time. It was a film of an event that was a reality at a certain time and place.<sup>3</sup>

It showed what everyone was witness to or had heard about. And everyone was impressed by it. I am the one who fixed that impression, who registered it on film.<sup>4</sup>

But, I feel that she is over-looking the power, noted by Franklin Fearing, of a human-being for self-deception.<sup>5</sup> Hitler was well aware of his purposes in making this film though Leni Riefenstahl

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<sup>1</sup>Bluem, Op. Cit., p. 51

<sup>2</sup>Knight, Op. Cit., p. 212

<sup>3</sup>Andrew Sarris, (ed), Interviews With Film Directors (New York) (1967), p. 392-393

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 391

<sup>5</sup>Fearing, Op. Cit., p. 22-23

might not have been. However, the method employed is deceit regardless of the operators cognition of the fact.<sup>1</sup>

In her style Leni Riefenstahl felt that there were two very important elements -- the construction (architecture) and the rhythm. The construction was to have an exact form which dictated the overriding principle of the film. The dynamic feeling of the film came from the rhythm.

In Triumph of the Will, for example, I wanted to bring certain elements into the foreground and put others in the background..... There must be movement of successive highlight and retreat, in both the architecture of the things filmed and in that of the film.<sup>2</sup>

This is a good example of the directional manipulation of what is seen by the audience. Even without realizing it she was adhering to the principles laid down for manipulating people with motion pictures.

The Nazis used motion pictures to try to control the thoughts of people. In Germany they were in some measure a success though no research figures are available to show us just how successful. But, outside the realm of Nazi Germany the films were a miserable failure. No one bought the Big Lie.

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<sup>1</sup>Fearing, Op. Cit.,

<sup>2</sup>Sarris, Op. Cit., p. 393

## Chapter 6

### TO BE OR NOT TO BE - MANIPULATED

Within certain limitations a person is subject to having his thoughts manipulated by those persons or agencies with the knowledge and material. Specifically, with reference to the discussion here, by means of the motion picture. It is possible to change a person's attitudes. Molding people and shaping their beliefs is very common, an everyday occurrence. Every day each of us is subjected to a bombardment of propaganda designed to shape us to someones way of thinking. The mass media, especially the cinema and its more immediate counterpart, television, subtly work on us in ways and means most people are not even cognizant of. They sit through a film and are aware that they are thinking differently or maybe they do not even realize their attitudes are changing over a period of time. Probably they will not even realize it. But, yet the research points to the fact that if a person is knowledgeable about what the effects of media are and watches them with a critical awareness, he stands a far better chance against the person who would attempt to bend his mind. Thought control is practiced by the Free World as well as totalitarian governments. The difference lies in the motives between democracy and dictator. But even so, an audience needs to view motion pictures with a critical eye in order to avoid being sucked into the thought numbing condition that allows manipulation.

The answer to this problem, then is education. Education in motion pictures so that the viewing public is able to grasp the forces that are in effect against them. However, the job of education is not being done. A 1966 study by the American Council on Education of the Film Courses offered in the one-hundred largest American colleges and universities yielded some revealing figures.<sup>1</sup> There were forty-five of these institutions offering no courses what-so-ever in the field of Film History, Criticism and Appreciation. The largest number of courses was offered by the University of California at Los Angeles with eighteen. The national average was approximately three per school. General communication courses were not offered at fifty of the schools, while the University of Southern California led the field with thirteen. This makes the average approximately two for each school. The figures indicate that education in this area on a nation-wide level is critically lacking.

In a Cold War, such as we are engaged in today, the realm of men's minds is as much a battle ground as a limited war in Southeast Asia. However, people, unaware of the forces that come into play, are too willing to sit back and let someone else pull the strings. They are content to absorb the ideas presented to them on the screen and never question them.

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<sup>1</sup> David Stewart, Film Study in Higher Education (Washington D.C., 1966), p. 164-165

What should be done and what the body of this research calls for is a more critical awareness based on education in the motion picture field. The people who are responsible for the education of our nation must take appropriate action in the revising of curricula to include courses that will inform the student on the subject of thought control. Tomorrow is really too late.

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