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# Philosophical Analysis of The Social Profile of The Manipulative Personality

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**Abstract:** The article examines the phenomenon of the manipulative personality within the framework of a philosophical analysis of social reality. It investigates the essential characteristics of manipulation, as well as its ontological, ethical, and socio-psychological foundations. Special attention is paid to the transformation of interpersonal relations in contemporary society, where manipulation becomes one of the instruments of social interaction.

**Keywords:** Manipulation, Personality, Social Philosophy, Power, Communication, Ethics, Subjectivity

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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary society is characterized by a high degree of communicative saturation, in which interaction between people increasingly assumes covert forms of influence. One such form is manipulation — a method of influence aimed at altering another subject's behavior and consciousness without their conscious consent[1].

The manipulative personality represents a distinct social type, formed at the intersection of cultural, psychological, and philosophical factors. An analysis of this phenomenon requires an interdisciplinary approach; however, philosophy allows for the identification of its deep-seated foundations[2].

Manipulation in a broad sense can be defined as a covert influence on an individual's consciousness and behavior, carried out with the aim of benefiting the manipulator[3].

From a philosophical perspective, manipulation is linked to the problem of freedom and determinism. It calls into question the autonomy of the subject, transforming them from an end into a means. This contradicts the classic ethical principle according to which a person must be regarded as an end in themselves[4].

Manipulation is also connected to the phenomenon of power. Unlike overt power, it is latent in nature, acting through language, symbols, and social norms[5].

## 2. Materials and Methods

The idea of the existence of a manipulative personality type was first formulated by T. Adorno, a leading representative of the Frankfurt School, philosopher, and sociologist. The manipulator represents a dangerous personality potential, harboring extreme stereotypes and rigid concepts[6]. Because of these, the external world is excessively schematized, divided into "empty administrative spaces," towards which this personality

feels almost no emotions. The rupture between the inner and outer worlds does not lead to introversion but, on the contrary, to a forced hyperrealism. As a result, everything and everyone is regarded as objects that can be manipulated and adapted to one's theoretical and practical schemes[7].

Adorno suggested that one of the destructive factors in the development of the authoritarian personality is severe psychic trauma in the "pregenital phase," which caused anxiety related to masturbation and slowed the formation of sexual and equal (psychic) maturity[8].

It should be noted that the analysis of the manipulator type, and indeed of the authoritarian personality, was conducted by Adorno within a Freudian paradigm. Consequently, all characteristics of this personality type were reduced to sexuality (libido), which arguably limited the scope of this study. For instance, the individual life path of a young person was interpreted primarily through various perversions of their libido; thus, the broader context of socio-political connections effectively remained outside the researcher's focus, even though its analysis could have significantly enriched the understanding of the manipulative personality type[9].

The research shows that individuals belonging to the manipulator type experience a deep unconscious fear of individuality, autonomy, certainty, and self-assertion. This peculiar xenophobia is linked to a fear of acute problems and suffering that may arise from the alienation of the personality and its self-realization in the social world. In effect, "compulsiveness" (the constant suppression of the individual "I") becomes a defense mechanism for such people, enabling them to adapt successfully to economic conditions and social hierarchies at the cost of devaluing their own individuality[10].

This idea was developed in the research of E. Shostrom, dedicated to the manipulative personality type. Deep distrust of oneself, fear of one's own individuality, combined with the desire to function successfully in society – these, in his view, constitute the subjective foundation for the emergence of the manipulative person. Although his monograph belongs more to the genre of popular science writing, it attracts attention due to its departure from the orthodox Freudian framework, its broad formulation of the problem, and its diverse examples of the negative consequences of a manipulative lifestyle[11].

According to Shostrom, manipulativeness is a characteristic of interpersonal relationships shaped under the influence of market mechanisms, which cause people to treat each other indifferently, as things. It exists within the framework of universal commodity-money relations.

At the same time, if manipulative methods begin to dominate the life of modern individuals, they reduce them to the level of "concerned automata," masking pathological changes in their personality – lack of spirituality, neuroticism, disintegration. All of this leads to various psychosomatic illnesses, destroys and nullifies human connections, contributes to the breakdown of the family, and compels the individual to useless and meaningless expenditure of energy[12].

According to Shostrom, the only solution is transformation into an actualizer. This term is borrowed from the theory of self-actualization of personality by Abraham Maslow and Kurt Goldstein. The actualizer is the opposite of the manipulator. The first step towards actualizing behavior is the awareness of one's own everyday manipulations, which allows for a fuller utilization of one's creative potential and personal uniqueness.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Philosophical analysis cannot be confined to description; it must indicate paths for overcoming the manipulative disposition. There are several lines of thought in the history of philosophy.

The first is ethical: the development of the Kantian principle of respect for autonomy, the institutionalization of constraints on manipulative practices in law and professional ethics[13].

The second is existential: the restoration of the capacity for authentic self-determination. Fromm saw the alternative in a "productive orientation" – love, creativity, spontaneity. Sartre pointed to the fundamental freedom to choose one's attitude towards one's situation.

The third is socio-critical: the transformation of the institutional environment that generates manipulative types. Habermas places hope in the democratization of the public sphere, where communicative action opposes systemic logic. Bourdieu points to the necessity of exposing the mechanisms of symbolic power and developing critical consciousness.

A philosophical analysis of the social profile of the manipulative personality reveals that this phenomenon cannot be reduced to individual psychopathology or moral vice. The manipulator is an anthropological figure emerging at the intersection of specific historical, social, and existential circumstances. From Machiavelli's prince to the digital "choice architect," the essential features remain unchanged: an instrumental attitude towards the other, concealment of true intentions, a striving for control, and an escape from one's own freedom[14].

Contemporary philosophy faces the task not only of describing but also of overcoming this figure. This requires the development of an ethics centered on human autonomy and dignity; an anthropology that sees in the human not an object of management but a source of spontaneity; and a social philosophy that lays bare the mechanisms of symbolic violence. Ultimately, the question of the manipulator is the question of what understanding of humanity and society we are prepared to defend[15].

#### 4. Conclusion

The conducted philosophical analysis of the social profile of the manipulative personality allows us to conclude that this personality type is not merely an individual-psychological phenomenon but also a product of specific social conditions. Manipulation acts as a specific form of interaction in which the principle of subject-subject relations is violated, and the other person is reduced to a means of achieving goals.

The manipulative personality is formed within the context of increasingly complex social ties, growing information flows, and the transformation of value orientations in contemporary society. Its key characteristics – the instrumentalization of interpersonal relationships, strategic thinking, and a propensity for covert control – reflect broader trends within social reality.

From a philosophical standpoint, manipulation undermines the foundations of authentic communication, such as trust, mutual recognition, and personal autonomy. This testifies to a profound ethical crisis in which efficiency begins to dominate over moral principles.

Nevertheless, the examination of this phenomenon reveals possibilities for overcoming it. The development of critical thinking, the strengthening of an ethics of responsibility, and a focus on dialogical forms of interaction can help reduce the level of manipulateness in society.

Thus, the problem of the manipulative personality requires further philosophical research, as it touches upon fundamental questions of freedom, power, and human dignity in the conditions of the contemporary world.

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