THE DIALECTIC OF SELF-EXPRESSION / COLLOQUY[1]

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ABSTRACT: The Dialectic of Self-Expression/Colloquy.
The societal milieu as regards the profuse aspects that have an impact on the individuals constructing a community has advanced along with the advent of scientific knowledge specific to the areas of subsistence. As an outcome, the act of expression, the relation between culture, human values, core meanings, social context, prolocutors have had to adapt or accommodate in accordance with the current reality, thus leading to a new dimension of the present. The interpersonal conduct is to approach the modifications or alterations of the world at large by considering the facets of the reference system and the unverse of discourse.

Keywords: *expression, cultural studies, communication, analysis, connotation.*

If the *Scripture* has assessed throughout history that *the letter might be attesting,* the actual interval that society undergoes could be referred to as an age of generalized intercultural dialogue, in which the right to opinion or perspective is no longer the prerogative of a educated minority, but an ever-expanding forum of social communication. In fact, the dissemination of a message or item of information/interchange has acquired mass proportions and character, and communicators have already become accustomed to the right to express their differences and affinities, doubts and certain-

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ties, anguishes and hopes, idiosyncrasies and preferences.

The process of communication, the basis depends/relies on estab-lishing a relation between a transmitter and a recipient. The diffuser, the one who intends to provide information, is subject to translate it into a language accessible to the recipient and compatible with the core meaning of the communication used, that is denominated as *coding*. Once elaborat-ed, the message is issued and circulated due to a material support, namely the communication channel. The exchange of information, of meanings, communication processes are social phenomena, that are based on interac-tion and determined by them. An expression is therefore a synergy, being, as such, subsumed to a process of mutual influence between several social actors. The articulation of a communiqué is always a transaction between prolocutors: the issuance and reception are simultaneous, the transmitter being, at the same time, the transmitter *and* receiver, and not the trans-mitter *then* receiver. Moreover, communication is a social act, deliberate or involuntary, conscious or unconscious, one of the acts that underlie the social connection. The Austrian psychologist Paul Watzlawick, a specialist in communication theory, argues that, in an interaction, any behavior has the value of a message, representing, in other words, a communication.

The act of conveying involves not only based on oral expression but a multi-channel system. Gestures, mimicry, body position and even silence are acts of communication, as they assume and actualize a meaning with an explicit, implicit or unconscious purpose. Thus, an individual that emits a statement accomplishes both to achieve the clear-cut objective of the com-munication act and to avoid certain problematic elements. Consciously or not, he will operate a filtering, a selection of the information to be trans-mitted. The message is therefore not elaborated solely on the basis of the elements the transmission of which is relevant, but also in relation to the arguments or subject matters of the sender/emitter.

The nature of communication is directly influenced by the social context in which the interaction takes place. Without being able to apply a single rule, one and the same social context will be able to play a different role, depending on the nature, complexity and, last but not least, the final-ity of the interaction.

If Jürgen Habermas has conceived the public space as an exten-sion of economic exchanges, attached to the public exercise of reason, the French linguist Patrick Charaudeau defines the nature of public space with

the help of the notion of *speech in circulation* or *circulating discourse.* The latter implies a sum of empirical statements that are produced in order to define actions, events and corresponding characteristics, behaviors and judgments. These statements take the discursive form, being either fixed in textual fragments (proverbs, dictums, maxims and any expression with a fixed character) or vary and constitute themselves in sociolects.

The discourse or expression analysis is formulated at the border of several disciplines: linguistics, pragmatics, sociology, social, cognitive and educational psychology, ethnography, semiotics,artificial intellect, etc. and evaluate how social actors use, in a certain context, different communication resources (languages, information, etc.).

Each of these functions knows particular manifestations: the discourses of the state institutions, which affirm, with the force of authority, the values of the society, the discourses of contestation of these values, the ordinary discourses, that regulate the social relations, being endowed with codes of language, the discourses that approach the life issues/concerns of people, the struggle for survival, between desires and destiny as fatality.

Communication theorists have developed a relatively generous concept, encompassing all forms of conveying a message. While some scholars emphasize that, in general, communication should be regarded as a frontier science, others are in charge of inventorying the definitions of the act of communication. Thus, in 1976, about 120 definitions were inventoried. In any dictionary of the Romanian language we will find the verb *to communicate*, having the meanings – with different nuances and meanings – of *to say*, *to make known*, *to give the news, to inform, to notify.* The referred conceptualization of the dictionary can be added the idea that communication is not only an essential component of life, but is that element that must be correctly understood in order for the act of to achieve the intended goals or intentions. But in order to be able to talk about correct communication, one needs to understand the basics of communication.

In this context, the perspective of Douglas Kellner has to be taken into account as the current time is defined by dramatic changes and transformations. The '60s initiated spectacular social and cultural transformations all over the world. The sixth decade marked an era of intense social transformations that called into question the existing social order, producing instead new forms of counterculture as well as alternative forms of the everyday.

With the advent of new technologies, the lifestyle has changed and the work has been restructured, the computerization being offered a primordial place in the individual's life, yet thus consequently communication might assume ambiguous nuances and with contradictory effects, Individuals are constantly subject to a flow of images and sounds of unprecedented magnitude, penetrating homes, to which the new virtual worlds of entertainment, information, politics reorder space and time, annihilating their distinction between reality and the media image, while producing new forms of experience and subjectivity.

Communication must therefore be interpreted differently, contextualized, because it is an essential component of life, which must be understood correctly in order to achieve its goals, explaining social realities and helping the individual to understand the world in which he lives.

In order to master communication we must understand it by making use of concepts, images, symbols, arguments and reasons. The numerous definitions given to communication have, however, depending on the field, a particular, specialized meaning, sometimes in contradiction with the meanings of other fields. They conceptualize the structures of domination and resistance, highlighting the hidden forms of communication, which can serve as instruments of social, political, economic change, etc. Communication requires a constant process of radiography precisely because of the rapidity and intensity of the changes it involves.

Another relevant definition is that given by the Spanish philosopher José Aranguren, according to which communication is a transmission of information to which a response is expected.

All these definitions represent the results of the historical evolution of the research carried out in the field of communication sciences.

Particular specialized acts of expression have included, over time, various cultural studies, even feminism, enriching itself with political, multicultural elements, etc. On the other hand, the theory of communication is a relatively new science, dating back about half a century, and the apparent clarity of the denomination of the discipline under discussion hides a trap, as it brings with it the entire load of ambiguities and connotations accumulated over time by the second term of the phrase.

In another register, films, music and underground culture are, in turn, forms of language that can more or less influence the receiver. There are even films that have been produced with the aim of strengthening a

certain opinion, promoting a certain lifestyle, etc., that can be noticed especially from the analysis of personalities such as Marlon Brando, Elvis Presley or James Dean, who, according to Douglas Kellner, "have become extremely influential, shaping the style, thinking and behavior of the audience; in the '60s, the figures of the countercultural current also became resonant images."

Communication is a privileged source of access to reality, being even a more or less discreet form of mass manipulation, a complex process, which involves several angles of approach.

The context of new technologies has created a different reality or led to a form of rupture as regards traditional patterns. In fact, the concept of *communication* is in the spotlight of cultural studies precisely because of the impact that expression has on individuals. First of all, communication involves a literacy in order to decode the message, implying the existence of pre-established and explained codes. Communication implies, after all, a user attitude, because any user updates the language as a means of expression *the use of which must be made as conveniently and economically as possible.*

In order to give a prior definition of the term *communication*, the appeal to *The Dictionary of Literary Terms* published by Alexandru Săndulescu in 1976 represents an essential point according to which derived from the verb *communicate*, coming from fr. *comuniquer* «to make known, to notify, to inform», the term, which also appears in the form of *communication*, especially in the phrase *theory of communication*, designates the transmission of information within a group, a transmission considered in its relations with the structure of the group. The poetic message (information) is transmitted through a discourse articulated in any language. The process of communicating the message can be researched from several perspectives, the attention being focused either on the ways and means of its transmission, or on the psychology, behavior and reactions of the transmitter and receiver, or on the social relations within which the communication is carried out.

A well-known and appreciated theory belongs to Bernard Voyenne, who identifies four means of transmitting information: *one-to-one*, *one-to-many*, *many-to-one* and *many-to-ma*ny. In this sense, the French theorist found that *the act of living in society involves communicating,* the need to

communicate, that is, to transmit or learn from our fellow human beings ideas, information, feelings representing a fundamental trait and a vital necessity of man. Rightly, Bernard Voyenne said that the exchange of information, of ideas, of intercomprehension are for society as important as breathing for the body, since the act of communication is the basis of social organization, coagulating and controlling the horizontal relations between people, but also engaging their vertical aspirations, in an ascensional movement towards the higher planes of reality.

In this context, the idea that a cultural analysis will highlight both the way in which the dominant ideology is structured in the text and in the receiving subject, as well as those features of the text that allow a negotiated reading, resists or opposes the text. Cultural analysis reaches a satisfactory conclusion when ethnographic studies of historically and socially located meanings are connected with a semiotic analysis of the text.

However, between culture and communication, no elements of complete identity can be established, nor can clear priority relations be established on the scale of human history or the history of the formation of individual consciousness. If in reality culture and communication form a couple and are not explained without each other, there is the likelihood that one to find that the two phenomena are not perfectly airtight, one containing the other, but neither located in the plane of parallel reflections, in analog correspondence, so that many mediations that should be part of cultural studies, including analyses of how texts are produced in the context of political economy and culture production system, but also of how the public and its subjectivity are the result of a multitude of social institutions, practices and ideologies.

It is therefore necessary to draw a distinction between the concepts of *culture* and *communication*, thus if by *culture* one referes to the artifacts of high culture, the way of life of individuals, the context of human behaviors or anything else, then culture is inseparably linked to communication. In order to become a social artifact and, as such, *culture* in the true sense of the word, it must be both a mediator of culture and mediated by it, to be therefore communicative by its very nature. Communication, in turn, is mediated by culture, being the way in which culture is disseminated, updated and streamlined. There is no communication without culture and no culture without communication, so drawing a rigid distinction between them and asserting that one of them is the legitimate object of studies within that

discipline, while the other is directed to another discipline is an obvious example of the myopia and inefficiency of the arbitrary academic division of work.

Culture and communication become notions that are usable and used regardless of the size of social life, notions that juxtapose implicit, often contradictory points of view. These notions often mask the reality of conflicts, but also the ambiguities updated in different social segments. In this regard, Douglas Kellner has uttered the observation that there has been a large-scale shift of the accent from the text and the context of its production to the audience and reception, which in some cases has determined the emergence of a new type of dogmatism in which only the public, respectively the reader, produces the meaning. The text, the society and the system of production and reception disappear into this solipsistic ecstasy of the text producer according to which there is no text outside of reading, the result being a parody of Derrida's famous words, namely that there is nothing outside the text.

Unless the necessary correlations are made between language and the social framework of a specific community, resulting from historical and empirical realities, then language and social foundations cannot be considered the basis of communication and existence. Language has a peculiarity that only it possesses: it is, as Benveniste observes, the interpreter (or: mediator) of society and of any signifying system. However, in the contemporary society there has been the globalization of culture, but in the sense of uniformity and impoverishment of its contents, phenomena that have not bypassed any area of cultural activity.

The phenomenon was deepened by the German philosopher and sociologist Herbert Marcuse, who campaigned for the establishment of a society within the limits of a polymorphic perversity, which would also imply a political correctness. He emphasized the idea that planned social organization manipulates consciousnesses, creating and conditioning needs from the outside, by forces over which man has no control. According to his studies, all this can be considered a type of globalization[2], in the sense that it emphasizes the idea of the adaptive dimension of individuals and

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2   Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Globalization and its effect on religion", în *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință*, Mihnea Costoiu, Liviu-Bogdan Ciucă, Nelu Burcea (eds.), Les Editura IARSIC, Arcs, France, 2014, pp. 532-541.

shapes thought systems and behaviors.

An essential component of expression/self-expression is entailed by language, one of the elements that characterizes what is meant by *human culture*, that is, what man adds to culture, what the individual does not receive from the ascendants through biological heredity, but in which each generation must initiate itself through learning. Language is not only an element of culture, but also a vehicle of all cultural skills. In other words, the word plays and mimics the world to the same extent that it signifies it.

In *les mots et les choses*, Michel Foucault has pointed out that the individual and language could not coexist without articulating each other. By relating man and nature through the prism of representations, language makes human society possible. From a cultural perspective, the specificity of an era and of an ethno-linguistic space are outlined, among other things, by the relationship between tradition and innovation. Stability and mobility are opposable traits, sometimes confrontational, but also complementary, that define a given culture in each phase of its evolution. Added to this is the fact that the incompetent valorization in respect of the public's resistance to certain meanings that are considered to be positive in themselves might lead to an indiscriminate and populist glorification of the text and the state of ecstatic pleasure as the outcome that is obtained from the consumption of cultural artifacts.

If any text or discourse, regardless of its thematic, compositional or fictional profile, is the direct expression of an intention and an act of communication, the basic principle is to identify exactly the context in which the discourse is launched and the horizon of expectation of the target audience category in relation to that context. Communication problems are often due to semantics, and the effort in communication must focus on the proximity of the codes of the two poles. In other words, the words used by the transmitter must mean the same thing for the receiver, because the pleasure of communicating represents, after all, a conditioned response to certain stimuli and should therefore also be put into the equation along with other forms of experience and behavior or conduct.

The mere fact of communicating involves, in certain circumstances – as, for example, in the sphere of politics – a form of action directed at the other. At the same time, power cannot be regarded merely as a relationship of subordination existing between individuals or between groups. It results from the very complexity of this relationship, as a concerted social action

that gives substance to the political and the interests that interwine to give rise to what is usually called "public space", namely even if the emphasis on the public and the reception has been a correction of the unilateral character of the purely textual analysis, in recent years cultural studies have overestimated the importance of the analysis as regards the reception of the text, underestimating, instead, the importance of the way of production and the political economy of culture.

All the discussions about the public space begin by referring to the promoter of this notion, the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas, the author of the theory of communicative activity. Habermas defines the public sphere as an area of social life in which public opinion can be formed. By expanding, the public space expresses not only the opinions of a limited group (the elite), but also of various other heterogeneous groups, because it no longer refers to general principles, but issues of common interest. Cultural materialism, however, also focuses on the material effects of media culture, insisting that the corresponding images, performances and types of discourse have a perceptible effect on the public. In the vision of cultural materialism, the media text seduces, fascinates, thrills, guides and influences the public.

The world is constructed from the permanence of these interactions of the actors, a permanence that gives rise to *a game of appearances* and an exchange of symbols that reproduce the hierarchies and social differences, prestige, notoriety, respect or admiration – after all, to a whole process of ordering and re-ordering the values of society. All wear the *mask* of value and they all owe something of what others perceive about them to the game full of conventions that is interpreted in the course of every day. This ingenious play of appearances, with images of reality and subjective perceptions, characterizes the essence of the political, *the scene* on which the various actors of history parade – while the score remains, at large, the same.

Inevitably, the score of social life involves actors and interpreters of roles outside which society does not exist, but for this everyone have to conventionalize their acts, to the point where the *signs* prove to be more effective than the *signified*.

There is to be considered the perspective that asssess the idea according to which language encompasses the most complex of the known semiotic systems. Its importance for defining and understanding the hu-

man is decisive.[3] The faculty of producing and understanding specific signs endowed with meaning gives the individual a privileged status in the known world, as the main reflective and projective being. The language/human speech, as a process of communication, involves three fundamental and defining dimensions: an ontological dimension, a gnoseological dimension and a social dimension.

If the reference is directed toward the ontological dimension of language, the person ought to consider that it provides the image of a virtual space in point of reflecting reality. The gnoseological dimension sheds light on the relationship between language and thought, while the social perspective also implies a social space.

To a certain extent, the term *communication* also implies the meaning of *communion*, which imply that "communicating" involves a direct way of associating and *pooling* the issues or concerns of individuals. The difficulties to be overcome in this respect for societies which do not have the necessary experience in managing economic and cultural pluralism can only be overcome if those societies are willing to accept *a new frontier philosophy*, less dominated by an interest in difference and closer to the idea of harmonising vital interests, whatever they may be. Thus, to establish a sense of closure, the coollary of the material assesses the perspective according to which reality and the décor of the political or societal life express the cognitive cleavages that derive from the differentiated access to information and the unequal activity of the media agents in the society.

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3   Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, *Om-Demnitate-Libertate (Human-Dignity-Freedom)*, Editura Risoprint, Cluj-Napoca, 2019, pp.201-215.

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