## POETIC SIGNIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION

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## Abstract

Poetic signification and communication is not an article in which I wish to bring to attention some definitions of what we call poetry and poetics, even if in order to make myself better understood I appeal to some definitions, especially from philosophy, then from the literary theory and semiotics. This paper demonstrates that as long as the poem is closely related to culture, as long as it generates visions and different ways to discover existence, the world as a whole, as long as the code artistic transmitter, thecreator, the poet communicates manifestations of the spirit then it is language; a different language from the common one, primarily because the transmitter is expresses himself on purpose through codes and special images, sometimes abstract, metaphorical images that may not be available to any reader; a language of Ludens, of poetic enigmas ... The poetic texts and messages, the same as the usual referential messages carry with them an information transfer, only that in the (aesthetic) poetic text a complex system of relationships takes shape. Starting from some major theorists of the poetic art we find out that semiotics helps us tolook at a poetic text in structural terms, that poetry and the spite of low redundancy produces a series of messages much more fertile - as I. Lotman states - than any other communication form ...

**Keywords:** *mimesis, communication, significance, poetry, inspiration, ludic.* 

When we talk about poetry we generally know that about it it is recognized that art belongs to those who bring words or to those who, as Paul Valerie says, struggling with the verbal material, speculate on the sound and meaning. There are, of course countless definitions of poetry which in time have made a career. For example, in the ancient world, for Aristotle or Plato, this (references are made to the epic and tragic poetry, comedy, and dithyrambic poetry) is seen as an imitation, *mimesis*<sup>1</sup>, while for Kant, it is the art of a free play of imagination, the Fantasia as an activity of the intellect, and to Nicolai Hartmann the poetry must open a piece of the world for the reader. We understand, in fact, that poetry should communicate something, something that are either imitates parts of (privacy - mood) the author, of his world in which we integrate the cultural world and religious one), or something that can open ontological horizons (unexpected ones, those unlimited semiosis caused by the very expressions poetic metaphors governed by *metaphor and ludic*).

Aristotle in his *Poetics* examines in particular the tragedy, not to achieve a theory about this, but rather, to show that, if it is well written, has an effect on the feelings and passions of the audience. Trying to define this art, the Stagirite aims at specific aspects of aesthetics because, as he notes, the author of a poetic piece adorns the speech with various kinds of ornaments (figures of speech, rhythm, rhyme, etc.).As a matter of fact, from among the arts, the Stagirite stresses that the tragedy (with its effects) awakens in the audience the joy of watching, that is the pleasure, but at the same time the contemplation, which according to the philosopher is the purpose of practical sciences "(...) the pleasure that the imitations give is also felt by all. The facts prove it to be true. The things that in nature we can not watch without disgust - like appearance most disgusting beasts and death - imagined by high fidelity fill us with delight. The explanation, this time too, seems to me to consist in the special pleasure that knowledge gives not only to the wise, but also to ordinary people; only that these ones partake less of it. That is why those who watch a figmant enjoy it: because they have the opportunity to learn while watcing and to realize every single thing, for example that such way someone is depicted"<sup>2</sup>. Plato in Ion (534b) speaks of an inspiration chain which starts from the Muse and, through poet, reaches the audience. But this transfer occurs after the poet is imbued with divine grace. The poet appears in Plato's conception as a"light, winged and sacred creature, able to create something only after the

divine grace penetratesn him (*entheos*) and abandons his self (*ekphron*), deserted by reason/judgement ".

The poet is the artist who uses words as symbols and places them around an idea. Placing these words, putting them on stage in relationships must show, on the one hand, the freedom of the poet from nature and, on the other hand, they must deliver in a message, the states and actions of the spirit. Novalis emphasizes in this regard, in the romantic manner of his time, that the poet holding the key of philosophy sets the words in relationship so as to tell about the universe household: "His words are general signs - are sounds - magic words moving that set in motion around them beautiful groups. The same as the holy garments of the saints continue to contain miraculous powers, one word sanctified by a glamorous memory, becomes itself, a poem. For the poet, the language is never too poor, but it is always too general. He often has to use the same words, worn out by use"<sup>3</sup>.

But the poet must, despite the feeling of freedom, if he wants to convey messages about the state of the spirit of the world, to control the freedom of word association, because otherwise, falling into the verbal delirium dimension (amplified by not controling the fantasy or poetic ludic) he, instead of transmitting an information system (beautiful), valuable both in the text (aesthetic) and outside it, for a possible receiver will only achieve a reference ambiguity, of meaning. Although the ambiguity is characteristic of the poetic text. But even from this point of view, the poet, as text transmitter (aesthetic) must send a code message to a receiver, depending on the expectations of this one. The French poet Pierre Reverdy, noting that in contemporary poetic languages there prevails *a* common discourse and a verbal delirium warns his fellow poets: "Beware now: words are at everyone's reach, you are asked to make out of words what one has never made before. "On the other hand, the Romanian poet and essayist Stephen Aug Doinas has a tough comment on verbal delirium and the nebula rush for images and metaphors of contemporary poets:'the poet creates his own surreality by using the analogy, that is by establishing relationships between the unique elements of this world. New poetry means undoubtedly a triumph of metaphor: as a true queen who loves pomp and luxury, it reigns today, proud of herself, over the various tribes of tropes. Its natural tendency is to become vision: to reconstruct itself, alike the sprinkled dew, a new, appearance- focused and revelatory -of the universe. Behind this image, and depending on the characteristics of materials, critical exegesis is invited to identify the coherent system of meanings that prove a personal view of the world and life"<sup>4</sup>.

On the other hand, Constantin Noica "Journal of Ideas", while analyzing the problem of Romanian culture, notes that poetry today is under the dictatorship of the consumer culture. He says that there is an inflation poetry in contemporary culture, and this is "a product of mere poetic sensibilities, often uneducated and lacking any craft, taking after the baneful French model, highly despising rhyme (Eminescu's Arghezi's Blaga, Ion Barbu folk poetry) and embarsssingly despising the pace, which is not only the basic structure of any poetry, but also of any art, like that of the universe, of life and thought. And if I accept them, I see in them, (in) the inflation of today poetry, consumer culture, necessary and beneficial too waiting for the performance culture"<sup>5</sup>. According Noica's ideas the poet is the being that makes you dream. The philosopher of Păltiniş writes that "I am about to invent a human being - because I need poetry"6 and elsewhere seems to come to terms with this age and these times as long as, despite his nihilism, he can achieve the highest art: "Our age, with its unexpected speed and detachment, with its commitment to the great visions of the abstract and nothingness is ripe for the supreme poetry and art"7. We understand that poetry is closely related to culture and it shows the image of man in relation to his time. Therefore, to understand or to taste a poet and the world we have to like his world, "I think that to taste a poet we have to like the culture he belongs too. If someone finds it indifferent or antipathetic, then the admiration gets cold"8.

To understand *the poetry* of a particular culture, it means to understand *the style*<sup>9</sup> of that culture that is, as Wittgenstein points out elsewhere, *the style is the man himself*, which shows that the style is *the image* (icon, mimesis) of man<sup>10</sup>. Hence we can talk about any aspect of culture about the models of the aesthetic language. But the *poetry* is worth it as long as the poet conveys information that can touch our hearts and our thoughts<sup>11</sup>. The poet capitalizes the words based on meaning, he becomes a kind of master of aesthetic communication. He knows that poetry is the highest manifestation of the spirit. The poet conveys energy quantitatively words and at the same time, qualitative quantitative words. The poetic message relates these words and motivates pleasure and taste. We can say that the poetic value of an aesthetic text is supported by the image (the atmosphere<sup>12</sup>) that *motivates* the words set in the relationship. There is usually a pact in which the poetic language "the exchange of words with the intensity of pleasure they produce - are beyond their mere elucidation, over here or beyond the their function of a *value significance*"<sup>13</sup>. The poet is the manifestation of the spirit, he communicates to others the universality of existence. He is the mediator of the human encounter with the universe, because in his words, his language the spirit is turned into existence. According to Hegel, the language should be seen as "the one where the spirit takes on existence. The language is self-consciousness existing for the others, it is the self-consciousness which is given directly as such, and, while being this individual self-consciousness, it is universal"14.

The poet communicates about the world (inner or outer of the self) using common words known to everyone, but the way they combine shows that he uses a different type of communication than usual one. The way words combine gives the aesthetic character (artistic ) to a poetic discourse "The poet is the one who can speak the language arts. The poetic language differs from the common one in that it expresses the purposely special images that are not understand by anyone. Any language is expressed in images. The gap between the existence and the understanding can not be bridged over unless the spark imagination intervenes. (...) What the poetic language does with the images is a game. She ranks them in elegant series, stuffs them with secrets, so that each image means unraveling an enigma"<sup>15</sup>. For the poet, on the one hand, the words are images of their own, and on the other hand, brought

together (motivatig or ambiguous, randomsome) bring other images, but, putting the words together, their welding in a certain type of discourse shows that, for example "the metaphor is the momentary blending of two images, rather than the methodical assimilation of two objects"<sup>16</sup>.

At the same time, the poetic language does not only distinguish from the common language, but also the scientifc one in which the terms (linguistic signs) refer to concrete, definitions, verifiable, not to unlimited instances of interpretation. The scientific language has at the same time similar components, like the poetic one on the one hand, just because it uses abstract words - but not ambiguous as in the poetic language (in some cases), andon the other hand, it is not abstract, resembles the common language, as it sends the concrete things. For example, a dictionary or an encyclopedia (eg. Medical) is made on the basis of scientific terminologies, yet accessible to the common man, while a volume of poems require more openness to language, to interpretation. The meaning of poetry requires to be sought, while in common language reveals itself. Whereas the metaphorical use of language to describe scientific phenomena merely leeds to confusion. The poetic language enriches the reference and expands the cognitive content. In this respect Hans-Georg Gadamer advises that in normal acts of communication to use a less aesthetic language, in order not to reach erroneous attempts to define the terms "The metaphorical use of language explains the need for definitions and justfies the use of artificial terms. Of course, they can not be introduced through definitions, but by the natural use of the language. The feature of the scientific language to relatively dissociate from the global linguistic phenomenon lies in a tense relation with the global nature that unites us all as human society, through the ability to speak, to seek and find the communicative word"<sup>17</sup>. E. Cassier also draws the attention on the fact that the language (regardless of its nature, and therefore the aesthetic or poetic language) is one of the symbolic forms under which there exists what is human, it is the sign of the difference in relation to any other beings. Man works with language, sets his signs in relationships to show or convey ideas. While in the act of creation, the man (the artist, the poet) achieves a mosaic of

signs that replace the idea or, even more express it. In mosaic representations the human being combines symbols to achieve new layers of meaning. From this point of view, the neurophysiologist scientist William H. Calvin points out that "mosaics also present the unlimited aspect of our mental life, the one involved in the inventory of new levels of complexity, such as crosswords or combined words (which may be the case of poetry) combining symbols to include new levels of meaning. Because the brain codes can represent not only sensory motion schemes, but also ideas, we can imagine how quality metaphors appear, we can imagine how it takes place what Coleridge called the willful suspension of disbelief when we enter the field of imaginary fiction"<sup>18</sup>.

Lotman underlined that good poetry informs nicely, since systems of signs were inserted that point to something certain (cultural). Where there is no information we are dealing with a poetic text of poor quality. We understand that metaphor and other figures of speech, which can be inserted in the text (aesthetic), related to the chromatic of speech, the part that should surprise us, that should show us something pleasant, that can only come with a piece of information . However we notice in today's lyrical works a particular concern for inserting as much information in the poetic text (aesthetic), forgetting to take into account the need for beauty. One reason might be the artists' fall into the trap of the informational delusion.

It is understood that, compared to ordinary referential messages, the poetic messages are more complicated, that's because the author of a poetic message "tends to emphasize those features which on the one hand seem to make more imprecise reference to term, and on the other hand to make us dwell on the term, as part of a contextual relationships and make it count as a primary element of the message", while the referential message (common) "once it observed the conventions imposed by the code, to make free his own equivocal signs and their function in context, must be abandoned" as its author does not dwell on problems in selecting the terms<sup>19</sup>.

While we are dealing with a text (aesthetic) poetic a complex system relationships is

constituted. Semiotics allows us, in this respect, to look at a text (aesthetic) in terms of "structural"<sup>20</sup>. In this regard, Terry Eagleton demonstrates that a poetic text can be analyzed as a structure from which we can conclude that every element involved in the text has more or less its own meanings: "maybe poetry contains an image of the sun and one of the month, and we are interested in how these two images together shape a structure. But you only become a true structuralist when you claim that each significance of each picture exclusively depends on the relationship the get in with each other. Images don't have a *substantial* significance, but only a relationa onel. There is no need to look outside poetry, in the knowledge that you have about the sun and the moon, in order to explain them. They explain and define each other"<sup>21</sup>.

From this point of view, a fundamental contribution to the knowledge of the poetic message brings R. Jakobson, who understands the integrated poetics of linguistics: "Proceeding to the examination of the relation that exists between linguistics and the science of literature, Jakobson points out that the study of poetic features that might seem that they represent exclusively the object of the science of literature, can be recognized as relevant to the whole theory of signs"<sup>22</sup>. From his point of view, the language is in some kind of conscious relationship with itself, and this shows his poetic function. The emphasis is on the *actual* character signs, stressing their *materiality* in this way, not only the function of exchange coin in communication. Hence it results that in its poetic function, the sign is separated from its subject, which shows that the relationship between sign and referent is disturbed, that is the sign acquires a certain independence of valuables by itself. In relation to the six essential factors of the communication process that Roman Jakobson identifies, namely: a transmitter, a receiver, a message that the two swap, a shared code that makes the message intelligible, a contact (the physical medium of communication) and a context to which the message relates; the poetic function can dominate the act of communication when the latter is centered on the message itself, that is when the words themselves are brought to our fore attention<sup>23</sup>.

Jakobson shows that compared to ordinary speech or writing for which we select certain signs out of a variety of equivalences which then we combine to formulate sentences, when we refer to poetic speech or poetic writing, we must pay attention to both the equivalences the selection, as well as the combinations of signs. In other words, in poetry "the likeness is added to contiguity", the metaphor is a sign replaced with another because, it is in a way, like this one: for example *the passion* becomes *a flame*, and the metonymy shows that a sign is associated with another, for example *the wing* is associated with *a plane* because it is a part of it<sup>24</sup>.

Realizing that the poetic text is a system of systems or a relation between relations I. Lotman considers that the signifier is determined by the nature of the significan, that is by the phonetic and rhythm structures derived in the text. Lotman shows that poetry, despite low redundancy<sup>25</sup> produces a series of messages much more fertile than any other form of communication. In front of the poetic text reader does not read, but rereads because certain structures of the text can be understood only in retrospect. In this sense, we can say that "poetry activates the whole body of the significant, pushes the word to work at its peak under the heavy pressure of the words in its syntactic vicinity and thus freeing its most valuable potential. Whatever we perceive in the text is perceived only by contrast and difference: an item that is not in a differential relationship with another one remains invisible. Even in the absence of certain procedures it can produce meaning: if those codes generated by the work led us to expect a rhyme or a happy ending that does not materialize, the minus procedure as Lotman calls it can be a significant element as effective as any other one"<sup>26</sup>.

I will end here these lines about the poetic significance and communication, not before mentioning too that the poetry lives a spiritual and democratic time of the culture. But this *democracy* despite the terminology must show, as we have already mentioned, that the poet is free to combine and set signs in relationship to signify the universe and culture he belongs or he relates to. He must know what part of the culture he belongs to: the conservative side, facing the past with to which he shares the inheritance or the creative part, production-oriented of new values. Any of the signs of these *two principles of culture*<sup>27</sup> the poet will operate with, it is a fact that he seeks to set the words in such a way that they resonate in the soul of the reader, the more that the joint words wrap meanings that torment him: "Sensitive and delicate the process of the birth is the poem. It is a continuous balance between the abstract thinking and the concrete thinking. The words are chosen not according to their abstract, conceptual meanings, but according to their power to resonate in the soul of the poet and the reading, of the reader"<sup>28</sup>. The status of the poet in relation to the cultural phenomenon must be one of awakening and training of the creative, *inventive* power<sup>29</sup>. Through poetry the reader is invited to a journey inside the poet and his interior self. Poetry is, as Novalis specified, the true path toward the inside. It is inside that occur the permutations among the systems of signs. It is there that the whole dream game of the poet takes place<sup>30</sup>, it is there that the *self-knowledge is the true knowledge of the world*<sup>31</sup>, it is there that the fantasy arranges ideas in such a way that they become the body system.

## Endnotes

- 1. Hans-Georg Gadamer points out that the concept of mimesis that gives aesthetic expression to feelings is a relationship in which there takes place not only an imitation, but also a transformation. "What is the experience of art is (...) the aesthetic non-distinctive. If you renew the original meaning of mimesis, we free ourselves from the aesthetic narrowness which classical theory of imitation represnts for thinking. Mimesis then does not cosist anymore so much in fact that something exists as having meaning in itself. Any alleged naturalness criterion does not decide, on this occasion, the value or non-value of a representation. Certainly, however, that any eloquent representation already has an answer to the question why it exists- whether it depicts something or nothing. The original mimesis experience remains (...) the essence of any formative act in art and poetry ". Hans-Georg Gadamer, News beauty, rom translation. Val. Panaitescu, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2000, pp. 50-51.
- 2. Aristotle, Poetics, IV, 1448b8-17.
- 3. Novalis, *Between Vigil and Dream* rom translation. Viorica Nişcov, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 2008, p. 166.
- 4. Stefan Aug. Doinaș, *Poetry and Poetic Fashion*, Ed. Eminescu, Bucharest, pp. 171-172.

- 5. Constantin Noica, *Journal of ideas*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 1991, p. 299.
- 6. Idem, p. 168.
- 7. Idem, p. 109.
- 8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Posthumous Notes* 1914-1951, rum translation. Flonta Mircea Adrian-Paul Iliescu, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 2005, p. 162.
- 9. On the other hand, the Romanian logician, Constantin Sălăvăstru stresses that each individual pereceives a text in terms of his socio-cultural experiences, which he considers as the trademark of reception, thus the one who interprets a text (nn poetic) will do it in terms of his socio-cultural intersections and not from the perspective of his knowledge about *style* or the generation the one that generated the current text belongs to, although this knowledge may influence his understanding. Sălăvăstru writes that for "the receiver of a philosophical text even if he knows what trend the text, he gets in touch with, even though he may know the rules of the trend all of them remain, influence on reception, insignificant. Everyone receives a philosophical text in terms of his socio-cultural experience, which he considers the *mark the reception,* although this mark is personal and there is no reason to be imposed on others. For the receiver, the deviations are significant because they are the *signs of difference* and reception remain *rules* of philosophical discourse." Constantin Sălăvăstru, Discursive Rationality Criticism, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2001, p. 40. I dare extend the theory and its applicability to poetic language too, considering the discussions about reconciling the philosophical and poetic language. I mention, for instance, that Novalis believes that poetry is a part of philosophical technique that "poetry is the heroine of philosophy. Philosophy rises poetry to the rank of principle. It teaches us to know the value of poetry. Philosophy is the theory of poetry. It shows us what we must understand through poetry, that it means absolutely everything . "Novalis, ed. cit., pp. 196-197.
- 10. Idem, p. 151.
- 11. For Hegel, in this respect, the art of poetry is considered the" universal art of free spirit in itself, a spirit that, in making of the work of art, is not related to the sensitive material from outside and that moves only in the inside of representations and feelings. But precisely on this, highest step, art exceedes itself, leaving the element of reconciling awareness of spirit passing from the poetry of representation the prose of thinking ".Quotation from Cassian Maria Spiridon, *Double Horizons*, Ed. Book Romanian, Bucharest, 2006, p. 139.
- 12. See in this respect Mariana Net, *A Poetic of Atmosphere*, Ed. Univers, Bucharest, 1989.
- 13. Jean Baudrillard, *Access Words* Rom translation. Bogdan Ghiu, Ed. Art, Bucharest, 2008, p. 24.

- 14. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Rom translation. Virgil Bogdan, Ed. IRI, Bucharest, 2000, p. 374.
- 15. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, Rom translation. HR Radian, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 2007, p. 224.
- 16. Jorge Luis Borges, *Essays*, edited by Andrei Ionescu, Ed. Polirom, Iaşi, 2006, p. 193.
- 17. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Praise of Theory*. Heritage of Europe, Rom translation. Octavian Nicolae and Val. Panaitescu, Ed. Polirom, Iaşi, 1999, p. 110.
- 18. William H. Calvin, *How the Brain Thinks*, Rom translation. Oana Munteanu, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 2006, p. 206. The whole theory of semantic mosaic at WH Calvin has as its starting point the idea that the human being has a living mind enhanced by the dynamic Darwinism of mental life through which he can invent and reinvent itself (himself) as many times as desired. We could translate into terms of Novalis like this: "The difference between *composing poetry* and *writing* a poem. The *mind* is the quintessential talent. The reason postulates, the fantasy *designs* -the mind executes. Conversely, where the fantasy executes and the mind projects." Romantic poetry and Rhetoric. "Novalis, op. cit., p. 175.
- 19. Umberto Eco, *Apocalyptic and Integrated* Rom translation. by Stefania Mincu, Ed. Polirom, Iaşi, 2008, p. 110.
- 20. The literary structuralism developed around 1960 as an attempt to apply the literary texts the methods and the logistics of modern structural linguistics, initiated and promoted by Ferdinand de Saussure. In this respect the contributions of Linguitics Schools in Prague and Copenhagen are eloquent. For a detailed explanation on the contributions of the two schools see section *Transdisciplinary Definitions of Contemporary Semiotics* of this chapter.
- 21. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory. An Introduction*, Rom. translation Delia Ungureanu, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 208, pp. 116-117.
- 22. Maria Carpov Introduction to the Semiology of Literature, Ed. Univers, Bucharest, 1978, pp. 25-26 (see the following).
- 23. "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" in Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.), Style in Language, Cambridge, Mass, 1960, p. 358, cited Maria carpov, op. cit., pp. 120-121.
- 24. Roman Jakobson and Morris Hale, *Fundamentals of Language*, The Hague, 1956 apud Maria carpov, op. cit., p. 121.
- 25. Those signs encountered in discourse to facilitate communication, not to transmit information.
- 26. Terry Eagleton, op. cit., p. 125.
- 27. Nicolai Berdyaev, *Philosophy of Inequality* Rom. translation of Florea Neagu, Ed. Andromeda Company, Bucharest, 2005, p. 315.
- 28. Cassian Maria Spiridon, *Thoughts about Poetry*, ed. cit., pp. 114-115.

- 29. Alex F. Osborn, *L'imagination constructive* Dund, Paris, 1971, XIV, cited Traian D. Stănciulescu, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Creation*, Ed. Junimea, Iași, 2005, p. 15.
- 30. We must recognize that the majority of today's poetry, is a laboratory poetry listed under the sign of making than under that of creation. In this regard, Marin Mincu analyses the young poetry ofpostmodernism and writes that "the current young poet is no longer interested in creating poetry by any means, but to write it; he no longer expresses himself in the act of creation (...), but through writing. The need to build large or revealing metaphors or to symbolize something that is totally absent, what interests him primarily being an acute grasp of thereal through which he manages to speak directly, without the mediation of conventions imposed by one rhetoric or another . Creation (...)he is no longer interested in and it is replaced with the naked operation of describing/ writing a text "in Marin Mincu, The Romanian Poetic Experimentalism, Ed. Parallel 45, Pitesti, 2006, p. 86. However, even in such conditions, the method and apparatus of semiotics can help to an interpretation or understanding of the text, even if it is the result of an experiment.It appears as a system of signs placed in relationships and and because of this it may be subject to functional structure analysis.
- 31. Mircea Cărtărescu, *The Chimeric Dream*, Ed. The letter, Bucharest, 1992.

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