

## THE COMMUNICATION THAT ALIENATES

In the context of a hyper urbanized and hyper computerized world, in a world where the news travel at an amazing speed, and where the social contacts are easier and easier to establish and more diverse, *the communication* represents the binder, the relational structure that gathers in a bundle the threads of this world, maintaining its cohesion, its nature, even when it sustains the dispute, the conflict or the lie.

Within the human society, considered as a structure of social relationships and a practice of the real due to these relationships, nothing can be created, nothing can exist without communication for the simple fact that the act of thinking itself is a form of communication, even with oneself. And if we want to better justify this situation we could go even further with this argument, in order to observe that in fact, at the base of the living there is a genetic code in whose structure "the information" and "the communication" form a couple of essential factors.

At the same time, one of the major premises of philosophy that we always have to consider is that reality is objective but, subjective as well, in as much as it is also the result of human practice. From such a perspective, we can ask ourselves: what does the objective reality represent without the practice through which the major instrument of communication – the language – transforms it in a symbolic system?

The simple intuition could help us answer this question without getting into too many metaphysical or scientific details: through language, the thinking processes the objective reality, cuts it out, classifies it, introducing it in a categorical system revealing thus "the world", (The human universe is one made out of "signs", of "symbols" and the relationships between these ones; *omne symbolum de symbolo*, Ch. S. Peirce says, the one who conceived the world as a semiotic "phaneroscopia". Saussure, not so much a philosopher, initiated a similar subject for study, "the semiology", conceived as the

study of the role signs in the social life, while Wittgenstein stated the solipsism: "the limits of my language are the limits of my world".

Thus, neither the individual knowledge, nor the collective one can ignore the language and the communication as means through which things, beings are turned into symbols and symbolic relationships. They are elements that allow the appearance and the evolution of thinking, generating the appearance of culture and the progress of knowledge. We could quote here Edgar Morin: "Culture and society are in a mutual generating relationship and in this relationship one cannot neglect the interactions between individuals who are themselves culture conveyers; these interactions regenerate the society that in its turn regenerates the culture"<sup>1</sup>. Even though the term communication is not clearly expressed here, it is obvious that the "interaction" Morin is talking about cannot be achieved in another way. But the French sociologist's idea becomes interesting only when coupled with the idea of "cognitive praxis": "culture does not only have a cognitive dimension: it is in fact a cognitive machine whose praxis is cognitive", and this praxis is achieved through interaction and communication in a perpetual process in the shape of a "retroactive loop". In other words, communication produces and transmits culture, namely a sum of principles, visions, models, cognitive schemes, liberties, taboos, myths, uses and customs, all of these components forming an interactive structure that however, right due to this morphological feature acquires activeness and direction achieving even to backtrack on itself in order to reshape its components and even its entire configuration. Thus, without seeing this as a paradox, culture constantly advances, after repeated recurrences over its own components which interact, communicate between them, re-arranging themselves, implicitly reorienting its cognitive vector. After every such movement, the "expectancy horizon" of that particular culture is

modified and also, in its turn, modifies the perspective from which the cultural mentality approaches the facts in order to achieve knowledge... Driven by such a retroactive dynamics, the culture advances, incessantly producing culture.

The situation is identical in the case of *society-communication* relationship: it is true that a society is a society just because its members are engaged in a communicational interaction process. This process represents in fact the binder of social cohesion. This binder controls until a certain point "the consensus" as well as "the conflict", both processes being socially immanent. If culture, itself a social process, comes back on itself for self-corrections to get knowledge, society alike, through communicational interaction maintains its cohesion, but, also, continuously re-orders itself, reorganizes its components, readjusts its internal relationships and hierarchies - in other words, evolves. Thus, the communication model proves to be the best in explaining the dialectic evolution of a society, its movement forward coupled with the revision of its own evolution towards its "correction".

Starting from the organization, in time, of a small social group in which the relationships and the hierarchies are gradually established gradually, they are extrapolated to a group made of other groups, that is to a society, giving it its form and coherent structure. This gives birth to the appearance of "classic" societies, where communication is a "temperate" one, adjusted for maintaining a certain coherence and rigor meant to ensure the state stability.

Obviously, communication is a phenomenon closely related to power and in the hands of those in power, communication remains a dangerous instrument. The analysis of this phenomenon allows the one who gets to know and master it to be able to elaborate an entire strategy to influence a social group. And when "the truth" in the name of which one takes action proves to be relative, biased, the consequences are easy to imagine. Clutched by an elite group led in the name of its own common interests, under apparent praiseworthy intentions, in the name of so called humanitarian ideals, the "communication" could confuse, could

manipulate individuals, groups, institutions and even whole nations.

In a "classic" society, an individual, a person remains a well-defined entity. Even though, he represents an entity that can be manipulated, he maintains his essence as a person who willingly adheres to a movement or an idea.

In such a society, the social cohesion is based more on the direct, immediate contact, on the relationships created through natural, face to face dialog between human beings and the media means contribute as well at maintaining this cohesion. No matter the extent and the intent of influencing the individuals through media, the social scaffolding does not yield, but keeps its coherence. Within the "classic" society, no matter the degree of manipulation of the individual, the communication joins, binds, socializes, bestowing on the social group its identity coherence.

But, modern societies are confronted today with a phenomenon that perversely takes place inside the social core and, instead of reuniting and producing the benefic socialization, gradually it stresses, wears down, creates mechanic and superficial addictions and finally, alienates. This factor is "the excess of communication" sustained by an amazing proliferation of mass-media.

Hyper communication seems to be the civilization phenomenon that leads to estrange from "culture", in the Spenglerian sense of the term. The excessive information flux transforms intercommunication in communication verbiage, accelerates the social time through multiple request and cvasi-automatic reaction at a message, thus increasing superficiality. The stereotype of communication often reduces the message to a phatic conversation with no cognitive value.

Here, there is another important observation to be made: mass-media contributes to communication addiction but it also alienates the individual, generating social autism. It is almost unsettling the percentage of individuals, especially young people, who, whilw on the bus, train or plane, in the waiting rooms, on institution hallways, on the street or while crossing the street look at and button the keys of a cell-phone, indifferent at the world around them .

The commerce with communication has reached unusual dimensions. Communication through media has become a hyper phenomenon organized at world scale. The Internet is no longer just a media means of communication but it is a part of our daily life, a sort of Trojan horse that controls our ideas and movements.

Even though this "institution", now planetary, product of an amazing technologic evolution has been created in the name of a progress ideal, for the wellbeing of the human being and society, there is implicitly, in the organization of this "cyberspace" the danger of a media aggression against the individual, through which this one could lose balance, socially extinct through excessive communication, being isolated in an artificial space, with all its consequences in this situation. In short, although it may seem exaggerated the Internet can create addiction and the "communication for communication" can turn into a communicational drug or into an alienating simulacrum of communication.

In one of his writings, McQuail emphasizes three aspects that positively influence the communication between individuals and act as a social binder: *the physical proximity, the similarity of preoccupations and the membership group*<sup>2</sup>. Or, the distant communication through the computer, without the direct, physical human contact with the interlocutor, even if this one appears on the screen of the computer has something artificial in it, that supports the feeling of false communication. Achieved in this way it can not replace the conviviality created by the contact in immediate context, by the tiny gestures, the minute detail, apparently insignificant, which in a real proximity creates supplementary meanings, a certain state, an ambiance... News on the computer, newspapers on the computer, shopping on the computer, books on the computer, music and image so on and through

the computer, all of these facilities apparently makes our existence easier, but, at the same time, risks to isolate the individual in a closed space, inducing him another way of thinking, creating other addictions, a different behaviour in which the logical, intellectual functions are hypertrophied at the expense of a real conviviality, of the real of the contiguous personal connection that keeps *homo sapiens* close to Nature. If we were Spengler adepts, we would believe that this is, in fact, a step towards the end of human civilization, a step through which the live communication structure is *em-bittered*, withdrawn from a really social context, uniformed, abstracted and formalized. Then, when the communication threads that sustain "the social" lose their sap, the entire structure itself is in danger. The human being seems to estranges himself from the *agora*, of live communication and ultimately of *his own nature*. Paradoxically, in a world totally based on communication, the individual may remain isolated and addicted until insanity to the communication means that he himself creates. However, let us not be so pessimistic and hope that the Alive with its typical reactive force will find solutions to attenuate the danger of alienation through "communication hyper consumption".

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### Endnotes

1. MORIN, E. (1991) *La Méthode 4. Les Idées. Leur habitat, leur vie, leurs mœurs, leur organisation*. Paris:Seuil. p. 17.
2. McQUAIL, D. (1999) *Communication*, rom. transl. Comunicarea. Iași: European Institute. p. 20.