

COMMUNICATION AS DEFINING DIMENSION OF CULTURE

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Abstract: *The gifts of speaking and of written word are the only ones which differentiate us from the animal world. The social organization, wars, big constructions and other such things can also be found at other species on the planet; however, we are unique through the way we communicate and through the quantity of information that we share every day.*

Keywords: *communication, culture, human relations, information, mass-media, social dimension*

The gift of speaking and the written word are the only things that make us different from the animal world. Social organization, wars, super-constructions and other things alike are found also in other species from our planet, however, regarding the way we communicate and the quantity of information that we share each day with our peers, we are unique.

Today humanity presents itself to us in a specific manner, as Edgar Morin says, "...like a bees nest, whose noise is provided from the multitude of communications. All that is featured, everything that navigates, everything that is propagated is the result of communication. There is no air molecule that doesn't vibrate today, full of messages, in the same way that there is no machine, gesture or meaning that is neither audible nor visible." Communication is "trafing" hundreds of millions of people on a daily basis, offering them information, opinions, publicity, knowledge, building one of the most important dimensions of our contemporary social environment, and in the same time being one of the most characteristic features and sources for our current civilization.

Communicating is more than sharing and sending information; it communicates, creates and maintains the society, builds, circulates, propagates a common identity. The new approach towards communication reveals that the man is

in essence, a dialog being, a participant to the communication process, reveals that he “can not communicate”, because every gesture of his has a meaning and it is a message to others. The conclusion that current thinking can sign is that to exist, as a human being means to communicate with yourself, with the world you are in, with divinity. In the contemporary philosophy “the relation of communicating is lifted at the level of matrix to all human experiences”, as Ilie Pârvu says in his “*Filosofia comunicării*”. (Pârvu [2000]; p. 127). E. Dobrescu supports, in this context that “We live in a communicative universe. All living bodies communicate between themselves; and in society – the communication represents the paradigm of all human activities; everything that is subscribed to the human being has communicative and communicational connotations.” (Dobrescu [1998]; p. 41)

Communication represents an essential dimension of human life, and in the same respect, of culture. To emphasize the importance of this phenomenon, some scientist researchers make culture equal to communication. American scientist Edward T. Hall affirms that “the culture is communication, and the communication is culture”. Beginning from this approach of the relationship between culture and communication some western scientist researchers represent the culture as an iceberg, with its base constituted by the cultural values and norms and its top by human behavior, manifested through communication.

In an attempt to conceptual delimiting the communication phenomenon apart from the culture phenomenon one needs to define them. Here, the problems complexity intervene, metaphorical expressed by Miguel de Unamuno declaring that, after 40 years of teaching, he doesn't know what culture is. The same situation we meet in the attempt to define communication. It would be a mistake to approach this phenomenon starting from the dimensional premises. Here the judgment of the all-including character of both culture and communication intervenes. A more correct approach would consist in the identification of the precise way to describe the world comprised by this phenomenon, without the accordance of conceptual priority, recognizing multidimensionality. The culture can be understood as the existential sphere in which human beings construct the meaning by using symbolic representation. Meaning that we refer to the modalities people use to give sense to their lives communicating between themselves. In a closed and deep end sense, the culture refers to the practices and the products of art, literature, music, film etc. But the cultural dimension overlays this scheme, in the same way as the communication dimension, referring also to the economical, political, social and technical environment. In this case, it is about instrumental symbolizations, which are different then those “existential” – purely cultural. So, the dual structure of the cultural universe is found in the communication environment as well, human languages having both an instrumental function and a symbolic function in the same time. By culture, we understand all the realizations of the human creativity, everything that “the man added to nature” and everything that sums up all the aspects of life and all the modalities for understanding them.

Communication – as well between people as between nations – is a key component of all the ways of living and, consequential, of all cultures. The notion of communicating comes from the latin word, *communico* – to relate, to have something in common, to share knowledge. Communication means permanent exchange of information, messages, and significations amongst individuals and groups of individuals through diverse languages, meaning that it represents: an interaction or a semiotic transition, in which the involved persons manifest – through signs – complementary behaviors, governed by certain rules.” (Farte [2004]; p. 196) The communication represents the basis of human socialization in creating, keeping and sending of social – cultural values and traditions to future generations. If we were to schematically represent communication – culture relationship, then:

- Culture = cultural heritage + cultural activity;
- Cultural activity = creation + social communication.

Cultural heritage can not be genetically transmitted. All the knowledge, traditions, behaviors exist only in the culture’s system. It is about transmitting signs from one generation to another through communication. Therefore communication is a structural – constituting factor of culture, a specific feature, of ontological criteria for human existence.

Culture and communication concepts are very close, and we find the basis of this unity in those definitions, which reveals their symbolic function, specific to human existence. Jean Gaune remarks: “*culture and communication both form a strange couple. One can not be explained without the other. Both of this phenomenon are perfectly tight, they are not containing one another and they can not be placed in the plane of parallel reflections, through analogical correspondence*”. (Gaune [2000]; p. 17) These two domains of interference intercede in the social integration process of the individuals, in transmitting the cognitive and practical experience.

Communication plays the fundamental culture vector roll. The evolution of culture is directly related with the development of communication means. The invention of writing, printing and mass communication ways – mass-media, of new informational technologies revolutionized the culture development. A low-based theory took shape: perfecting the means of communication lead to social progress and the social progress stimulated the communication development.

Mass media is a complex system of scientific means of social communication, specific languages, new cultural genres and specific cultural products. These are not only a “vehicle” of culture or an agent of culture socialization, but also these are the producers of a new culture.

The communication channels are cultural instruments that serve promoting or influence the attitudes that facilitate motivation, favor behavioral models streaming and deploy social integration. These channels have a major roll in turning cultural politic to action, and in the culture democratization. For millions of people the communication channels represent the main access hub to culture and to all forms of

creational expression. Communication also has a considerable importance for depositing knowledge, organizing society's collective memory and, especially in collecting, treating and utilizing the scientific information. Potentially, at least, communication can remodel the cultural matrix of society, in this way identifying itself with a permanent source of danger and problems.

The generic social effects of communication can be as it follows:

- Changing the human relation with the surrounding world by creating an informational ambiance that acts as a third party between one and his relationships with the social environment;

- The information comprised in mass communication tends to reduce or to modify interpersonal relationships, that were once constituting the main structure of social communication;

- Digital technologies of communication is the space and time distance amongst people and societies, strengthening world interdependencies and thus creating the premises for planet based knowledge. Marshall McLuhan used to talk about the idea of a "global state";

- The extension and multiplication of social effects of particular events that happened in a certain part of the world to global scale, through mass-media channels;

- Streaming in portions never seen before, of knowledge and culture to every day people, and in this way transforming and continually improving individual knowledge. Ample researches emphasizes that the modern man is really informed, having, a volume of professional, political and cultural knowledge never obtained before, thanks to communication;

- Propaganda and public opinion become key factors for influence and social control, for social practices, representing symbolic violence instruments. Like the two scouts of AC Roma club Alexander King and Bertrand Schneider remark, *"mass-media became one of the key agents in public opinion forming and individual judgment"*.

Communication's impact towards culture development in the postmodern society becomes considerable, massive and sometimes unpredictable, leading to the reconfiguration of the cultural universe. A series of authors emphasize the fact that the current time period is a witness to the forming of a "neo- culture" as a shape that culture takes in our time, designated through the terms "mass culture" and "media culture". The "mass culture" is defined as a conception towards life, as a form of existence valuation, as lived ideology, dominating, and generically as pointing to all the psychic contents that result from exposure to mass communication channels. In this context they are talking about a cultural crisis, about diminishing the standard value of cultural messages, symbolic violence and manipulation, "non – communication", danger, meaning changing the dialog stance of communication to a monologue stance. (Baudrillard [1972]; p. 208, p. 222)

The current cultural phenomenon showed the close relationship between various ways of communication and the cultural processes, their interdependence, putting in advantage the communicational dimension of culture, becoming issue of thinking and systematical research for all the social disciplines.

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