

Reengineering some uncertainties about communicational relationships

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ABSTRACT

The impulse to start the current research is represented by the ascertained fact that in the universe of communication there is a persistence of uncertainties regarding the place and the functions of communicational relationship in the processes of communication. This study takes into account the fact that in the nuclear center of communication there is a communicational relationship. The investigation focuses on revealing the conceptual articulations for understanding the idea of communicational relationship. We emphasize the fact that, on the first level, communication is a voluntary social involvement, an intentional existential manifestation. The so-called involuntary aspects of communication are moments of loss of control in generating meanings. There cannot be communication without a will for communication. The meaning is the first level of human will and desire for communication. The second level is the message. Communication itself appears as an integrative third level of human will for communication. We help the emergence to be seen and delineate the criteria for the comprehension of communicational relationships: existential manifestation, the classes of communicators (actors, agents, actants, interactants, transactants), transactivity (transactional criterion), and repetition (iteration). The conclusion is that the communicational relationship is a personal-iterative, transactional and life-existential meaningful manifestation.

Keywords: communication uncertainties; communicational relationship; life manifestation

1. INTRODUCTION

Human communicational relationships constitute the ontological armature of society. It does not exist a society without relational network. "People, assert Dumitru Otovescu, Florin Păsătoiu and Radu Petcu, consume their social life relating" (Otovescu, Păsătoiu & Petcu, 2013, p. 340). There enter in the human relationship sphere both the personal relationship, and the interpersonal relationship (professional, organizational, interethnic etc.) Human relationships are understood by almost all specialists as being social relationships (Barker, 2003; Barker, 2012). A primary premise that leads to this inference is that the human being is a communicational being. As conscious entity emerging inside the social and developed under this circumstance, the human being is communicationally impregnated. Therefore, his relationships are also communicationally impregnated, either directly, or indirectly. A normal exigency of General Communication Science contends that the human relationships that are indirectly impregnated by the communicational trait are to be analyzed

as personal relationships. Their sphere, without being insignificant, is however reduced, and their specific is apodictic. However, wider scientific resonance is communicational relationship. If the human relationships constitute the ontological pillar of society, the communicational relationships constitute the radiant axis of sociology.

2. FOUR DEFINITIONAL CRITERIA FOR A STANDARD COMMUNICATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

We consider that it is necessary a systematization of the meanings of standard „communicational relationship”, because this is a nuclear sociological concept. Ilie Bădescu considers, in truth, that „social relationships represent the central concept of sociology” (Bădescu, 2010, p. 279). Similarly, we say, communicational relationship is a nuclear concept of communication.

By definition, the communicational relationship meets four criteria, presents four aspects. The four standard criteria of communicational relationship are: the existential manifestation, the classes of communicators/the number of communicators (actors, agents, actants, interactants, transactants), transactivity (transactional criterion), and repetition (iteration). A communicational relationship is an interpersonal, iterative, transactional existential meaningful manifestation. If the existential meaningful manifestation does not repeat, then we speak of communicational contact (Du Plessis, 2001; Du Plessis, 2005). The existential contact is a repetitive stage of an existential meaningful manifestation.

a) The existential meaningful aspect

An existential meaningful manifestation. First of all, people generate meanings. Human beings and only human beings generate meanings. Human life is a universe of meanings. After thousands of years of co-construction of meaning and message processing, in the communicators' mind the message is built irrepressibly. It cannot not stir meanings, it is not possible not to assign meanings, it is not possible not to estimate a message. However, despite the first axiom of the Palo Alto School (non-communication is impossible), we see that non-communication is possible. Communication is not given, but it is constructed. It is a higher level and it is built using pre-communicative elements, as meanings. The level of the infra-meanings and the level of the created meanings, discovered or assigned constitute the zero level, the automatic level. Communication emerges as significant interaction (indicial, indicator, semiotic, signalitic, iconic, symbolic, and symptomatic). There is a joining and sharing of meanings of rational or emotional order: thoughts, ideas, knowledge, feelings, opinions, information. The essence of communication – “sharing” – means sharing meanings. The comprehension and the sharing as defining approaches of the communicational process refer to meanings. Comprehensibility is an ontological principle. Communication can remain only at the level of comprehension. It can advance towards higher levels of “significationality”: trust, power management and dissemination of information (Ishizaki & Kato, 1998; Katagiri, Takanashi, K., Ishizaki, Den, & Enomoto, 2013)

In general, communication is instantaneous: the agreement on the remission-reception of meanings is spontaneous and, most of the times, tacit. The “agreement” is invoked only in case of disagreement. As Petra Hendriks shows, there are „speaker meanings” and „hearer meanings” and sometimes the two do not coincide. Under these circumstances, in order to find a solution, we make use of literal meanings: „Literal sentence meanings result from hearer's failure to calculate the speaker meaning in situations where the hearer's selected

meaning and the speaker meaning differ. Similarly, non-recoverable forms result from the speaker's failure to calculate the hearer meaning in situations where the speaker's intended meaning and the hearer meaning differ." (Hendriks, 2010, p. 1). The meaning proves to be not only a construction, but also a co-construction (Tshesane, 2001; Maior, 2009; Angelopulo & Barker, 2013).

The elements of this level irradiate also the message level: without being purely automatic, the emergence of the message is irrepressible. Meanings and messages are irrepressible and auto-telic. Instead, communication is dependent on the two poles of crystallization; it is a building that is built through the communicational commitment of the transactant. There are random meanings, but there is not incidental communication. Communication is not unconscious or involuntary. It does not happen accidentally. There is no involuntary communication. Any communication requires an implicit or explicit commitment. Shortly, communication is a commitment. Or commitment is a voluntary act. So, all communication is conscious and voluntary. Communication involves a commitment to do jointly, to share something, achieving something together and sharing, placing in common includes the obligation to do voluntarily in common, being informed. What is common is preliminary, somehow individually, subjective, but not random. Meanings can sometimes be random, whereas communication can never be random. Communication is a negotiation, a transaction, and a negotiation cannot be involuntary. In communication, "silence and speech" constitute the object of communication (Nakane, 2009; Fourie, 2010; Fruză, 2014).

At the first level of human will, we have the meanings. On the second level, we retain the message, and on the third level, we record communication. In more precise terms: meanings are unconditional, they are generated spontaneously. Meanings are spontaneous: the world emanates "sponte sua" meanings. Spontaneous includes the random. Some of the meanings precipitate, crystallize in meaningful relational nuclei called messages. The messages seem irrepressible, but they are not anymore unconditional: the message is conditioned by a receptor, a receiver, an available communicator, by another. The meanings only need me. The message deliberately needs me (assumed or real) and also an indispensable other real and computational (able to build, rebuild and process meanings) (Craft & Davis, 2013). At the third level communication is double conditioned. It takes the condition and the message criterion also adds the additional criterion of minimum confirming the sharing or at least certain message meanings. In communication, the criterion of the message another is doubled by the making of common criteria, placing in common, sharing. If I and Thou (Another, Other) are not putting in common meanings, even divergent, para-consistent, vague or contradictory meanings, then there is no communication. For meanings, it is enough also a simple I and Thou, necessary for a real message. Martin Buber is he who in the philosophy of communication establishes the nuclear tandem of the communication "I and Thou", I and being with Thou. For communication, it is required that I and Thou do something in common, to build together in common spiritual or material meanings. H.-G. Gadamer contends that "the communicational relationship" has "the meaning of address" (Gadamer, 2000, p. 699).

In their situation of theoretical representations of human relationships, social relationships do not stop to be occurrences of existence. „The fundament of a social relationship (also its circumstance), asserts Professor Ilie Bădescu, is life manifestation that includes at least two individuals" (Bădescu, 2010, p. 279). Social relationship is, ontological, a life manifestation that attracts the action, interaction, and change of minimum two agents. The first feature of communicational relationship is that of being an existential manifestation. The life manifestation is meaning to be in the world, „being-in-the-world". Self-understanding and world understanding take place in relational terms. In fact, the social

universe is a system of personal, interpersonal, social relationships (Munteanu, 2013; Siminică & Traistaru, 2013; Avram & Traistaru, 2014).

The human being perceives himself as element of a system and as an actant within this system. „Being-in-the-world, asserts Jurgen Habermas, is a fundamental ontological concept; its central significance here is as term of relatedness, it concerns our relations as persons (...) intrinsically related to our capacity for self-understanding and self-expression. We understand ourselves as actors or as agents in relation to the world” (Habermas, 1970, p. 35). Not only in the social system, is the individual agent or actor, additional in his consciousness and in his social manifestations, but he conceives himself as agent or actant and he behaves as such. The agent’s energy comes from his social relationship. His role and place in the social structure of membership is fixed, first of all, by canonical sets of relationships. Jurgen Habermas uses also the actor concept, also the agent concept. Craig Calhoun uses the actor concept and considers „social relationships” as being „the concrete connections among social actors” (Calhoun, 1992, p. 206). Anthony Giddens chooses „Agent Agency” (Giddens, 1984, p. 5). Instead, professor Paul Dragoş Aligică uses „agents” (Aligică, 2007, p. 84). Although, aside Pierre Bourdieu and Dumitru Bâtâr, he chooses the „agent” concept (Bâtâr, 2003, p. 49).

b) The numerical aspect

The fourth criterium is found in number. The quantitative standard of the social is constituted by minimum two agents who interact, transact. The communicational relationship is performed between two subjectivities, but it has inter-subjective character (Goodwin-Davey & Davey, 2000; Barker, 2009). This leads to the idea as Pierre Bourdieu shows, that the „social world” is formed „as a space of subjective relations” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 8). Composing a relationship universe, social relationships are structured as „a network of relationships”, P. Bourdieu asserts (Bourdieu, 1990, p.44).

c) The transactional aspect

Personal relationship and interpersonal relationship, we emphasize, they are also relationships. Their practical essence is constituted by action, interaction, connection and exchange, in a word: transaction. The communicational relationship is transactional (Sonderling, 1995; Sonderling, 1996; Sonderling, 2012). Some authors consider, unilaterally, that a relationship is defined either as action, or as interaction, or as exchange. The relationship deriving from action we find it, for example, with Max Weber. In his conception, through action here is understood that behavior of an actor to which this attaches a meaning („attaches” a meaning): „Action is social insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and thereby oriented its course” (Weber, 1978, p. 4). J. Mucha just approaches that in Max Weber’s work „Economy and Society”, and states that „the concept of social relationships is introduced via the concept of social action” (Mucha, 2003, p. 10). Although in the theory of social relationship, A. Schutz starts from the „social action” of M. Weber and F. Znaniecki, his position is that social phenomena could be understood and explained according to a system of four reference schema having in center: „social relations, social group, social act and social personality”. Professor Raymond Boudon considers that action is in the core of social life and institutes social phenomena understanding within its original formula named „action sociology paradigm” (Boudon, 2006, p. 23). A. Schutz constructs a prototype of social relationship in a center where to fix the connection: „the prototype of all social relationship is an intersubjective connection” (Schutz,

1971, p. 14). R. N. Lebow, for example considers that „social relations are characterized by exchange” (Lebow, 1996, p. 1).

Social interaction does not only generate basic communicational relationships, it can, as Nelson Goodman shows, „bring and lead to new social relationships” (Goodman, 1998, p.138). Alan Page Fiske, on the other hand, places at the basis of social relationship the interaction and demonstrates that „people in all cultures use (...) relational models to generate most kinds of social interaction evaluation, and effect”; „people interact with others in order to construct and participate in one or another of the four basic types of social relationships (Fiske, 1992, p. 689). In Professor Marian Preda’s opinion, social interaction is substantial and it can be approached in processes as communications, conflict, decision, power or organizational exchange (Preda, 2006, pp. 32-46).

Social life is transaction and, so, directly, a communicational relationship. On his opinion is that the human being is the result of a long evolution of interaction and social relating. He isn’t impregnated socially, he is socially constructed. There is no human being outside the social, and social means, first of all, relationship (Lebow, 2009; Bărgăoanu, Negrea & Dascălu, 2010; Balaban, 2013; Louw, 2014). Relating, human beings are performing their own essence. The fact that they expect a relationship, they want to relate to one another or they must relate and to be engaged in relationship, which sometimes seem compulsory represents only an essence conversion in existential necessity. Human being can be un-relational. His own relationship essence makes him feel the necessity for a relationship. Hence, he is inclined to engage in a relationship (MacCliam & Barker, 2009; Crețu, 2009; Frunza, 2011).

A. P. Fiske observes that the whole social life of human beings, all its relational aspects „may be organized by combinations of just a few elementary models (schemata, rules, or grammars): communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing” (Fiske, 1992, p. 690). The relational life of the world can be described, explained and understood through action of these four forms of relationship. Fiske specifies the content of these four models: „In communal sharing, people treat all members of a category as equivalent. In authority ranking, people attend to their positions in a linear ordering. In equality matching, people keep track of imbalances among them. In market pricing, people orient to ratio values” (Fiske, 1992, p. 689). We understand that transaction (action, interaction, exchange) constitutes the third criterion of communicational relationship definition.

d) The repetitive, iterative aspect

The Latin „relatio” had the meaning of „repeated bearing” (Teodorescu, 1998, p. 500). As guide for our ordinary coherence of knowledge, in concept, the content of standard communicational relationship has to accede and also agree with iterative, repetitive, recovery and returning traits. The etymological kernel of „relationship” word provides us, additionally, with a condition necessary for the comprehension of a standard social relation. As repeated relation, the communicational relationship has at least two returning points. On the one hand, a relationship is conveyed from a person to another person. On the other hand, a relationship conveys backward. The persons who enter in a relationship are the terminus places of the relationship. As such, the relationship connects two returning places. There is no relationship without a return place. If it isn’t responding to an interaction gesture, it isn’t associated to a relationship. Communicational relationships have iterative character. Returning, replication, answer reaction forms the second criterion for a relationship. A relationship is the

consequence of a relating. Under this standard, a relationship is a correlation (Crețu, 2009; Colhon & Tandareanu, 2010; Brie & Horga, 2010).

But the repetitive character is only a premise for a standard communicational relationship. Additionally, out of this, on an informational-organizational coordinate, any communicational relationship is loaded by an order that has two components, coherence and systemicity. Coherence is an oriented continuity. Systemicity is referred to as relationship performing, not as its content (Dobrescu & Bârgăoanu, 2001). Hence, there can be accepted a definition of the communicational relationship according to the organization idea as being relevant for re-launching intercession of a standard definition.

3. CONCLUSION

The standard communicational relationship is a transactional and unitary, informational, coherent, iterative and systematic existential manifestation of two or more subjectivities. The ontological dimension assures existence of the relationship. Instead, the organizing-informational dimension assures the relationship against volatility, assures its crystallization, structuring, functioning. On systemic feature of any social relationships there are pointed out structures of communicational relationship. Subsequently, according to the communicational relationship structuring we can talk about social groups, organizations, social networks. We understand the communicational relationship as an existential meaningful manifestation with an interpersonal-iterative, transactional character.

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