DIALOGUE
AND
UNIVERSALISM

1/2013

The annual subscription rates are:

Individuals – 44 EUR
As above, for three years in advance – 110 EUR
Institutions – 70 EUR
As above, for three years in advance – 180 EUR

Double copies are available at 12 EUR each for individuals and 20 EUR for institutions; some back issue rates are available on request.

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Dialogue and Universalism, c/o
e-mail: mczarnoc@ifispan.waw.pl, http:// www.dialogueanduniversalism.eu
or to Polish SEC SOCIÉTÉ EUROPÉENNE DE CULTURE; *D&U*
00-079 Warszawa, ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 87/89

PL ISSN 1234-5792

Printed by Drukarnia Paper & Tinta, Warszawa

DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

CULTURE, COMMUNICATION AND COGNITION

Guest Editors: Marek Hetmański, Marcin Trybulec

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Editorial

PHILOSOPHY AT THE CROSSROADS: BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN MEDIA, COMMUNICATION AND COGNITION

In an attempt to explain what mind is and how it works, the twentieth century philosophy turned to language. The linguistic turn in philosophy means relinquishing mentalist vocabulary in favour of explanations depicting thought in terms of linguistic activity. Rather than study pure thought, ideas or representations, philosophers elect to talk about language, the meaning of words and sentences, their syntax and points of reference. Since the early 20th century, researchers in various fields of humanities have highlighted the fact that language is neither a transparent vehicle for knowledge nor a neutral instrument of its generation. At the very root of the linguistic turn lies the general conviction that the medium of cognition and communication exerts significant influence on the cognitive process as such. It seems, however, that traditional philosophies of language, mind and science have failed to derive the ultimate consequence from this line of thought. Generally speaking, media as such, with the possible exception of language understood as a public system of representation, lie outside the scope of interest of philosophers of mind and philosophers of language. In particular, the cognitive value of writing and literacy remains highly underappreciated, despite the fact that most philosophical work actually takes place on paper. The failure to consider writing (and other media) as an important factor in the processes of cognition and communication seems to originate from an assumption, deeply rooted in philosophical tradition, that since any given thought may be expressed by means of any given vehicle (medium) the material vehicle of meaning does not impact the message it carries.

Classic philosophy tacitly assumes that the medium as such is a factor of no significance to the cognitive and cultural process. Research carried out under the theory of literacy (also known as the Toronto School) has been able to convincingly question this assumption. Detailed studies conducted by researchers such as Eric Havelock, Jack Goody, Walter Ong, David Olson, and pertaining to discrepancies in terms of the way in which oral and literate minds function,

provide plentiful material to challenge the commonsense belief that a written message simply constitutes an exact copy of a spoken utterance. Numerous analyses performed by literacy theorists corroborate the thesis that writing is not merely a convenient representation and transcription of a spoken message. While it facilitates certain forms of symbolic operations, the process of transcription can also hinder others, thus significantly altering not only the cognitive acts of the subject of communication, but also modifying the very tasks faced by actors engaged in it. The thesis constitutes an exemplification of a more general proposition that in the process of re-description of representation, what is changed is not merely the material vehicle of the message (the medium) but also its actual content and the nature of cognitive processes engaged in by the participants of communication. Intensive research is currently under way within the theory of literacy into the conceptual and cognitive consequences of media as such and the communicational practices correlated with the same.

This issue of *Dialogue & Universalism* aims to introduce the problems of media and communicational practices into the scope of philosophical deliberations, by demonstrating that the media of communication significantly influence the relations between language, its users and reality, which in consequence contributes to considerable cognitive and cultural changes. The underlying idea behind this collection of articles is the question of philosophy's response to the fact, diagnosed by the theory of literacy, of media mediating cognition.

Topics considered in this D&U issue are divided into three groups of problems. The first part includes papers whose authors aim to answer the question of how and in what sense can philosophical studies and the theory of literacy, or theories of communication, be mutually complementary. What can be gained by philosophy by reflecting on studies of the theory of literacy? Why would the theory of literacy or theories of media and communication benefit from philosophical reflection? The question of communication between representatives of different cultures and languages as well as the problems of understanding incommensurate historical and cultural contexts constitute the second area of interest in this issue. Finally, the third group of articles struggles with the issues of the pragmatic dimension of language and communication.

Publications contained in the D&U issue *Culture*, *Communication and Cognition* (CCC) approach the aforementioned problems from a number of theoretical perspectives. It was the intention of the editors of the issue to establish an interdisciplinary forum where the relations between cognition, communication and media in the cultural context could be discussed. Therefore, authors invited to contribute to the CCC issue represent various fields, from psychology, through anthropology, cultural and media studies, to philosophy itself. By entwining various threads of thought originating from areas where philosophical investigation meets the theory of literacy and theories of communication and media, this issue of D&U seeks to demonstrate how fruitful interdisciplinary cooperation can prove to be.

The editors of the CCC issue would like to extend particular thanks to David R. Olson for his participation in the conference "Culture Communication and Cognition: Explaining Cognitive-Cultural Components of Media and Communication" organised in Lublin in May 2012 and for his contribution and support. We would also like to thank Jan Sleutels for highly inspiring conversations. Both the conference in Lublin and this volume itself would certainly have been greatly diminished if not for the help of Grzegorz Godlewski, Zbysław Muszyński and Tomasz Komendziński.

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David R. Olson

WRITING, THE DISCOVERY OF LANGUAGE, AND THE DISCOVERY OF MIND

ABSTRACT

In the 1960s claims were made about the role of literacy in restructuring the mind. While those claims were frequently criticized, this paper revives the claim by showing that reading and writing require a new consciousness of properties of language, properties relevant to a distinctive modes of literate thought.

Keywords: literacy; mind; consciousness; thinking; quotation.

Some years ago (Olson 1977; 2004) I advanced the argument that writing bore a special relationship to consciousness of language. Borrowing from historical and anthropological sources (Goody 1986; McLuhan 1962) that social practices had shifted historically with the advance of literacy and writing, I proposed that similar changes may be observed in the development of children. Namely, it is possible, I suggested that children's orientation to language changes as they become literate. This proposal led to a flurry of experimental studies with pre-reading and post-reading children on how their learning to deal with printed materials altered their conceptions of their oral speech. No one doubts that when children learn to read they learn something about written language; the controversial claim was that learning to deal with written language altered their perceptions and conceptions—in a word their consciousness—of their spoken language. In an early study, we (Robinson, Goelman and Olson 1982) showed that pre-reading children had a very permeable boundary between what was actually said as opposed to what was implied or intended by what they said. No distinction was made between what was said, what one meant to say, what one should have said, and so on. Children's understanding of what was said, especially their memory for and attention to the very words of an utterance, changed importantly as they learned to read and write. Historians point

out that the very notion of "verbatim," according to the very words, is of Medieval origin (Small 1997).

The hypothesis drew both praise and criticism. Critics showed that in some circumstances children could make the required distinctions in that many young children repaired their own and other's misstatements and mispronunciations and hence denied that any major change occurred. Others admitted the shift but attributed it to the maturing of cognitive functions generally (Hakes 1980) and still others to schooling and culture generally rather than to reading and literacy (Scribner and Cole 1981). One effect has been to distinguish linguistic competence from metalinguistic knowledge, that is, knowledge about language and then to narrow the claims as to what precisely changed with literacy. I argued that metalinguistic knowledge about the pragmatic functions of language—asking, telling, lying—tend to be universal whereas knowledge about the phonological, semantic and syntactic structures of language were more directly associated with literacy and writing.

Support for this hypothesis came from a variety of sources. It had long been observed by Piaget and others that pre-school children lacked the concept of word, confusing the word with the thing represented. Thus asked for a long word, they may offer a word such as "train" because trains are long. In our own work (Homer and Olson 1999; Homer 2009) young children were shown a sentence that read "Three little pigs." Once children had repeated the sentence, one word was covered up and they were asked "Now what does it say?" they often replied "Two little pigs." When asked to pretend to write such expressions as "Two little pigs" they made two visual marks, one for each object rather than one for each word. We concluded that pre-literate children took visible marks to designate things not words for things. They lacked the concept of word.

Even when they are somewhat older and more literate children tend to be uncertain as to the relations amongst what was actually said, what was implied, and what was inferred. Thus Beal (1990) presented brief stories such as the following: Cindy's family went to the beach. Cindy made a sand castle. The waves were big that day. Her sand castle got smashed. Her father helped her make another one. Did the story say that the waves smashed the sand castle? Only 8 to 10 year olds said *"No"*. I reviewed this material in a current issue of *Written language and literacy* (Olson 2012).

Studies of children's literacy development are limited by the fact that age and learning to read in school covary. Hence, the importance of the dramatic findings by Morais, Bertelson, Cary, and Alegria (1986) showing that adult subjects of normal intelligence who had for historical reasons missed the opportunity to learn to read and write performed just as do young children on tests of phonological awareness, that is, tests that require subjects to analyze the sound properties of an utterance as opposed to its meaning. Again, such findings suggest an altered grasp of the linguistic properties of language.

While there is now more or less universal agreement that the ability to analyze the phonological properties of one's own speech depends upon literacy, there is less agreement that there are similar limitations in children's ability to reflect on the semantic and syntactic properties of their language, specifically, the meanings of words and sentences, to treat them as objects of analysis and reflection. My suggestion is that learning to read and write has a major impact on the ways in which adults in a literate society come to think about words, their meaning, their definitions as well as about the relations among them, that is their synonymy, antonymy, and hyponomy.

In one paper (Olson and Oatley (submitted)) we have argued that the metalinguistic attitude to language has both an historical and a developmental trajectory, in both cases a product of writing and a written tradition. Writing, like quotation, sets apart a piece of language as an artifact with a distinctive representation and interpretation. Essential to writing in an alphabetic script are the concepts of phonemes, words and sentences. Concepts of these entities allow these structures to be isolated from the stream of speech to become visible entities in a written code. Once isolated they become available as objects of discourse—*mentioned* rather than *used*—allowing a discussion of the precise itemizing of sounds, the meanings of words and the correct interpretation of sentences. Thus, the concept of word appears to be unique to members of societies acquainted with the alphabet (Himmelmann 2006). In written contexts the conventions of meaning and use become explicitly normative, subject to training and enforcement in the school. Through historical time and in the service of particular goals—the administration of justice or the resolution of philosophical disputes—modern Western languages have developed the lexical and syntactic resources that make up the written register described by Biber (1986; 2009). These resources are particularly appropriate to the written academic discourse that requires "a scrupulous attention to language in its own right" (Donaldson 1975, 70) and that Yuill (2009), and others find characteristic of the language of the school. Thus changes in cognition may be seen as reflections of a changing attitude to language, specifically, attention to the properties of language in addition to the meaning conveyed. Of course, this special attention to the properties of language, once learned, is applicable to careful speech and to more formal uses of language (Snow & Uccelli 2009). Segerdahl (1993) for example, has argued that "it is first through the influence of school-grammar that we learn to handle words according to grammatical rules … and to read sentences from the point of view of their grammatical structure" (8).

While literacy and the new metalinguistic concepts it sponsors, may affect the way we think in a quite general way, writing may also affect cognition by means of its permanence as an artifact. This view is best developed in the so-called "extended mind hypothesis." This is the claim that not all of our cognition goes on in the head. This claim seems unexceptionable when we consider such computational activities as long division or the use of an abacus. We per-

form some simple operations and the result is taken as the product of thinking. The claim becomes more dubious when the extended mind is interpreted as including social knowledge such as knowledge of physics that is distributed across many minds as well as in textbooks and laboratory manuals. In my view it is incorrect to think that knowledge exists anywhere but in the mind of individuals while at the same time admitting that technologies such as writing and computing reshape the cognitive activities one is engaged in. Thus, to literate readers attention goes not only to the message conveyed and the conclusions reached but to the rules and routines by means of which those messages are conveyed. That is what makes them open to revision and to advances in thinking. And such rewriting and rethinking are clearly facilitated by the presence of a written record.

The same seems to be true of the uses of memory. In a landmark book Mary Carruthers (1990) showed that the concept of memory changed with the availability of written texts. And not only in the way one would think, namely, that they used written signs as an aid to memory. Rather they began to think of memory as verbatim memory, memory corresponding to the written version. Prior to that standards of correct remembering were more lax; there was no firm distinction between paraphrase and quotation.

Cognitive theorists such as Merlin Donald (1991) argued that the functions of mind changed with the evolution of cognitive technologies such as writing, a view earlier expressed by Vygotsky (1962). But Donald added that the architecture of cognition actually changed when the cognitive resources are distributed between what is in the mind and what is in the symbols one creates. This theme has been extensively examined and elaborated by Georg Theiner (2011) who shows how texts and programs are used to extend our thinking into domains otherwise inaccessible.

For my part I prefer to link what is in the mind to what one is conscious of and explain complex artifact-mediated cognitions such as long division or following a recipe or writing a program as dividing a complex task into constituents each of which may be carried out within the conscious mind. Like writing, these technologies provide new things to think about and to use in our thinking but thinking remains within the conscious mind. On the other hand, once one become conscious of words, their meanings, their definitions, their logical and semantic relations, one's thinking is altered forever. This is what we mean when we pursue or recommend our literacy.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

Manuela Ungureanu

EXPERIENCES OF WORD MEANING

ABSTRACT

I focus on Barry C. Smith's investigations in the phenomenology of speech, and on his ambitious, unified theory of both sub-personal and first-personal linguistic knowledge (2008, 2009). I argue that empirical hypotheses about our awareness of word meaning challenge the starting points of his phenomenology of speech, as they require both (1) modifications of his proposed theory of speakers experiences of word meaning, and (2) clarifications of what the phenomenology of speech teaches us and why.

Keywords: phenomenology of speech; understanding; knowledge of language; Dummett; Chomsky.

While in the last couple of decades philosophers of language have showed much diminished resistance to Chomsky's approach to (knowledge of) language, their opposition to it has recently taken new shapes, as illustrated in the works of Barry C. Smith, among others (Smith 2008). Together with other philosophers focused on understanding speech, such as J. McDowell, E. Fricker and D. Pettit, Smith's work shows a strong interest in the phenomenology and epistemology of speech. But Smith also subscribes to Chomsky's arguments from the poverty of the stimuli, and to his general approach to a theory of linguistic competence firmly rooted in empirical research in psycholinguistics and developmental psychology.[1] More generally, Smith seems to consider a wide variety of empirical research, and as constraining the philosopher's hypotheses

[1] Smith states for instance: "As Chomsky's arguments show: (i) the learner cannot learn a language L unless she knows P antecedently, (where P is some set of domain-specific constraints on the structure of possible human languages), (ii) P is innately known (because it could not be learned on the basis of impoverished linguistic data available to the learner as the poverty of the stimulus arguments show)…" (2008, 980). For a forceful defense of Chomsky's arguments from the poverty of the stimuli, see Laurence and Margolis 2001, which provides a comprehensive reply to influential critics, such as Putnam.

about the nature of language and/or our knowledge of it, even such that the latter may correct some phenomenological data (2007, 2009).

I concentrate here on Smith's position outlined in his 2008 and 2009 papers.[2] I find his general approach salutary. For it opens the door to further investigations of sources of evidence about meta-linguistic awareness, including not only the phenomenology of speech, but also some empirical research in psycholinguistics, usually ignored when focusing on grammatically judgments. This, in turns, suggests that his interest in the phenomenology of understanding speech springs from a discontent with the narrow range of data concerning speakers' competence to which Chomsky's I-language hypothesis is to be accountable.

But Smith proposes to cover this broader cluster of data about speakers' competences under the umbrella of an ambitious, unified theory of both sub-personal and the first-personal level of linguistic knowledge. Thus, to clarify Smith's approach to the phenomenology of understanding, we need to look at his critique of the Chomskian linguistics and, respectively, of McDowell's take on phenomenology, as well as at Smith's proposed solutions to the impasse he identifies in these two accounts. I first outline, in section 2, the position emerging from his negative arguments against Chomsky and, respectively, McDowell, and then present what Smith takes to be the starting points of a solution to their flaws. In section 3, I summarize some of the data he calls phenomenological and thus in need of an account, and then I argue, in section 4, that his proposals are wanting, and this for reasons of the same kind as those he marshals against McDowell.

I argue that some of Smith's proposed accounts of understanding fall short of what they claim to offer. For, once introduced, empirically motivated hypotheses about our awareness of word meaning bring into question some of starting points of his phenomenology of speech, as they require (1) modifications of his proposed theory of speakers' experiences of word meaning, and (2) clarifications of exactly what the so-called phenomenology of speech teaches us and why. Thus, while salutary in its inclusive take on types of empirical evidence informing philosophers' conception of knowledge of language, the alternative currently offered by Smith to the Chomskian picture of language, is unsatisfactory.

1. REMNANTS FROM PREVIOUS DEBATES ON DUMMET'S VIEW OF KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE

In his recent articles, Smith seems by and large interested in re-formulating and addressing some of Michael Dummett's fundamental questions for the philosopher of language, raised in his much earlier paper entitled *What do I know when I know a language?* (1978/1993). He appreciates Dummett's questions as

[2] I will also make some quick references to his 2007 "Davidson, interpretation and first person constraints on meaning," and his 2006 "Why we still need knowledge of language."

having raised some deep foundational issues in this branch of philosophy and, arguably, beyond: What is the proper characterization of speakers' knowledge of language, since (some of) it gives them "immediate access to some one else's minds when they speak within reach and in a familiar language" (2009, 184)? Moreover, what account of this knowledge does justice to speakers' conscious or immediate access to some aspects of meaning, and especially of their experiences of word meaning (2008, 942; 945)?

But just as in his 2009 paper Smith discriminates about what theory succeeds to do justice to speakers' speech comprehension, in his earlier paper he is selective in his commitment to Dummett's position. On the one hand, he supports the view Dummett can be seen to share with Chomsky, that the "significance" of language is to be explained in terms of a speaker's knowledge of her language.[3] On the other hand, Smith also explicitly, and for good reasons, rejects Dummett's suggestion that the only regularities which feature as part of our language are those to which we have conscious apprehension (2008, 968).[4] Having clearly dissociated his position from that of Dummett's on the extent to which our knowledge of language is conscious, Smith goes back repeatedly to supporting Dummett's conception of understanding language as conscious, immediate or automatic and the related need to respect what he calls the phenomenology of understanding speech, which includes, arguably, the fact that "a speaker knows a vast amount about his language as a matter of ordinary conscious reflection," and in an authoritative way.

But Smith's interest in Dummett's description of first-personal, authoritative knowledge speakers have, plays a double role in his two papers. He uses his request for an account of speakers' phenomenology of understanding speech to argue that the Chomskian linguistics and philosophy of language is descriptively incomplete, while a year later, he provides an argument against McDowell's own account for some of the data they both call the phenomenology of speech. Thus Smith supports not merely the request for an account of the phenomenological data concerning speakers' understanding speech, but rather a particular approach to it.

2. GAPS IN CHOMSKY'S VIEW OF KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE?

For Smith, Chomskian cognitivism about knowledge of language implies not only a rejection of the Platonist idea that languages are objects independent of speakers' knowledge, but also a commitment to positing sub-personal, lan-

[3] Smith thus rejects the Platonist idea that languages are abstract objects, whose existence is independent of human cognition. For instance, Smith claims that "it is what people know, linguistically speaking, that individuates the precise domain of the language they speak…" (2008, 966).

[4] His justification for refusing Dummett's restrictive view of linguistic regularities covered by the theory of (knowledge of) language relies heavily on reasons having to do with Chomsky's cognitivist position in linguistics (2008, 968–70, 980).

guage-specific cognition in order to explain both language acquisition and adult linguistic competence. On this latter aspect of Chomsky's approach, Smith has a couple of qualms, e.g., its being descriptively incomplete, and its having to face a rather serious (meta-theoretical) problem, characterized as "the tension between the objectivity [of linguistics] and the first-person authority of our knowledge of language (2008, 977)."[5] Before I move on to his charge of incompleteness, it is worth noting the ambiguity in Smith's wording of the alleged deeper problem, and especially with regards to the issue of objectivity. For Smith implies both that the Chomskian approach cannot fulfill the need for an account of the objectivity *of linguistics* as a theory, as well as, respectively, the request for an account of speakers' own *objective knowledge of language*. Smith also suggests that the objectivity of linguistics as a theory can only be secured if the generalizations it explains about speakers' competence are rooted in the latter's deemed objective awareness.[6] But, in turn, his statements about the objectivity of *speakers'* knowledge rely heavily on what Smith describes as an essential datum of our phenomenology of understanding, e.g., that speakers have "occurrent and conscious knowledge of … a welter of facts," including some of those described and explained by Chomskian linguistics.

However, my focus is not with the soundness of his attack against Chomskian cognitivism. Rather what interests me here is Smith's claim about the cognitivist's "downplaying" some central elements of speakers' understanding speech, arguably, including their own characterizations of these experiences. Contrary to Chomsky's explicit decision not to characterize the principles underpinning speakers' competence as knowledge, but rather as (mere) cognition, Smith submits that there is some reason to describe speakers' meta-linguistic awareness as knowledge in "the genuine philosophical sense of knowledge." Despite speakers' related faillibility, a speaker has "knowledge of what his words mean, knowledge of which arrangements of his words are sentences, and of how utterances of them can and cannot be understood" (947). Furthermore, this type of linguistic awareness "is both theoretically characterizable and first-personally available" (978). Once provided with a case that speakers' awareness at the first-personal level is indeed theoretically characterizable, the cognitivist's approach to linguistic knowledge arguably misses "the full range of the facts we can know as speakers" and especially those which are known by

[5] He states that "[t]he objectivity of linguistics requires there to be objective facts to which a speaker's linguistic intuitions are answerable—there should be a gap between the linguistic facts studied and our opinions about them. On the other hand, first-person authority requires the linguistic facts to be, pretty much, as we take them to be—for our linguistic intuitions to be largely correct. This tension between the objectivity and first-person authority of our knowledge of language is *the real problem facing a Chomskian account*" (2008, 977, my italics).

[6] "without a notion of language as something independently known it is merely a *façon de parler* to talk of a person possessing *knowledge* of language. If knowledge-of-language is a state of the person and the language a person speaks is determined by that state, it is hardly knowledge that is at issue" (2008, 974; see also his 2006b).

speakers such that they can make first-personal claims to knowledge of them (978).

To deliver the theoretical characterization of the alleged facts we know as speakers at the first-personal level, Smith proposes to focus on knowledge of word meaning, which, he argues, is accessible or first-personal, in contrast with our knowledge of grammar.[7] An account of our experience of word meaning thus becomes the real focus of his desired approach to first-personal knowledge of language. Smith's new story of speakers' authority and objectivity thus includes not merely the phenomenological data about our experiences with word meaning, (e.g., the experience of hearing what you say as *there in the words* uttered) but also an outline of a philosophical account of experiences with word meaning, along the following lines:

Experiences with meaning—in the sense of word meaning, are authoritative and objective because we *learn to have experiences with words* in the context of leaning words from others … such that when word meanings are introduced the experiences of two subjects is co-ordinated and involvement with an object and another person are not negligible (2008, 978, my italics).

For Smith, this new epistemology of speech implies both that the child is *investing* the sound with meaning, and that when it comes to their awareness of word meaning, their experiences can be characterized as such: "Where they to reflect, and there is no reason to expect them to do so, they would think: that's just what the word means" (979). While this sketchy picture of speakers' objective knowledge of meaning may be taken as a philosophical exercise, Smith brings in empirical research on the role of joint attention in early acquisition of language to support it (2007).

Moreover, consistent with his commitment to inform his theoretical account of knowledge of language by empirical research in psycholinguistics, Smith brings in a flurry of such data in his 2009 examination of McDowell's version of the idea that the meanings of words "must be publicly available in overt speech". Like McDowell, Smith takes it upon himself to preserve and account for "the phenomenological claim that we hear meaning in people's speech" (184). But he argues that empirical research in psycholinguistics impedes McDowell's quick move from the phenomenological datum that I hear what you say "as there in the words uttered" to the idea that word meanings are indeed to be found *in* words "present on the surface of someone's speech" (190–1, my italics). For the purposes of this argument, Smith quotes research in psycholinguistics in favour of "specialized speech processing mechanisms, rather than

[7] Smith includes here the grammaticality judgements explained by the Binding Principle as samples of speakers' *conscious* linguistic judgements accounted for at the *sub*-personal level (977). He also submits that the experience of meaning and the experience of hearing strings as structured respond to different parts of cognition, when he emphasizes that "despite the experiences of hearing what you say as there in the words uttered, the sources and objects of these two kinds of knowledge are quite different" (979).

just general auditory "ones, and which help speakers discriminate, for instance, between ambiguous speech and non-speech stimuli (Dehaene-Lambertz et al 2005).

But in his 2009 paper, Smith also supplements his earlier developmental story about how speakers come to learn experiences with word meaning as children, with the hypothesis that "the real object of speech perception is the *voice* of the producer," i.e., the source of the speech sounds in which *we* take ourselves to hear meaning (208–9, my italics). If so, Smith seems to argue that, despite the experiences of hearing what you say "as there in the words uttered," the phenomenological datum may be revisited. This is the case when the datum implies an empirically unmotivated view of the relation between language and knowledge of language, which he attributes to McDowell and presents as:

(A) speakers' knowledge latches onto properties of an external language

Although he does not elaborate on this, Smith seems to support the alternative view

(B) speakers' knowledge determines the properties of their internally represented language (2009, 198).

This picture of the relation between knowledge of language and language itself constitutes the broader metaphysical background against which Smith outlines his argument for the idea that the real object of speech perception is the *source* of speech sounds, i.e., the voice of the producer, a conclusion which he suggests, again, is grounded on empirical research on the psychology of auditory experience (204–5). More importantly for our analysis of his methodology, in his 2009 paper, Smith provides a clear example that our phenomenology of speech cannot be taken at face value in our epistemology of understanding, and thus needs to be corrected. As a consequence, his disagreement with McDowell appears to be not only one about *where* one may locate meaning, given the phenomenology, but one about *how*, and even *to what extent*, to accommodate such data about our experiences with word meaning.

I believe that the alternative Smith proposes in his replies to Chomsky and McDowell is in need of further clarification and evaluation. In particular, it is unclear whether his earlier epistemological story about how we learn to have experiences with words in the context of leaning words from others is consistent with his support for (B), and moreover, whether it is aligned with the source (no pun intended) of the latter view of the relation between knowledge of language and language, i.e., empirical research on meta-linguistics awareness. Furthermore, when confronted with the debates in psycholinguistics concerning the stages and the sources of children's development of meta-linguistic awareness, Smith's proposals appear also too meagre to guide us in cases where empirical research suggests we need to correct further phenomenological data about our experiences of hearing what you say as there in *the words* uttered, and where psycholinguistics cannot easily provide the choice between rival empirical hypotheses.

3. EXACTLY WHAT ARE THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL DATA OF UNDERSTANDING SPEECH?

Before I move on to argue that Smith's proposed epistemology of experiences of word meaning cannot be motivated by psycholinguistic research on meta-linguistic awareness, here is a quick outline of some main experiences with word meaning he characterizes and how. By and large, given their content, Smith's descriptions of phenomenology of speech can be gathered into two kinds of data. A first cluster of data seems to be about the idea that understanding speech has the character of a *direct* perception, i.e., in a language we understand we hear people's words as meaningful, and cannot help but hear them that way when words are familiar (2008, 942)**.** Following Dummett (1978) and McDowell (1998), Smith also stresses that "we hear more in the speech sounds when we have learned a language**"** and that, as theorists of language, we have to consider the following description of understanding speech as basic: "speech episodes start as mere encounters with sounds, and that sounds by themselves are not identical with words, grammatical structures or sentences." It is from this cluster of sounds we construct "the experiences of hearing what you say as there in the words uttered" (2008, 949).

The phenomenological data in the second cluster seem to emphasize not merely the character of direct perception of speakers' understanding, but rather go beyond this and emphasize its being conscious, which he also construes as speakers' having authoritative and first-personal experiences of word meaning. Smith claims that "speakers typically know, without evidence or inference, what they mean by their words and which configurations of their words are grammatical … And in a passage representative of what he takes as a core phenomenological datum, he adds that "There is such an experience as the meaning of a word being all there at once, or of bringing the meaning of a word to mind as when one decides whether the use of a particular word is more apt than another" (2008, 978).

4. BEYOND PHENOMENOLOGY: METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LITERACY

The dynamics between language acquisition and meta-linguistic capacities have earlier been only a secondary theme in empirical psychological research, and this both in Chomsky's arguments from the poverty of the stimuli, as well as in followers of Piaget's idea that children demonstrate minimal awareness in non-linguistic activities. While Chomskian linguistics did not elaborate on the developmental relation between language acquisition and meta-linguistic abilities, psycholinguists applied Piaget's notion of minimal awareness to language, and suggested (1) that children exhibit first awareness of the goals and success or failure of their speech-acts, and (2) that children's meta-linguistics activities

are different from those of language acquisition (Homer 489). However, in the 1980s, developmental psychologists came to reject the view that language acquisition and meta-linguistic ability are distinct cognitive capacities. Rather, they advanced the thesis that basic language processes, such as production and comprehension, influence, and are continuous with, children's meta-linguistic abilities. For instance, given the pattern of detecting and correcting errors of speech which begins in early childhood, and arguably requires meta-linguistic ability, Smith and Tager-Flusberg argued that early on children demonstrate more than 'minimal awareness' of the kind described by Piaget (1982).

Since the 1990s, however, the main debate on children's development of meta-linguistic awareness has concentrated on whether or not exposure to reading and writing contributes to children's more abstract understanding of language, and especially their grasp of linguistic categories such as words and phonemes. While some argue that metalinguistic abilities are acquired mainly through normal cognitive development and/or language acquisition, by abstracting spontaneously away from the units of language used by the adults, Olson and Homer support the hypothesis that "children's meta-linguistic understanding of *word* develops as they attempt to relate written language to speech" (Olson 1997, my italics; Homer 2009). Given, among other things, cross-linguistic evidence in cognitive psycholinguistics that conventional notions of word are *not* necessarily employed by adult speakers of all languages (Hoosain 1992), psychologists interested in the development of meta-linguistic abilities have focused their investigations on phonological and word awareness, and on a variety of related segmentation and processing tasks, most of which contrasted preliterate to literate children as well as adults (Veldhuis & Kurvers 2012).

In a recent review of research on literacy and metalinguistic awareness, Homer submits that the empirical evidence for the influence of literacy on meta-linguistic development is considerable (2009). Firstly, he reviews studies demonstrating the effect of literacy on phonemic awareness, such as the one by Read et al. in which Chinese adults were asked to add or delete consonants in spoken Chinese words. Participants in the study had either learned the alphabetic script, Pinyin, or had only been taught to read and write with traditional Chinese characters. The results showed that only participants with prior exposure to alphabetic writing were able to segment words in phonemes, and this even for subjects who could not longer read and write using Pinyin. Secondly, Homer introduces results from his own or related studies examining four- , five- and six-year-old children's conception of word; his own results appear to show that prior to their exposure to literacy practices, children perform poorly on tasks designed to test their word awareness, or respectively, for children trained in Chinese writing system, their awareness of the linguistic concept of character (2009, 495).

But Homer also concludes that the current debates have moved away from considering either children's word awareness as a natural consequence of their

speaking a language (Tager-Flusberg or Karmiloff-Smith) or the hypothesis that, for some properties of speech, awareness of units of segmentation is determined by literacy (Olson or Homer). The picture he sees as emerging in the field is that of the reciprocal relationship between the acquisition of literacy and meta-linguistic development. As he stresses, the two positions share the idea that children acquire a more abstract and explicit understanding of language as they move from formal to more symbolic representations of speech, and they do not do so merely as matter of expanding on the general minimal awareness invoked by Piaget.

It is also useful to note that researchers examining the relation between literacy and units of language attempted, more recently, to classify a spectrum of cognitive tasks ranging from those requiring more explicit or more implicit meta-linguistic awareness, and concluded that the exact description of the meta-linguistic awareness identified through experimental study is influenced not merely by children's exposure to literacy but also by the nature of the task introduced in the study.[8] But Veldhuis and Kurvers also concluded that the results of the more offline tasks reveal "a significant influence of literacy on segmentation along word-boundaries" despite the fact that the results from the relatively more online tasks are less clear-cut with respect to the way in which literacy affects language processing (2012).

5. CONCLUSION

Thus, as Smith appears to anticipate, developmental psychologists focused on phonological and/or word awareness have found that the acoustic properties of speech and the linguistic material hearers perceive in it are not easily aligned. But empirical results summarized above support an idea Smith's analysis of speech does not consider, namely that finding words in a sound stream is difficult even for a child acquiring her native language. Indeed, empirical developmental research supports the view that metalinguistic awareness, especially of the more explicit varieties develop only by the time children reach a certain age, depend on a variety of factors, such as cultural aspects of children's environments, e.g., being brought up in a bilingual environment, or being exposed to symbolic communication, including literacy practices.

When confronted with psycholinguists' distinctions and conclusions about phonological and word awareness, Smith's proposals in his reply to Chomsky

[8] Veldhuis and Kurvers have applied to pre-literates and literates not only tapping or dictation tasks, which allow for judgement and conscious attention to the response, but also click-tasks in which judgement is not required, and there is little time for conscious attention. In the tapping task, children are asked to repeat 17 sentences one-by-one after they were read out loud and to indicate with small blocks how many parts they thought the utterances consistent in; in the dictation task, children were asked to tell the researcher about a nice expericens they had had, and then to repeat the story "part by part" so that the researcher could write it down, etc. (2012).

and McDowell seem wanting. Firstly, when it comes to the phenomenological datum on which he provides the corrected interpretation in his 2009 paper, that "we experience hearing what you say as there in the words uttered" neither the appeal to the direct perception of the voice of the person, nor his proposed epistemological account of our word acquisition explain why we *do* experience words as there in the words uttered. Secondly, while Smith brings in empirical research on the role of joint attention in early acquisition of language to support his epistemological story, his account does not allow for further development of meta-linguistic abilities later in childhood, and/or as a product of engaging in literate practices (2007)**.**

But it is exactly the details of such a development that have been brought to light by recent psycholinguistics of literacy. Contrary to Smith's epistemology of the objectivity of understanding speech (in his 2009), empirical research on the strong influence literacy has on phonological and word awareness suggest we might need a different account of the phenomenology of speech for a speaker who has not been exposed to reading and writing, or one distinct from an account of the literate speaker experiences of word meaning.[9] Olson's hypothesis that the acquisition of literacy is more a matter of learning to hear and think about one's own language in a new way suggests the following paraphrase of Smith's description of the phenomenology of speech: I have "the experiences of hearing what you say as there in" what I construct as the words uttered, given my having learned to read and write.

More generally, when confronted with the impressive body of empirical research on the relation between speech and writing, the meager description of our phenomenology of understanding speech cannot be taken to support the idea as speakers have, as Smith puts it, conscious *experience of words* independent of the cultural or technological environment in which we develop our meta-linguistic awareness. To be clear here, I do not mean to suggest that knowledge of word meaning, as we literate speakers experience it, is not conscious and first-personal. Rather, I believe I succeeded to motivate the further investigation of the hypothesis that knowledge of *word* meaning is conscious and first-personal as a product of a developmental process whose cultural nature we still have to examine. I suggest that empirical research of the kind just outlined above helps dislodge or modify notions of language or knowledge of language, such as those included in theses (A) or (B) above, and this especially when an important party in the debate includes empirically minded phenomenologists, like Smith. Further investigation is needed to clarify the level of generality expected for the content of some data of the phenomenology of speech, and by

[9] As Olson points out, print is not simply spoken language written down; unlike informal utterances, printed text "depends on no cues other than linguistic cues; it is addressed to no one in particular, its author is essentially anonymous, and its meaning is precisely that represented by the sentence meaning" (1977).

extension, a future account of the objectivity and authority we do have as speakers. But such explorations are the topic of another paper.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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LITERACY, POWER, BODY—TOWARDS ALTERNATIVE PHENOMENOLOGY OF WRITING

ABSTRACT

The classical phenomenology of writing, postulated by such literacy theoreticians as Walter J. Ong, and Marshall McLuhan, focuses on writing as an instrument of intellectual emancipation, as a technology of intellect. In this article I claim that their view is too narrow. Firstly, as David R. Olson, Harvey Graff and Michel de Certeau point, writing may be an instrument of power and discipline. Secondly, reading and writing are not only the mental practices of scripts organization and interpretation. They are strictly related to specific bodily practices which have important implications for the cultural functioning of literacy.

Keywords: literacy practices; bodily practices; alternative phenomenology of writing.

INTRODUCTION

Every technology—wrote Walter Ong in 1982—"enrich the human psyche, enlarge the human spirit, and intensify its interior life" (Ong 1982, 82). Ong did not only assume that these were best realized by writing, but also that writing originally being a certain technology of the intellect formed a particular cognitive relationship between a literate person and his/her cultural environment. This very category of "technology of the intellect" is the subject of my article. I will prove that writing is not only the instrument of cognition but also of power, and that identifying literacy mainly with some intellectual activity may appear a methodological trap. Firstly, writing, I suppose, is not only a technology of intellect. Secondly, the analysis of bodily components of reading and writing may lay foundations for new directions in the literacy studies.

WRITING AS AN INSTRUMENT OF INTELLECTUAL EMANCIPATION?

The classic theory of literacy focuses mostly on cognitive and critical aspects of literacy. According to Ong, Marshall McLuhan, Jack Goody and Eric A. Havelock, the consequence of appearance of writing was a creation of an "autonomous discourse"—a self-explicit text concept, in the absence of the author and of those interested by his definite interpretation. Under the analytic power of the eye writing reveals on the surface specific cultural contents which makes them objective. Since it decontextualizes the text and liberates it from a more or less standardized interpretation, it dissociates from the momentary communication goals, and leaves a reflection for the reader. It promotes a critical distance saving a reader from the intention of the author and the institution behind him/her. It fixes culturally important contents and exempted one from the necessity of maintaining the common core of convictions, thus encouraging another kind of intellectual involvement. In other words, writing allows for a rupture with traditionalism and conservatism of oral world (Ong 1982, 41), conditioning the creation of more or less formalized tools of language, conviction and cognition strategies analysis. As Goody (2010, 105) underlined in his last books, writing contributed to the increase of reflexivity unknown in the oral cultures. And thus it leads to the creation of a specific mental attitude that was expressed by specific actions, in the conscious transformation of specific cultural institutions (Goody 2010, 105).

Certainly, all mentioned theoreticians realized that not in every cultural context writing could act for cognitive emancipation and that it was, really, not the only decisive factor in that matter. They realized also that various uses of writing could not be reduced to Ong's "autonomous discourse." And that is why Goody dedicated a lot of attention to the unsyntactical uses of writing and to the so called limited literacy, serving for the memorization of constant unquestionable cultural contents. His book *The Logic Of Writing and the Organization of Society* was mostly dedicated to writing as a tool for bureaucratic authorities in the ancient civilizations of the Near East. (Goody 1986) For the same reason, Havelock wrote about the Greek orality and literacy as extraordinary and not transmittable to the experience of other cultures (Havelock 1986). Ong admitted that critical potential of writing was limited, because literacy absolutized thinking and action models. And still the main subject of interest of all mentioned researchers was the cognitive and emancipatory implications of writing. Later, the implications were applied to at least a partial demythologization (Goody 1986, Assman 1992).

WRITING AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER?

Writing—write both the representants of *New Literacy Studies* and theoreticians, inter alia David R. Olson and Harvey Graff—is not only a tool of cognition but also of power, serving to discipline the citizens by the use of such

purely literate inventions like organized bureaucracy (Graff 1979, Olson 1994). The non-emancipatory functions of writing display not only the first uses of writing in the Near East civilizations that had nothing in common with the literature or scientific discourse. It is also observed in much recent uses, specific for cultures in which both the literature and science became renown institutions with great scientific prestige and in which literacy was no longer the privilege of the staying in power minority. The modern era gave more examples—writing spreads mainly thanks to the print and by common education. In modern times to be literate was equivalent with, according to Michel de Certeau, the initiation to the capitalistic and conquering society: with the acceptance of some cultural order and not with its reflexive transcendence (De Certeau 1988).

According to the revisionists, in order to mobilize a phenomonology of writing alternative to the classical, it is sufficient to examine the functioning of such institutions like schools. Certainly, the school as an institution can be said to serve mainly the accumulation and decontextualization of knowledge, which in literate societies needs new institutions for its maintenance and transmission. Schools frequently detach pupils from their traditional families and neighbourhood communities. Moreover, it rationalizes, formalizes and universalizes educational process, often turning its subject into knowledge separated temporarily and spatially from the existential context of use. However, as the researchers of *New Literacy Studies* remark, the pupils extruded from a definite existential order are inserted into another order and receive not only knowledge but also specific values. For example, the XIX century public schools typically promoted such values as individualism, mobility, competitiveness, and the conviction that the skills acquired at schools have private character because they serve the individual to choose and achieve his/her own goals (Graff 1979). The crusade contra analphabetism beginning in the XIX–century England was not to serve the intellectual and political liberation of the working classes. The school of that time rather disciplined than liberated, because they taught the ideas of competitiveness, punctuality, discipline, work in the hour system time frame etc. Their main though certainly not the only function was to adapt people to the conditions of the industrial and urbanized capitalist society (Graff 1979).

LITERACY AND BUREAUCRACY

To mention a more modern example, equally problematizing the issues of the classical literacy theory, it suffices to observe the functioning of contemporary bureaucracies, and specifically such writing genres as filling forms. Their filling and submission in an adequate institution become a condition of functioning in the modern society, a condition, for example, for receiving an identity card or for opening a bank account. Using them has nothing to do with the individualistic controlled conscious transformation of the world. Quite the contrary, the practices of using them consists often in a gesture of unconscious submis-

sion—and more or less unconscious integration in a definite social, politic or economic structure. They are not a tool of intellectual emancipation because their main objective is to maintain the *status quo*—not the liberation but, on the contrary, placing the individual in a net of social, political and economic obligations. They do not provide a critical distance relative to the current cultural situation but the feeling that this situation is and should be the basic point of reference.

The forms, it should be noticed, are an example of unsyntactical use of writing, so the use different from the writing employment in the literary, philosophical or scientific discourse. They remind the letters, discussed by Goody, since they consist of a set of questions requiring answers according to the strictly codified key. Just like the letters, the forms are a clear proof that writing is not only a representation of the speech but it also produces the forms of organisation of linguistic material unknown to the speech. Such an organization consists in the creation of an economic language excluding verbs, using the formulae disconnected from speech and using the visual order as a content stratification tool. The form language is not only economic. It is a language of power and authority, radically cut off from everyday speech, restricted for a situation of interhuman, more or less communitarian, interaction: a language creating a specific jargon or rather grapholect. It has an impersonal and formal character. As such it does not constitute a language of objective distance nor critical individualism, because it serves discipline and standardization.

The forms consist of often numbered tables placing specific information in an abstract number order (an order that has nothing to do with the continuity of unsegmented utterance). They serve as a standardized data segregation. They split the information into a sequence of elements ordered according to one key, and place them separately, in a manner that has nothing to do with an everyday existential experience. Placing them is not coincidental but subjected to a rigorous classification, since in a form definite and adequately formulated personal data, and thus only the elements of the same nature and paradigmatically equivalent can be found. The forms have nothing to do with enumeration. They are based on the finding of the common denominator for the specific information and then on linguistic and formal standardization.

Precisely these tables so characteristic for the genre are visible in the manner that benefits from materiality of a page or pages to the //adequate order of the data (the most important information is usually at the top and in the beginning of the form). The forms are not only texts but they do not have a referential character; they do not represent any fragment of reality but they constitute it. They are literacy genres of not only pragmatic character but also performative—they are links of institutionally regulated actions that permit to create and maintain some predefined social roles. In other words, they do not describe the people that fill them but rather they inscribe a given person into a network of a social relationship, enabling them or forbidding them specific actions. The con-

dition for their efficiency is not only the information they include but also the context in which they act: the fact that they should be filled in an algorithmic manner and also that they should be submitted in an exact imposed time and in an imposed location. They are not an example of an autonomic discourse, because their meaning and, especially, their illocutionary force are not included. Not all of them are linguistically articulated; we can reconstruct their illocutionary force thanks to the extralinguistic context in which forms exist. In other words, the understanding of that context, and especially the cultural practice network connected with it, are essential in order to understand and use them. Moreover, the uses of forms demand a specific literal and nonlinear reading techniques—institutionally determined and institutionally reproduced. It is because the forms could not be an efficient tool without the standardized way of their interpretation and use.

Consequently, in order to understand properly the concept of writing as a technology of the intellect, various cultural and historical writing genres and reading techniques should be also examined. This direction is taken by David R. Olson (1994) who assumes that emancipatory writing action requires specific writing genres, precisely—specific texts and specific interpretation techniques: individualistic, critical, and based on the conviction that their meaning has an autonomic character, independent of all the institutions that claim the right to the correct understanding. In short, the very appearance of writing, according to Olson, does not make it a technology of the intellect. This technology is possible due to the invention of literal reading. This invention appeared in the Western culture almost two thousand years after the invention of alphabetic writing. Literal reading, moreover, needed not only a specific institutionalized context that granted its durability and popularity but also a specific material text form. It is difficult to imagine a spectacular success of that reading technique without the appearance of printed books, whose universality permitted for the total control of readers, read texts and the purposes of reading. The liberation of the reader freely poaching the text—one of the fundamental conditions of the emancipatory effect of literacy—was a result of some historical and cultural changes. It can hardly be considered that a phenomenon having appeared in a modern era has determined all subsequent reading techniques. On the contrary, it may be claimed that the ideal of "reading freedom" so praised by Ricoeur (1981) and considered as a paradigm for literacy as such by Christian Vandendorpe (2009) is an ideal in force among all reading practices. Reading, contrary to what is claimed de Certeau, is not always "capturing": the creative and individualized transformation of the meanings negotiated by means of the text (1988). The proofs are given by already mentioned cultural institutions, like bureaucracy and school, institutions often remaining in a strict institutionalized relationship. The school, as remarked David R. Olson, is responsible for teaching some standardized reading techniques used in bureaucracy and for their cultural reproduction (Olson 2009, 571–572).

READING AND WRITING AS BODILY PRACTICES

Above all, writing is not only a technology of intellect. It means that the writing potential is not exhausted in the creation of specific mental attitudes: critical or disciplining. Literacy, as Tim Ingold remarks in *Perception of Environment* (2002, 392–405), is also the tool that requires physical practice consisting in, among others, some eye–hand coordination. The fact that we no longer notice it and we are likely to identify literacy rather with mental than physical actions is symptomatic. It can indicate deep interiorization, both mental and physical, not only of the literacy but rather its specific, characteristic of print and the culture form of digital media. The action of reading and writing as an activity with a physical component have become transparent for us. This is the result of some reading techniques understood not only as an interpretation techniques but as body techniques minimalizing the physical effort put in reading (hand work realized while reading a printed compact book code is by far easier than while reading a scroll), deleting voice as an intermediary with a given content (silent reading) and facilitating a writer a constant contact with his thinking process. Those techniques eliminate to a great extent the resistance of substance (writing with a pen on the paper is much easier than writing in clay with a graver or on the parchment with a quill dipped in an inkpot). They also eliminate the awareness of some materiality of writing (it suffices to compare the Japanese art of painted calligraphy and the gradual reduction of the Western calligraphy to the technique of standardized, legible, and as much transparent as the possible register of given contents).

"If you cannot write—says the author of one of colophones analyzed by Paweł Majewski in his text *The Torment of a Copist, the bliss of a Kaligraph*—another colophone—you may think that it is not a great toil but if you wish to know the truth I will tell you it is a hard work: it dims the sight, it slouches the back, it constricts ribs and stomach, it squeezes the kidneys and makes the whole body ache …" (George 1994). According to Paweł Majewski, medieval writing experience in the Western culture was radically different from the writing experience in Eastern cultures. In the West writing was associated with hard work and it was an alienating work. The author of colophones, obviously, as a copyist was not only the author of copied contents but often he did not understand those contents. In contrast, the Japanese culture identified writing with an art unifying the spirit and body of a writer in harmony, with "creativity and a means of interior perfecting". In the Western culture, says Paweł Majewski "creativity is what is written. The instruction of the perfection is a ready text. And it is difficult not to conclude that the reason for that is the opposition of alphabetic and ideographic writing." "An European may express himself in what he writes (although this claim least concerns medieval Europeans). A Japanese—in what he writes and in how he writes. The difference also results from differences between alphabetic and ideographic writing. Between these two

types, and precisely between the two tracing processess there is a serious somatic and mental diversity" (Majewski, in print).

Majewski's text is inspiring for several reasons, but I will indicate the two most fundamental. Firstly, it oversteps Ong and McLuhan's perspective since it analyses not only the very phenomenology of writing from the point of view of the dominating principle of representation, but above all, the historically and institutionally concretized writing practice with its cultural context and all mental and physical components. Secondly, it abandons the positive evaluation of alphabetic writing in favour of ideographic writing, assuming that the alphabetic writing is an experience not liberating but leading to a certain alienation—the separation of sensory and intellectual experience. However, in this claim Majewski stops somehow halfway. He focuses mostly on visual specifics of alphabetic and ideographic writing, assuming that calligraphic practices, including physical practices, are an effect of the principle of representation ordering the very writing. He presupposes that main characteristics of calligraphic practice are either the effect of pictorial resemblance existing between ideographic writing and reality or its lack (as in case of alphabetic writing). However, may be the direction of this implication should be reversed. Perhaps, it is not the principle of representation that imposes a certain perception and valorization of writing. Perhaps, it is reading and writing practice including specific bodily and mind activities, and the accompanying cultural context with the set of attributed meanings, what are original and what we need to understand in order to fully appreciate the peculiarity/specific character of a given writing system.

In other words, the reflection on the "physical" and processual sides of literacy, the activities organizing literacy and making it irreducible to mental activities, are, in my opinion, unjustly neglected in the literacy theory. Similar bias/blind spot can also be noticed in predominant definitions of writing, where writing is described as a sign system and an accompanying principle of representation. For example, writing is commonly defined as "a group of visible signs referenced in an arbitrary manner to the defined structural level of language" (The New Encyclopedia Britannica 2002, 1025) or "system of signs serving to register or replace the speech by notation" (Wielka Encyklopedia PWN 1985, 548). Writing in such a sense is reduced to a given content and a given visuality. However, writing is not only a work of the eye and mind. We should relativize all definitions basing on this reduction, and assume that they are the effect of specific reading and writing practices. Therefore, we should analyze the assumptions behind them, in order to correct them.

"I watched, we read in on of Egyptian papyrus from ... century, a metalurgist at work, at his melting furnace. His fingers are like crocodile skin, he stinks more than dead fish. Every carpenter working with a chisel is more tired than a farmer. Wood is his field, metal graver his hoe. Afterwards he is sore because he worked hard but at night there is still a light in his hut" (Kuckenburg 2006, 210).

In the next fragment of the text, we read an advice given a son by his caring father:

> "if you can write, this ability will be more useful for you than all professions that you have described. See, there is no writer, who lack the food or palace goods. Than your father and your mother, who kept you on a journey of truly life" (210).

In this excerpt the work of a simple labourer or craftsmen is clearly opposed to the work of a scribe. The second one is obviously associated with power and social promotion. Not only. It is also considered as an activity superior to others, being "clean," not tiring, requiring a little physical effort. What attracts the attention of the Egyptian that recommends the scribe's work, is not the mental component of writing, interaction with a given content. What is important for him is a physical aspect that in the modern culture has become so obvious and transparent that pointing it out might be taken as a naivety or incomprehension. In other words, for that Egyptian the very action of registering as a certain physical practice was an important and not obvious cultural experience. And this experience should be appreciated.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the analysis of reading and writing practices requires not only a study of intellectual processes: specific activities of text creation and interpretation. Firstly, writing is not only a technology of intellect and a medium of intellectual emancipation: it is also a medium of power and disciplination. Secondly, the analysis of cultural and social implications of literacy requires a study of associated bodily practices, because these practices greatly influence the ways of functioning in the cultural environment.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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BETWEEN MEDIA AND CULTURAL PRACTICES: SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY OF THE TORONTO SCHOOL

ABSTRACT

The problem of the Toronto School's theoretical identity emerges from the recognition that the most influential figures of this orientation do not agree regarding the general idea of the School as a coherent theoretical trend. Moreover, the idea of "medium" central to this orientation is fundamentally ambiguous. Therefore the aim of the paper is to consider the identity of the Toronto School by referring to the so called materialistic interpretation of the media. The paper supports the thesis that the minimal definition of communication technologies in terms of physical artifacts comprises the conceptual core of the Toronto School's identity. The failure to consider the minimalistic definition of media results in the general blurring of the Toronto School's theoretical identity.

Keywords: media; communication technologies; Toronto School; theoretical identity; technological determinism.

INTRODUCTION

The name 'Toronto School' was coined by Jack Goody in his *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, where he mentioned that his famous article *The Consequences of Literacy* had been inspired by the works of the Toronto School, particularly of Harold A. Innis and Eric A. Havelock (Goody 1975, 1). Without fear of exaggeration, it can be claimed that this very comment by Goody constituted what could be called the act of baptism, one that formally established this school of thought, despite its rather varied methodological background and subject matter content. Ever since, most commentaries pertaining to the Toronto School have repeatedly referred to that particular moment as the act of original cognomination (Kerckhove 1989; Strate 2004). In time, the Toronto School would be mentioned among the most significant schools involved in media studies and theories of communication. Unfortunately, as quoted by Derrick de

Kerckove, during the 1985–conference on "Innis McLuhan and the Frontiers of Communication" Jack Goody invalidated the act of baptism he himself had proclaimed. Furthermore, Brian Stock and David Olson have also voiced opinions skeptical of the treatment of the "Toronto School" as a separate category (Kerckhove 1989, 74–75). Regardless of the reasons which ultimately led Goody to change his mind, the situation as a whole does arouse a certain suspicion in terms of the actual viability of the name "Toronto School."

Even more doubts arises when we analyze the various strategies employed in defining one of the concepts central to the Toronto School approach: "media of communication". Rather than "media," various wordings are used including: "channels of communication," "material ground for meaning," "communication technologies," "information technologies," "technologies of the intellect," "extensions," "communicational environment," "symbolic form," etc. On closer inspection of the varying definitional strategies one might conclude that the Toronto School comprises a multitude of research approaches that seem to have rather little in common. Are we therefore still in right to even use the name "Toronto School"? Or should we follow Goody giving it up altogether?

The expression "medium of communication" remains one of the most ambiguous concepts not only within the Toronto School but in media studies as a whole (Mock 2006). Nonetheless, it seems rational to assume that in order to even begin discussing the Toronto School as such, a certain consensus must be reached concerning the minimal definition of this central conceptual category. The following deliberations consider the identity of the Toronto School by reference to the so called materialistic interpretation of media. Such a minimalistic interpretation of media as material vehicles for information does not exclude the existence of other, superimposed and more complex ways of understanding the said category. By no means I claim that the conceptualizations of the notion of "medium" within the Toronto School are limited to the above minimal definition. I will argue, however, that failure to consider this minimalistic definition results in the general blurring of the Toronto School's theoretical identity. I aim to support the thesis that the minimal definition of communication technologies comprises the conceptual core of the Toronto School's identity.

TORONTO SCHOOL IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNICATION THEORIES AND MEDIA STUDIES

When we consider the identity of any given phenomenon, we should establish at first the particular qualities that set it apart from its environment. Therefore, the following deliberations are needed to reveal the distinctive characteristics of the Toronto School. For the sake of clarity, the considered context will be narrowed down to media and communication studies. Before we can contrast the Toronto School with other movements prevailing in media studies, we ought first to provide an overview of communication studies in general. It is not an

easy task to examine the highly disorderly character of the field—problems considered in it, its employed methods, or developed theories. The scale of the phenomenon can be seen in reading Robert Craig's article (1999) who, having analysed seven different communicology textbooks, managed to distinguish as many as 249 separate theories of communication. Providing a broader theoretical context and presenting a number of available classification strategies may facilitate a better understanding of the Toronto School.

Standard classification systems utilized in communication studies typically fail to include a category corresponding to the Toronto School. Popular divisions would just as readily assign the Toronto School to a number of research orientations at a time, as to none at all. For instance, Judith N. Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama (1999) list four paradigms of communication studies: functional, interpretative, critical-humanistic, and critical-structuralist. The failure of this classification derives from the fact that it does not account for the particular features of the Toronto School which set it apart from other popular theories. It does not mean that it is completely neglected, although the attempts to characterize the Toronto School would typically treat it as a sort of curiosity or an additional feature complementing the prevailing theories of communication.

For reasons of practicability and clarity, the most commonly offered division within theories of communication involves two main orientations: American (pragmatic-empirical) and European (humanistic-critical) (McQuail 2005). The main criteria of the division include: research methodologies, the focus of analyses, and the historical scope of considered phenomena. The American school of communication studies relies mainly on quantitative methods, stressing the importance of developing adequate research tools; it focuses on the attitudes of media users in the present. This approach allows the cognitive accomplishments of the American school to offer tangible, practically applicable solutions. The European school adopts a considerably different approach based on the interpretation of available historical sources. The school's authors do not devise research tools or participate in the production of the analyzed material, as is the case in empirical studies. Instead, they are preoccupied with social conditions of scientific, philosophical or religious thought, analyzed over extended historical periods. A pronounced example of this approach is provided by the Frankfurt School. The methodology employed and the research focus adopted make it impossible to unambiguously confirm the cognitive accomplishments of this orientation. As far as the Toronto School is concerned, apart from geographical considerations there is little to qualify it for membership in the American orientation. Similarities in methods and the scopes of researched phenomena suggest its possible membership to the European school. Researchers such as Harld Innis, Eric A. Havelock or Walter Ong rely on interpretative methods; researchers analyze extended historical periods, typically focus on temporally distant cultural transformations and are interested in the broadly understood social context of cognition (Watson and Blondheim 2008, 7–26;

Meyrowitz 1994, 50–57; Nerone 2006, 94–102). However, the characterized opposition between the American and the European approaches fails to reflect one of the particularly significant aspects of the Toronto approach. Namely, the research focus of the Toronto School falls on the actual medium of communication rather than its content. For this reason, this school of thought remains outside the analytical model sketched above. Publications concerning the school tend to emphasize the awareness of remaining on the margins of mainstream communication studies (Lister, Dovey, and Giddings 2003, 123–127; Kroker 1985, 7–20; Babe 2000, 3–38). It seems therefore that the Canadian approach can neither be classed as American or European.

In the search for the specifics of the Toronto School, it would be useful to consider briefly the history of communication studies as such. The prevailing approach to research of communication focuses on analyses of the message carried therein. The preference is rooted in the historical background from which the science had originally emerged. The first theories of communication (1920s and 30s) concentrated on studies of propaganda. The theories constituted as the basis for the established assumption that propaganda could influence all individuals within a society and directly further the agenda of its authors (Meyrowitz 1985, 13–15). Regardless of certain modifications, the theories of the 1930s to 1960s could generally be classified under the same category (Katz 2007, 1–2). Research problems typically encountered by mainstream media studies include questions about the way the recipients react to media messages, the frequency with which they utilize a given medium, who and to what end controls the message, what are the main goals that motivate its users and senders. In short, the studies are concerned with the content of messages and methods of media use rather than patterns of information flow modified by media as such (Meyrowitz 1994, 50).

As observed by Joshua Meyrowitz, even proposals intended by their authors as alternative to the study of the actual content of communication provide nothing more than yet another variation of the theory aimed at content analysis. Such was the case with the theory of cultivation proposed by George Gerbner in the 1970s. The author used the term "media environment" by which he understood the symbolic setting created by media to organize the worldviews of the recipients. The medially shaped images of reality influence the way in which recipients perceive and respond to the non-media reality that surrounds them. In this sense, media do indeed create social reality. As depicted by Gerbner, media do not provide a metaphorical window on the world, nor do they reflect reality. Media constitute the reality itself (Meyrowitz 1985, 13–14). If we consider only the choice of metaphors, certain apparent similarities can be observed between the theory of cultivation and the concepts advocated by McLuhan. However, any extension of the said correspondence to claim a certain analogy between the theory of cultivation and the Toronto School would be unfounded. Gerbner's research interest focused on the way in which content presented by media

shapes social reality. Meanwhile, analyses conducted by the Toronto School aimed to reconstruct the elements of the world image that resulted from the impingement of the medium itself, regardless of the message carried by communication. Similar analogies may be suggested to exist between the Toronto School and the Frankfurt School or political economy. Both these approaches constitute a clear alternative to the prevalent (empirical) orientations of media studies. Researchers of the critical school will insist that media do not and cannot constitute an unbiased means of providing information about reality. Their function is predominantly that of the confirmation and legitimization of the relations of power existing within the society (McQuail 2002, 6–8). The mentioned thesis of the non-transparency of media seems to correlate with the central claim of the Toronto School. Seeking a meaningful analogy in this respect, however, would be highly premature as the relations of power evoked by the critical approach are maintained by the messages forwarded by media, not media themselves. The critical school, with its thesis of medial non-transparency, focuses on the opacity of media messages contaminated by ideological content. A medium is understood here as a basically neutral vehicle for meaning which, although used for ideological purposes, does not in itself in any way modify the message.

DENIS MCQUIL'S ANALYTIC SCHEMA

Researches on the impact of media conducted as a part of mainstream media studies fail to account for the significance of the means of information transfer itself. Media are treated as neutral vehicles allowing the transfer of messages intended by the senders. Standard classifications will therefore typically rely on the opposition between the study of the communicated content and the study of the medium. A classification based on this distinction is only partially applicable in the attempt to determine the theoretical identity of the Toronto School. As it turns out, other orientations also stand in opposition to the study of the content, such as those focused on media treated as social institutions in a given political context. This research profile is not, however, typical of the Toronto School. We should therefore ask further questions pertaining to the very concept of the "medium of communication." Should such a medium be understood as an institution, a material channel of communication, a cultural practice, or maybe as something entirely different? Do media, as material vehicles of meaning, possess any form of autonomy in shaping a socio-cognitive consequences? Or does the entire consequences of media amount to merely their use as dictated by the society and culture?

It seems that the above question can best be answered by employing the analytical model proposed by McQuail (2002). The schema suggested by him refers to the two pairs of conceptual oppositions: the opposition between the

socio-centered and media-centered orientation, and between the culture-centered and materialistic approaches. The same can be illustrated as follows:

Basic theoretical orientations in media theory	**Culture-centered orientation**	**Materialistic orientation**
Socio-centered orientation	Frankfurt School, functionalism	political economy
Media-centered orientation	agenda-setting theory, cultivation theory, uses and gratifications theory	Toronto School

The socio-centered orientation grasps media as a tool wielded by social forces such as cultural values (the culture-centered orientation) or economic and political factors (the materialistic orientation). Meanwhile, the media-centered orientation emphasizes the importance of the vehicle for meaning as a factor organizing the act of communication itself. According to McQuail's classification, the Toronto School falls in the category of the media-centered, materialistic orientation. Media are viewed here as the basic factors of social change activated by material transformations within communication technologies (McQuail 2002, 5–6). It is this very characteristics that establishes the unique character of the Toronto School among other orientations in communication studies (Meyrowitz 1994, 50–52). Therefore, in the context of media studies, the minimum condition of the Toronto School's theoretical identity is the adoption of media-centered and materialistic assumptions regarding the nature of communication technologies. So understood communication technologies constitute an important although not sole factor of socio-cognitive change.

TOWARDS THE STUDY OF MEDIA AS SUCH

The above comments sought to determine the characteristics setting the Toronto School apart from other orientations in the context of media studies. It turns out, however, that even within the Toronto School as such, there is no consensus as to how communication technologies are to be viewed. Moreover, researchers studying this particular intellectual tradition also seem to disagree regarding the interpretation of this central category. For instance, Menahem Blondheim and Rita Watson, in the introduction to their book *The Toronto School of Communication Theory,* rightfully observe that the most characteristic trait distinguishing the Canadian orientation from other theories of communication is its focus on "technology or medium." What they fail to do, however, is specifying the way in which said categories are to be interpreted. Blondheim and Watson settle for a general statement that communication technologies include all forms of technical and non-technical means that serve to mediate

communication (Watson and Blondheim 2008, 10). The broadness of this interpretation is in line with the spirit of McLuhan's work. However, being so vague, the definition cannot serve as the quality distinguishing the Toronto School from other orientations in media studies. For instance, in accordance with this inclusive interpretation, non-technical means of communication include both language and other cultural semiotic systems, such as the systems of fashion or eating. The so understood communication technology does in no way set the Toronto School apart from semiological or structuralistic communication theories which focus their research interests on the messages carried by cultural semiotic systems and their relations with the social structures of power.

Interestingly, the creators of the Toronto School themselves tend to lean towards similar interpretative strategies. Some follow in the footsteps of McLuhan and rely on the inclusive understanding of communication technologies, others seem to be somewhat vague in this respect. In an article entitled *Writing is a Technology that Restructures Thought*, Walter J. Ong criticizes the narrow interpretation of communication technologies:

> "The concept of 'medium' or 'media' applied to human communication uses an analogy which is useful but nevertheless so gross […], that it regularly falsifies what human communication is. I MYSELF TRY TO AVOID THE TERM NOW, though I have used it in earlier books and articles. 'Medium' applies properly to manual or machine transferral of pattern, not to human communication" (Ong 1986a, 38).

The quoted comment constitutes Ong's attempt to distance himself from excessively narrowed definitions of media as material vehicles for meaning. In his interpretation, writing viewed as a technology that restructures thought means the social practice of its use. A similar interpretation of the Toronto School's research, particularly the works of Goody, was suggested by M. Cole and J. Cole (Cole and Cole 2006, 317–319). Their understanding of practice was that of: "a recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge" (Scribner and Cole 1981, 237)**.** Such an interpretation of communication technology attributes primary importance to the actions and intentions of the participants in culture. However, it also seems to lose the track of media understood as material artifacts. Instead, it focuses on social means of using communication tools.

Indeed, the theses formulated by the authors of the Toronto School tend to be concerned with the shaping and consequences of certain specific communication practices. Therefore, I do not go as far as claiming that studying communication practices is irrelevant or marginal. What I wish to stress is that considering communication technologies solely in terms of cultural practices threatens the theoretical identity of the Toronto School. It would result in blurring a key idea of the orientation expressed in the claim that: "media themselves put an indelible stamp on the structure of knowledge and on the mentality of their us-

ers" [underlined by MT](Olson 2007, 355). One must concur with the thesis that communication technology defined as a practice constitutes an important aspect of social organization. However, with such an interpretation of the concept of technology, the central thesis of the Toronto School would boil down to the position that a certain aspect of social organization—in this case communicational practice—impacts other dimensions of socio-cognitive life. The attractiveness of this interpretative pattern lies in the fact that it can hardly be branded as ethnocentric or claimed to advocate technological determinism. However, such understanding would also hinder the expressiveness of the Toronto School, and it would make its key thesis on the consequence of media *as such* being loosed a lot of it original significance. To illustrate the above with a specific example: if one would give up the materialistic interpretation of media, the research goals of the Toronto School could be expressed by quoting Ruth Finnegan, who wrote that while studying media:

> "what counts is its use, who controls it, what it is used for, how it fits into the power structure, how widely it is distributed—it is these social and political factors that shape the consequences (…) it is a social not a technological matter what kind of information is expressed in which medium" (Finnegan 1988, 41–42).

The above formulation of research goals is fairly cautious and reflects the exceptional complexity of cultural phenomena. However, Ruth H. Finnegan's intentions did not include a characteristics of the Toronto School. Quite the contrary, she sought to advocate a research program set in opposition to the same. Moreover, the statement is a near perfect reiteration of the already well defined research objectives of mainstream media studies. Meanwhile, as already mentioned above, the Toronto School is commonly defined as standing in theoretical opposition to classic studies of communication. At this point, the blurring of the Toronto School's identity becomes more than apparent. Once the material dimension of media is marginalized and replaced with the notion of cultural practice, the unique character of the Toronto School against the background of other theoretical orientations becomes somewhat dubitable. It also seems to obscure the meaning of the very statement that the Toronto School studies the cultural consequences of media as such. As a consequence of defining communication theories too broadly, we are faced with what J. Halvenson pictorially described as the "implosion of the literacy thesis" (Halverson 1992).

DO MEDIA AS SUCH MODIFY THE CONTENT OF COMMUNICATION?

Even if we agree with R. Finnegan that the most interesting results are obtained by studying the social methods of employing communication technologies, we do not necessarily have to concur with the claim that "it is a social not

a technological matter what kind of information is expressed in which medium" (Finnegan 1988, 42). In a sense, Finnegan is right. It is the individuals as members of a given culture that decide the content of their own communication. The same information can be expressed in many languages and with the use of many different media. However, there is also a point in which R. Finnegan is mistaken. The claim that "it is a social not a technological matter what kind of information is expressed in which medium" (Finnegan 1988, 42) may be read as a particular application of the general thesis claiming that the material vehicle of meaning does not impact the message it carries. To put it more simply: the medium as such does not influence the content of communication. At first glance, this general thesis seems to directly follow from the rather evident observation that any given thought may be expressed by means of any given vehicle (medium). However, even if the latter statement is true, it does not automatically presume the same logical value of the former.

It is commonly accepted that a given language in a given form of expression can equally well carry any given meaning. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis may serve as a telling example here. The Inuit language includes approximately twenty different words to describe snow. This, however, does not mean that the so called Standard Average European languages lack the means to express the same semantic nuances as those used by the Intuits. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis remains in line with the belief that both types of languages are capable of expressing any hues of meaning. The gist of the position, however, lies in the claim that the grammatical structure of ethnic languages can facilitate or hinder referring to certain aspects of reality. It may also suggest certain topics, rendering them central elements of the cultural worldview (Lucy 1992, 148–149).

The Toronto School evokes a parallel line of argumentation. Any given meaning can be freely expressed, both in writing and orally. This does not mean, however, that the material form of media bears no relation whatsoever with the type of information being carried. The researchers of the Toronto School have convincingly demonstrated that particular channels of communication may favor or hamper the transfer of given information. Two telling examples should suffice to demonstrate the claim's validity. Walter Ong's and David Olson's deliberations on decontextualisation of written communication provide characteristics of the minimum consequences of the chosen medium for the content of the message.

When considering the interpretation of the Gospel according to St Mark, Ong explains the particular difficulties in interpreting biblical texts (Ong 1986b). Specifically, a correct interpretation requires understanding that the written text is not a mere transcript of Jesus' words and deeds. The text of the Holy Bible is to a certain extent an artificial construction of the described occurrences, one that sacrifices the literality and fidelity of the account in order to ensure that the events are easily understood by the reader separated from the dynamic context of the described oral situation. To follow Ong's argumenta-

tion, this was the only available way in which biblical stories could be recounted. The very act of writing down an oral utterance separates it from the living situational context which carries much of its meaning. The act of transcription eliminates a part of the oral utterance's meaning. But that is not the most important thing. After all, the context can be recreated through a verbal description of the situation at hand. In this sense, the claim that any message can be expressed by means of any channel of communication still stands. However, the fact of the matter is that a context introduced verbally will have a completely different character from the original, dynamic situation of direct communication. The meaning of an oral utterance is always somewhat elusive, not perfectly defined and non-verbalized as it reflects the elusive and non-verbalized context. The written representation of a spoken utterance requires the context to be given, this, however, can only be accomplished by means of a verbal description (Ong 1986b). Consequently, the information carried by an oral utterance does, in fact, significantly differ from the seemingly identical written message.

By referring to John Austin's theory of speech acts, Olson gives an even more telling account of the consequences of written decontextualisation. According to Austin's theory of language, any language statement carries, alongside its literal meaning (the locutive aspect), an illocutive force which refers to the specific communicational intention of the sender. The same sentence uttered in a different situation will have the same literal meaning (locutive) but may also carry varying illocutive force. It may after all serve as simple information, a warning, a piece of advice, a suggestion, an order, etc. (Austin 1975).

The study of the cognitive function of writing conducted by the Toronto School often refers to the new possibilities offered by the use of writing. These refer to such characteristics as its temporal durability and spatial localization. Olson goes on to reveal a whole new dimension of this process. He demonstrates that the influence of writing on cognitive processes is not limited to the new possibilities it creates. Writing has also a negative impact in that it hinders or even renders impossible certain specific types of communication acts. Olson ventures that in oral contexts, it is relatively easy to recognize the illocutive force of an utterance as every sentence always operates within a broader, non-verbal context. It is that context that allows us to determine the illocutive force to be attributed to a given statement. To follow Olson's argumentation, writing is very effective in translating the locutive aspect of a statement, but it also separates the utterance from its living context. As a consequence, the literal transcription of a spoken utterance will not carry its original illocutive force. Writing a spoken statement down is enough to blur its illocutive strength:

> "If writing cannot capture speakers stance, gaze, tone of voice, stress and intonation, reading such text calls whole new world of interpretative discourse,

of commentary and arguments as to how precisely an utterance, now transcribed, was to be taken" (Olson 1994, 266).

The lack of a dynamic situational context and nonverbal semantic cues necessitates an additional specification of a written sentence's meaning to ensure its proper interpretation. In oral communication, the illocutive force of an utterance is attributed and read intuitively. On the other hand, having resorted to writing induces the participants of communication to translate the nonverbal context of an oral utterance with the use of a more or less accurate terminology. The phenomenon of the disappearing illocutive force of oral utterances results in the emergence of various cultural practices aimed at accurate reconstruction of complex, paralinguistic contexts. This, in turn, leads to the creation of a sophisticated conceptual apparatus to describe the intentional state of individuals (Olson 1994).

The processes described by Ong and Olson are good examples that illustrate both the limitations and possibilities offered by writing itself, not just by its usage. In both situations writing, being a material vehicle for communication, brings along both restraint and opportunity. In such cases, we can talk of the minimum consequences of media understood as material vehicles for information. Notably, this does in no way exclude studying the consequences of communication technologies as cultural practices. The object here is to demonstrate that a part of communication practice is constituted by the minimum consequences of media understood as material vehicles for meaning. This minimal interpretation of media and their consequences allows us to maintain the identity of the Toronto School and at the same time to appreciate the role of technology understood as a cultural practice.

SYNOPSIS

The reluctance to use the narrow concept of "medium" results from the belief that the adoption of such a constricted interpretation leads to technological determinism and related ethnocentrism. Indeed, the danger is a real one. Critics argue that if the Toronto School has to study the consequences of the material dimension of media, it must understand the relations between said media and their users materialistically. It seems, therefore, that studies of the material dimension of media lead to the use of causal explanatory schemas typical of technological determinism. The desire to avert accusations of technological determinism has become one of the key factors affecting the formulation of broad definitions of media. My argument is that such an interpretational strategy may threaten the theoretical identity of the Toronto School. Broad interpretations mean that rather than studying media as such, we focus on their social application. The Toronto School is thus faced with the dilemma: to face accusations of technological determinism, or risk having its very identity questioned. Both

options seem equally unsatisfactory. Future considerations should therefore focus on finding a way out of this difficult situation. What conceptual schemas and interpretational strategies should be employed to retain the narrow understanding of media while at the same time warding off accusations of technological determinism? The so formulated problems prepare the ground for further researches of the fundamental analytical categories used by the Toronto School such as media and mind.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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CONTROVERSY OVER THE STATUS OF THE COMMUNICATION TRANSMISSION MODELS

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the status of the transmission approach to communication. The approach is derived from Claude Shannon's and Warren Weaver's mathematical theory of communication, and is primarily used for the analysis of telecommunications processes. Within the model a metaphorical conceptualisation of communication is adopted, as conveying (transmission) of information (thoughts, emotions) from the mind of a subject A to the mind of a subject B. Despite the great popularity of the transmission approach, it is subjected to multilateral criticism. Alternative approaches were formulated in which the transmission metaphor is exceeded, extended or even overcome (e.g., the constitutive, transactional, or the ritual approaches). This paper discusses such criticism. The doubts are raised primarily by the characteristic reductionism and the postulated exclusivity of the transmission approach. A question arises whether all the possible types of communication activities can be represented within the transmission approach as a transfer of information. In this context, the dispute between the supporters of the universalistic and the relativistic attitudes to the transmission metaphor is discussed. The polemic also concerns the psychologism elements which are present in the transmission models. Wittgenstein's criticism of psychologism conducted within the framework of his everyday language philosophy is of particular importance. The philosophy may applied to the problem of interpersonal communication. In conclusion it is assumed that the transmission metaphor is important as a tool for the study of many, but not all the aspects of communication. Its importance also lies in the fact that it is the first scientific approach to communication. The exclusivity claims of the transmission model, however, have several limitations, inter alia, it hinders research on the history of communication practices, although the model itself is embedded in a specific historical context.

Keywords: communication; transmission; psychologism; metaphor; universalism.

1. INTRODUCTION

I consider some of the methodological aspects of the problem of defining interpersonal communication. I attempt here to reconstruct (at a glance) the dominant method of building communication models, to identify the potential controversy related to it, and to indicate the types of arguments which are being contested with regard to the transmission metaphor.

Since the turn of the fourties and fifties of the twentieth century a number of theoretical models of interpersonal communication have been formulated and have become the subject of intense academic debate. The most common of these is undoubtedly the transmission approach,[1] which refers to a specific metaphorical conceptualisation, used both in everyday, colloquial communication practices, as well as the scientific reflection on the communication. According to Mikołaj Domaradzki:

> "the metaphorical conceptualisation of language as a "wire" used for transmission of thought, implies the ability to "insert" meanings into words; by speaking and writing people "pack" their thoughts into words, thus the words include the thoughts, which can then be "transferred the interlocutor." As a result, successful communication is based on "extracting" the correct meaning of the message-package, in which the sender "packed" ("dressed") their thoughts" (Domaradzki 2012, 3).

The above quotation contains the most important formulations which may serve to express the everyday as well as the scientific knowledge about communication.

I want to point out several types of controversies related to the transmission approach. The first is the presence of the psychologist (mentalist) elements in it. Very often they are considered to be self-evident, non-negotiable, even axiomatic elements of the communication models. But at the same time they are met with criticism, especially from the representatives of the so-called constitutive, transactionist and ritual approaches to communication. Another issue causing disputes over the transmission models is the reduction of communication activities for the transfer of information. Such a reduction is the "legacy" that modern science of communication inherited from the pioneering study by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, which emerged from the formal sciences: mathematics, cybernetics and computer science. Currently, however, it is emphasized that the transfer of information is one of the very many, but not the only function of communication. The third and final issue which is going to be addressed here directly concerns the transmittance itself—the metaphor of transmission, which imposes a certain way of thinking and talking about it on both researchers and ordinary participants of communication. Is the transmission metaphor wrong?

[1] It is sometimes also referred to as "telegraphic" or "linear."

Should it be rejected? Maybe rather exceeded and expanded? Is the description of communication in terms of transmission the only possible, i.e., universal way of its representation? And what kind of universalism is it, if we consider the dispute between the supporters of the universalistic and of the relativistic understanding of communication activities?

2. THE ORIGIN OF THE TRANSMISSION COMMUNICATION MODELS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

The roots of the transmission models date back to the very beginnings of scientific reflection on communication phenomena, to Shannon's and Weaver's works. This model, called the "mother of all models," was particularly important for the development of communication science in the twentieth century. It determined a large part of the communication theory and at the same time is probably it the most striking instance of a transmission model. As noted by Emanuel Kulczycki:

> the technical-transmission approach to the communication process as a transfer of information/ideas/knowledge since the first half of the twentieth century has gained the attention of a wide range of researchers involved with almost every scientific discipline. The main reason for the success of the transmission models is, according to the researchers, their simplicity, generality, quantitative aspect and compliance with the everyday notion of the communication process (Kulczycki 2012, 2).

Let us consider an assumption that due to the scale and the force of impact of the American researchers' proposals one might venture to speak of the "transmission paradigm" in the framework of scientific reflection on communication.

We must not forget about the foundation on which the paradigm has been constructed and on which it stands to this day. Regardless of whether the transmission model is adopted as the basis for research, or subjected to criticism and rejected, it should be taken into account that the whole paradigm is founded on a strong relationship with mathematics, cybernetics and computer science. At that time Shannon and Weaver worked for the telecommunications industry, and conducted research on the capacity of telephone lines, which prompted the development of the mathematical theory of communication. It is undoubtedly very useful as a tool for research of these kinds of communication which Shannon and Weaver were interested in, however, it is often subject to over-interpretation and becomes a victim of its own popularity (Mortensen 1972, 55–56). Before describing the possible criticism of the transmission communication model it is worth to recap its most important theses and present its principal assumptions.

In the famous article of 1948 Shannon wrote:

> "The fundamental problem of communication is that of reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point. Frequently the messages have meaning; that is they refer to or are correlated according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities" (Shannon 1948, 379).

This proposal, evoked a year later in a work written jointly with Weaver, gives rise to a series of definitions of communication falling within the transmission paradigm. The most important are the propositions of the communication theory classics, including Carl Hovland ("I should like to define communication as the process by which an individual (the communicator) transmits stimuli (usually verbal symbols) to modify the behaviour of other individuals") (Hovland 2007, 320), Theodore Newcombe ("Every communication act is viewed as a transmission of information, consisting of a discriminative stimuli, from a source to a recipient," Newcombe 1966, 66), Bernard Berelson ("Communication: the transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, etc., by the use of symbols—words, pictures, figures, graphs, etc. It is the act or process of transmission that is usually called communication" Berelson 1964, 254), or John Hoben ("Communication is the verbal interchange of thought or idea" (Hoben 1954, 77)). According to Bruce Pearson, "communication implies the transmission of meaningful data from one organism to another" (Pearson 1977, 4). In addition to the cited authors, the most important representatives of the transmission model also include Harold Laswell, Denis McQuail, Paul Lazerfeld and Roman Jakobson.

On the basis of the source materials a generalized version of the transmission approach to communication can be provided which would include all its most important features. It would look as follows: It is assumed that communication is a transfer (transmission) of psychological (intellectual or emotional) content by the subject A (the sender) to the subject (or subjects) B (the recipient). The term "psychological content" usually means what you think or what you feel (mental act). The very transfer of psychological content (its transmission) is done through a given (external, perceived sensuously) medium. The medium assumes various forms, such as words (in the case of verbal communication), gestures (in the case of non-verbal communication), graphic signs etc.

Of course, this reconstruction is a simplified and generalized compilation of many positions, but I assume that it contains at least the most important features of the transmission communication models. It is also worth mentioning (this will be of significance for further arguments) that this way of thinking about communication roughly corresponds to the ordinary, commonsense ideas of what communication is. Scholars often consider the above transmission communication model as a kind of axiom, a foundation for any further consideration on communication. The universality of its occurrence and acceptance, however, should not be the only guarantee of the theoretical value and quality of this model.

3. THE DISPUTE OVER THE TRANSMISSION METAPHOR

A variety of objections, or at least doubts, are formulated against the transmission communication model mentioned in the previous section (Ollivier 2010; Carey 2008; Mortensen 1972. The following question is often asked: Are the classic transmission models not totally wrong, but rather have a too narrow range?

The statement that "communication is transfer of information and messages" is certainly not just wrong. However, it is insufficient (too narrow) to describe all of what we call communication. It seems that the issue is how to use the character of the quantifier: the above statement is probably true, as long as it is preceded by a small quantifier, but it would be wrong if it was preceded by a large quantifier. Communication is also, among other things, the transfer of information, news, etc. The same applies to the problem of the function of communication. There are many such functions, perhaps countless, some are more or less common, but it is impossible to identify just one, or even, say, three or six functions of communication.[2] The multiplicity of communication functions coincides with the multiplicity of social practices of the communicative actions' nature. The theory of communication, therefore, does not apply to any one particular type of activity (e.g., based on the transfer of information), but to a whole range of different activities identified as communication.

Equating communication with the transfer of information is an expression of reductionist tendencies, characteristic of the transmission paradigm. Are the communication models, constructed on the basis of mathematical and cybernetic theories, reducing the concept of communication to data transfer based on feedback, an adequate tool for research in the social sciences and humanities? Without much doubt, it can be concluded that they are effective especially when the object of communication scholars' interest are, e.g., mass media, telecommunications, quantitative studies of the media, etc. In such a case, transmission models are useful because they are created just for the purpose of analysis of phenomena of this type.

The aforementioned reductionism, probably "harmless" to, e.g., the quantitative research of the press, would be difficult to accept for the humanities, as it gives the notion of communication an ahistorical character. A radical reduction of communication to data transfer is often combined with the postulate of restrictedness and the totality (exclusivity) of the transmission metaphor. Since it is assumed that communication is always and everywhere based on the transfer of mental content from the mind of a person A to the mind of a person B, then it is simultaneously recognized that communication practices have not and will not undergo any historical transformations; it is recognized that regard-

[2] Such a claim can be justified by referring to similar claims of Wittgenstein and Austin on the function of language.

less of place and time interpersonal communication has been carried out in the same way, and the only way to conceptualise it (both commonsensically and theoretically) is the transmission metaphor itself.

The polemics with the radical form of the transmission paradigm can therefore be justified by, e.g., the need to implement the postulate of considering communication to be a historical phenomenon, e.g., within the social history of communication (Burke 2003, 1). For instance, it involves trying to determine whether the transmission metaphor is the only type of thought pattern serving as a point of reference for the way we think and talk about communication. Although one could argue with the exclusivity of the transmission metaphor, it would be difficult to completely reject the assumption of metaphorical conceptualisation of social phenomena, including communication. Even a moderately relativistic position which grants the communication practitioners the value of historicity, is combined with the recognition that the various types of conceptualisation (e.g., everyday ideas) of communication underwent historical transformations. The transmission metaphor appeared at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the midst of the transforming communication conceptualisations.

The everyday (commonsensual) experience, shared with other members of society, related to engaging in and implementing social communication practice teaches us to use the metaphor of the transmission. Wittgenstein wrote, "a particular image of language imprisons us," the image of what we call communication. The Nietzschean "violence of metaphor" makes it impossible to transcend the image of the world which dictates a given pattern of thinking and speaking. Apart from the image of the world there is no area of "pure communicative facts," no "communication itself" nor any of its "essence." We are constantly in the field of "human facts," which also include ways to describe a variety of phenomena, describe mainly by talking about them. The "violence of metaphor" is a part of the basic characteristics of the socio-cultural reality. There is no alternative to the metaphor:[3] both when (in a practical setting) we are talking about something to someone, as well as when—in the theoretical approach—we reflect on communication scientifically.

In relation to the above statement the following question arises: are we (both as researchers, as well as ordinary language users) "forced" to use certain metaphors at all, or are we "forced" to use only this one particular metaphor of transmission? In other words, speaking of communication have we only one metaphor (the transmission metaphor) at our disposal or could more their types

[3] The only possible kind of alternative to the metaphor is another way of phrasing it, e.g., as "world view" (*Zwischenwelt der Sprache*), "symbolic form," "conceptual framework" etc. The position discussed here is widespread in contemporary philosophy, especially in neohumboldtianism (Ernst Cassirer, Leo Weisgerber), in constructivism (Niklas Luhmann, Nelson Goodman) and in the views of Martin Heidegger (the concept of "world-view"). Regardless of the kantian (and neokantian) provenance of this position, it was popularized the most by Friedrich Nietzsche.

be envisaged? The ongoing dispute on this question includes two standpoints: universalist and relativist.

A representative of the universalist approach to metaphors in communication would probably say that it is not possible to "go beyond" the metaphorical conceptualisation, that the use of metaphor is universal, i.e. panhuman, species-wide, super-cultural. This statement could be considered as an expression of the general form of universalism, while its narrow, more radical form would be expressed in the belief that in regard to communication only one particular metaphor is panhuman and super-cultural—the transmission metaphor (Reddy 1993).

The relativistic position also takes two forms in this case. A radical (but also naive) relativist finds that there is an alternative to the use of a metaphor (this or that), because "everything is relative, nothing is universal." The radical, however, should still provide a proposal for such an alternative, non-metaphorical form of speech (thinking) about communication. Whereas a moderate relativist (and such position is adopted in this argumentation) would agree with a moderate universalist about the fact that you can not "go beyond" the metaphor, and that we are specifically condemned to use certain patterns of thinking.[4] However, the moderate relativist (as opposed to a radical universalist) allows for a possibility that there is a wide variety of patterns, many different metaphors (except the transmission metaphors), which are relative and changeable, and thus dependent on the conditions of time (history) and social culture.

A moderate relativist, who is willing to compromise, would say (sharing the views of a moderate universalist) that we are not able to look at phenomena of communication (as well as all other social phenomena) *sub specie aeterni*, and to treat it as "pure fact." He would treat this type of claim as a fantasy[5]. Nevertheless he would allow for a multiplicity and variability of thinking and speaking patterns. This means that for the moderate relativist it is not possible to go beyond metaphors (ways of thinking, speaking) at all, however, it is possible to change, in a way to move from one metaphor (valid in a given community, within a specified period of time) to another; it is not possible to go beyond the image of the world constructed by the community, but it is possible to move from one such image to another. It also means that the problematic transmission metaphor is not the only one possible metaphorical conceptualisation of communication, but one of many.

The dispute between relativism and universalism, outlined above, can be solved by referring to the difference between language and speech, in the classical sense of Ferdinand de Saussure. A moderate relativist agrees with the fact

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[4] Whether such schemes are only biologically determined or also, and perhaps primarily, culturally is a separate issue. However, it, being a different argument, exceeds the scope of this article.

[5] This would be a claim formulated by, e.g., Husserl and the neopositivists about the twentieth-century philosophy.

that on the "level of language" we are dealing with a universal structure. Perhaps he would even agree that this universal structure is determined by universal, common cognitive structures. He will argue instead with the postulate of "transmission monopoly," recognizing that although in terms of a quantitative approach the transmission paradigm holds a very important position in communication science its popularity alone does not warrant justification for its postulated exclusivity. The moderate relativist, however, is not interested in this permanent, universal level of language structure, but in the variable level of speech. When he examines communication he is not interested in it at the level of structure (although there is no reason to denying the universal structure of communication, language and cognition), but at the level of social practices.

At this level indeed we may seek "historicity" of communication—communication as communication practices, not universal "structures". Relativity and variability over time are supposed to be attributes of the types of practices. In other words, even if it were possible to prove the existence of universal communication structures (contingent of a universal cognitive structure), there would be no contraindications for research in, e.g., a history of communication practices, a kind of "history of the idea of communication." And on adopting such assumptions, Peter Burke outlined four arguments concerning historical description of communication practices:

> "Different social groups use different varieties of language. The same people employ different varieties of language in different situations. Language reflects the society (or culture) in which it is spoken. Language shapes the society in which it is spoken" (Burke 2003, 3–4).

Within this type of research the following assumption appears: communication practices, both at the levels of the ordinary as well as theoretical, are historical in nature, and therefore variable and relative. More specifically, historicity thus understood concerns metaphorical conceptualisations (while recognizing the impossibility of going beyond the metaphor).

4. PSYCHOLOGISM IN THE TRANSMISSION MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

Adopting the transmission metaphor results in a number of theoretical consequences set implicite in the transmission communication models. In many ways, they go beyond the initial assumptions adopted by Shannon and Weaver, therefore, sometimes they assume the form of "silent guidelines," taken as a self-evident, almost axiomatic part of these models. One such consequence is the presence of psychologist (mentalist) elements in transmission studies. They are visible in the above-referenced definitions of communication, especially in the works of Berelson, Hoben and Pearson. In the Polish literature the psy-

chologist element is particularly clear in the definition of communication presented by Walery Pisarek:

> "Transferring mental content, both intellectual and emotional (...) by an individual (or individuals) A to an individual (or individuals) B is called communicating or informing. The initial determination of what is transferred as 'mental content,' or as 'what you think or what you feel' (...) implies that communication (or information) (...) occurs only between people. However, if "mental content" is replaced by a broader category of 'information,' the transmitting and receiving subject does not have to be a man" (Pisarek 2008, 17).

This quotation shows how the transmission approach is combined with the adoption of a perspective which is identified in contemporary philosophy as psychologism (mentalism). In order to comment on the position and the role that psychologism plays in communication theories I will refer to its basic form, which is the subject of an important dispute which took place among the philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The classic psychologism in its fullest and most common form is presented primarily in the work of Franz Brentano, John S. Mill and their disciples and followers: Wilhelm Wundt, Hans Cornelius, Theodor Lipps,[6] Friedrich Beneke. The very term "psychologism" was introduced by Johann Erdmann in 1866 and has dominated many areas of the humanities, mostly German, until the first decades of the twentieth century.

Psychologism is usually defined as the position, according to which a given theoretical problem is reducible to psychological concepts or it can be explained (solved) using psychological terms. While the term "mentalism" usually refers to a psychologist view, according to which the objects established within a given scientific theory are mental (psychological) in their character, or are dependent on the mental (psychological) acts. Psychologism and mentalism met with severe criticism from, e.g., phenomenology (Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Roman Ingarden), formal logic (Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell) and ordinary language philosophy (Ludwig Wittgenstein).

The primary objection to psychologism was (and is) the accusation of reductionism, also in terms of methodology (especially in the context of the ongoing, parallel dispute of naturalists with anti-naturalists on methodological autonomy of the social sciences and humanities). The most powerful attack on psychologism was launched by Ludwig Wittgenstein, on the grounds of his "late" colloquial language philosophy.

In the final period of its activity (the forties of the twentieth century), Wittgenstein focused on tracking down the illusions and prejudices (including the

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[6] Eventually Lipps admitted in 1902 that the antipsychologist arguments of Edmund Husserl were right.

philosophical ones), which we succumb to using colloquial language. One of such illusions is, in his opinion, the belief in the correlation between an act of speaking and a certain accompanying mental state (mental act):

> "Wittgenstein also intimates doubt about the idea that when I speak, I must first think in some inner symbolism, linguistic or mental, and than transpose my thoughts into utterances of a different, public symbolism" (Glock 1996, 360).

The illusion is caused by a specific mode of imagining ourselves, which we are forced to by the language at our disposal. It could be said that the task which Wittgenstein performs, is resisting the colloquial metaphor, fighting against "violent metaphors" which lead us philosophically astray: "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it inexorably" (Wittgenstein 1997, 48). According to Wittgenstein, neither thinking nor understanding of something have to be interpreted solely in psychological terms. They also do not have to be seen as immanent phenomena, taking place in the "private" mental space. He also proposes a very pragmatic approach to thinking (or understanding) as the only external forms of action:

> "It is misleading to talk of thinking as of a "mental activity". We may say that thinking is essentially the activity of operating with signs. This activity is performed by the hand, when we think by writing; by the mouth and larynx, when we think by speaking (...). If than you say that in such cases the mind thinks, I would only draw your attention to the fact that you are using a metaphor, that here the mind is an agent in a different sense from that in which the hand can be said to be the agent in writing" (Wittgenstein 1998, 6).

Recalling the numerous examples of "language games" Wittgenstein suggests that the description of an activity based on, e.g., the issuance and exercise of command may be reduced to a description of expressing words (using signs) and of the reaction to them, where the activities are the result of the "rules of the game" adopted by the sender and the recipient. Such a description has not necessarily to (or indeed must not) contain a description of the alleged mental acts accompanying such activities.

Wittgenstein is credited with the most significant observation concerning the multitude of "language games", adopted later by, e.g., John L. Austin: it is impossible to identify any one function of language, but there are infinitely many (or at least a lot) of different types. Accepting that the only function of language is for example "naming things," or assuming that a preceding mental act is a necessary condition for the activity of speaking, would be expressions of unnecessary reductionism. The same can easily be applied to communication—as long as you accept that Wittgenstein's "language games" are equivalent to what

we call communication activities. And if it is so, then communication researchers should note that they are indebted to representatives of colloquial language philosophy for certain important guidelines which can at least play the role of postulates and become a subject of discussion. These guidelines are directly related to the transmission approach to communication.

First, referring to Wittgenstein's position, it may be concluded that the "transfer (transmission) of information, feelings, thoughts, etc.," is probably one, but not the only possible function of communication. This means that the exclusivity of the transmission metaphor may turn out to be a procedure equally susceptible to criticism as are attempts to reduce the function of language to naming objects. Communication may be described as (also) an activity of transferring a thought to someone, but not only in this way. According to Mikołaj Domaradzki:

> "In most cases, communication is (...) metaphorically conceptualised as a kind of 'conveying' ('transmission,' 'transfer,' etc.) (reified accordingly) of thoughts: senders 'pack' their thoughts into words, and recipients 'extract' the meaning out of these 'packages.' However, communication is not only such 'mental object exchange' " (Domaradzki 2012, 4).

Domaradzki cites the example of an alternative metaphor of communication: it does not have to be a metaphor of "conveying something to someone," but "illuminating," "enlightening" someone, and the philological analyses indicate that the versatility of such a metaphor is not smaller than of the transmission metaphor.

The second guideline concerns directly the problem of the presence of psychologism elements in the transmission approach. Multilateral, sharp criticism from philosophers representing various trends and schools compels us to treat psychologism at least cautiously. The assumption that communication may be reduced to the transfer of thoughts, emotions, states of mind, is perhaps dictated to us, as Wittgenstein suspected, by certain "traps" which are laid for us by the way we speak, but does not necessarily mean that such an assumption must be indiscriminately regarded as an axiom in the theory of communication. Moreover, a number of positions in the field of social sciences and humanities, which participate in the scientific reflection on communication, clearly polemicises with psychologism. Emanuel Kulczycki writes:

> "… the reduction of the process of constructing the message-meaning to an individual psyche is not acceptable from the perspective of culturalism or the broadly understood anti-psychologism. Creating meanings, symbols, does not occur through an individual decision, but in a social interaction" (Kulczycki 2012, 31).

These guidelines should not be regarded as a dogma which would replace the earlier ones. It is worth to include them in the framework of critical reflec-

tion on communication. Presenting such guidelines is not intended to overcome or reject the transmission approach, but only to extend and exceed it.

5. CONCLUSION

The transmission approach to communication—like all the approaches—is a kind of metaphorical conceptualisation, which has been designed by researchers in a particular historical and social context and in relation to specific (sometimes implicitly accepted) theoretical assumptions, as well as in relation to other disciplines of science. This means that—contrary to occasionally formulated postulates—it is not absolute nor exclusionary. As a further consequence another conclusion arises, namely, that the range of the applicability of the transmission models in the study of communication is indeed broad but not unlimited. This hypothesis, which summarizes the earlier arguments, requires a more comprehensive justification which would go beyond capacity of any single article. Which is why I shall only point out some contributions towards such a justification.

First of all, we ought to emphasise the significance of the circumstances and the context of Shannon and Weaver's mathematical communication theory which inspired and largely determined the subsequent theories and models of transmission. Developed in response to specific needs (telecommunications), it has often been transferred to a field of completely different research problems. An example of it is the repeated reference to Shannon's concept for the purpose of research on the so-called non-verbal communication, while the basic assumptions of the concept do not actually offer such a possibility.

In addition to the real effectiveness of the transmission approach in analysing what they were actually created to analyse, their meaning and importance lies in the fact that they are (in the classic form as proposed by Shannon) the first example of a scientific account of communication phenomena. In other words, in the late forties and fifties of the twentieth century the science of communication was being developed, and its first achievement was the transmission metaphor put in scientific terms (based on mathematics and cybernetics). I assume here that all the earlier examples of reflection on communication were pre-scientific in nature and should be viewed merely as early contributions.

Theoretical reflection on communication, however, did not end at the time the first transmission model was created. In the twentieth century, a number of expansions and improvements were proposed, there were also competitive accounts, trying to exceed and even overcome the dominance of the transmission metaphor. The value of the claim, which states that "communication consists in transfer/transmission of information, thoughts, emotions, etc." should be determined in two ways. First, the importance of such a claim, representative to the transmission approach, lies in the fact that it has obtained the form of the first

scientific theory of communication, though the form was not yet final. Secondly, it can be applied to specific areas of what is called the interpersonal communication, although not all, and not in equal measure.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

Jan Sleutels

THE FLINTSTONES FALLACY

ABSTRACT

A leading idea in evolutionary psychology and philosophy of mind is that the basic architecture and dynamics of the mind are very old, presumably dating back to the Stone Age. Theories based on this idea are liable to paint a caricature of our ancestors by projecting our modern self-conception onto earlier minds. I argue that this 'Flintstones Fallacy' is an underrated risk, relieved neither by standard biological arguments nor by arguments from psychology and philosophy. Indeed, each of these fields has better arguments for the contrary view that the mind as we know it from present-day experience is not ancient at all.

Keywords: philosophy of mind; ancient minds; evolutionary psychology; folk psychology; Flintstones fallacy; overinterpretation; cultural variation.

1. INTRODUCTION

While theories of mind in the second half of the 20th century have not been particularly keen on questions of history and development, the situation has changed with the rise of disciplines such as evolutionary psychology and cognitive archaeology (see, e.g., Tooby and Cosmides 1992; Donald 1993; Mithen 1996; Noble and Davidson 1996; Deacon 1997; Donald 2001). Theories in these fields generally concentrate on minds in deep history and on the far ends of the evolutionary tree. Philosophers have picked up the trend. They often express concerns about the methodology of evolutionary psychology and its conceptual foundations (as philosophers do), but on the whole they tend to support the project (see, e.g., Gärdenfors 2003; Bermúdez 2003; Corbey 2006). The preoccupation with deep history and distant origins betrays a presumption of psychological continuity, commonly backed up by the idea that the mind is a native asset of the biological brain, which is presumed to be responsive only to pressures on an evolutionary timescale. So, when traveling back in human history one may

expect mind and brain to stay roughly the same during most of the journey. The recent past is by implication uneventful.

Also moral considerations may bear on the issue. According to a long-standing Western tradition, the mind is the seat of human dignity and man's defining characteristic. From that perspective, changes in the nature of conscious minds on anything short of an evolutionary timescale would compromise the moral unity of mankind. Even if animals and early hominids can be excluded from our peer group (to which some would strongly object), drawing the line closer to home is insufferable.

Regardless of the moral concerns at stake, I will argue that deep history is not the right place to start when studying the mind's history. It makes us susceptible of a particular type of fallacious reasoning which I shall call the Flintstones Fallacy (section 2). The fallacy is irredeemable: neither standard biological arguments are helpful (section 3), nor arguments from psychology (section 4) and philosophy (section 5). Indeed, each of these fields has better arguments for the contrary view that the human mind is neither ancient nor a natural asset of the brain.

2. THE FLINTSTONES FALLACY

Fred Flintstone, the Stone Age protagonist in the legendary TV series from the 1960s, was the spitting image of a modern human being. The artists willfully projected modern mentality onto Stone Age man to create a comical effect, and they were very successful at it. Now, the idea that the conscious mind must have been basically the same throughout most of human history makes psychology do much the same thing that is funny in the Flintstones, namely, to project onto earlier humans (as well as hominids, primates, and other animals) the image that we have of ourselves as conscious, thinking creatures, in spite of the fact that this self-image may well contain features that are typically modern and have been acquired only recently. If we knew *which* of these features are specifically modern acquisitions this would not be a problem, of course, for we could then omit them from the image projected onto earlier humans and other creatures. In fact, however, we have no idea how to sort mental features into modern and ancient, or into essential features (which any mind must have irrespective of its state of development) and accidental features (which may or may not be present, depending on the state of development). So, projecting the modern self-image back into deep history is bound to be fallacious to some degree by inadvertently attributing modern mental traits to other types of mind that do (or did) not really possess them. Moreover, once the fallacy has been committed, the misattributions will tend to stick, and it will become more and more difficult to identify and correct them.

To be sure, not all mental features are equally susceptible to the Flintstones fallacy. Basic information processing capacities (e.g., for early vision or sen-

sory-motor coordination) are largely immune to it. These capacities typically involve neural mechanisms that can be directly identified by neuroscientific means in humans as well as in non-human animals. In principle it is no more fallacious to attribute them to earlier humans than to attribute them to present-day animals. Yet even here one should be cautious, both with respect to earlier humans and with respect to contemporary non-humans. Although basic 'micro-cognitive' mechanisms can be identified in humans and animals alike, the manner in which they contribute to overall cognitive performance may be quite different. In ordinary, present-day humans the mechanisms are typically described partly in terms of their role in overall mental competency at the personal level (cf. Bennett and Hacker 2003). Now, obviously one should be careful not to transfer these personalist descriptions of neural mechanisms from humans to animals, which would go well beyond the licence of neuroscience, and would indeed expose one to the Flintstones fallacy.

The features for which the Flintstones fallacy poses a problem are typically those described by folk psychology. Folk psychology is the collection of practices, principles and conceptual tools that we use for purposes of describing, organizing, and communicating our ideas, beliefs, motives, feelings, and reasons for acting. It is the toolkit that we use for identifying and interrelating types of mental contents (beliefs, feelings, ideas), states (awareness, understanding, agreeing), processes and episodes (reasoning, dreaming), faculties and attitudes (imagining, remembering, perceiving), and so on, with respect to one's own mental life as well as that of other members of society. Folk psychology in this sense is roughly the ordinary "concept of mind" described by Gilbert Ryle (1949). What the present argument calls into question, is specifically that the familiar concepts of folk psychology can be meaningfully and non-fallaciously applied to ancient minds.

Notice that the Flintstones fallacy may affect our thinking about the mind in opposite ways, one projecting present mentality into the past, the other projecting past mentality into the present. On the one hand, the evolutionary trend invites us to picture Stone Age man as having an essentially modern mind. On the other hand, the same type of reasoning may lead us to picture modern humans as "Stone Age brains acting clumsily in modern environments" (Smail 2008, 149), "Pleistocene hunter-gatherers struggling to survive and reproduce in evolutionarily novel suburban habitats" (Buller 2005, 112), since "the modern mind is adapted to the Stone Age, not the computer age" (Pinker 1997, 42). The two projections are niftily combined in the following passage on the Neandertal mind:

> "Much modern thinking is still based on abilities that evolved long ago. It is very unlikely that the advent of modern humans was marked by a total reorganization of the brain; it is probable that much modern thinking still consists of processes that evolved in earlier times. Many modern human activi-

> ties place minimal demands on problem solving ability (the overworked driving-to-work example). More likely, the neural change leading to modernity was modest and added to the abilities already possessed by premodern populations [such as Neandertals]. If we can identify and peel away this final acquisition, we should be able to describe the Neandertal mind itself" (Wynn and Coolidge 2004, 468–469).

The passage characteristically emphasizes the vast continuity between premodern and modern humans, whose minds are claimed to be essentially alike except for a "final acquisition." The driving-to-work example referred to in support of continuity adds a comical note, calling up the image of Fred and Barney getting ready to face another day at the Bedrock Gravel Company.

3. BIOLOGY

The belief that the human mind has developed very slowly over a vast period of time is typically defended by appealing to biological continuity. Assuming (1) that the mind is a product of the brain, (2) that brain structure is determined by evolution, and (3) that evolution works very slowly, it seems logical to conclude (4) that the mind in its contemporary form developed on an evolutionary timescale and must have been roughly the same throughout prehistory.

The validity of the argument is doubtful, however. First, even assuming that it could be established that the basic structure of the brain has been the same since the dawn of humanity, this would reveal little about the way in which that basic structure was *used* by ancient minds. If earlier humans had modern hardware, so to speak, it does not necessarily follow that they were running modern software. The converse is much more plausible: from the software they were running one could make a reasonable estimate of hardware requirements. This second inference, however, offers no relief of the Flintstones fallacy; it relies on a prior insight in the organization of ancient minds ("ancient software") that cannot be established by biology. Biology may be able to sort brain features into ancient and modern, but it cannot do the same for specifically mental features.

Moreover, the idea that the development of phenotypical traits such as behavioural competencies is determined by slowly working genetic mechanisms has also been challenged from within evolutionary theory itself, among others by Dual Inheritance Theory (DIT) and Developmental Systems Theory (DST). According to DIT the features and competencies sported by normal adults (generally, mature phenotypes) depend on biologically inherited traits as well as on cultural inheritance (Tomasello 1999). Similarly, DST explains how non-genetic factors (such as cultural traditions) may systematically shape biological structures and capacities, including those of the brain, provided that they are reliably present in every generation (Oyama et al. 2001). Because non-genetic

factors can operate on much shorter time scales than genetic factors, psychology's focus on deep history is probably misguided. Relatively recent changes in mental architecture may be consistent with a sophisticated view of evolution.

Finally, advanced imaging technologies in cognitive neuroscience point up the importance of neuroplasticity for understanding the cognitive functions of the human brain, in particular that of the neocortex (for an overview, see Pascual-Leone et al. 2005). Human brains are intrinsically able to reconfigure themselves in dynamic response to changing environmental pressures, notably including cultural conditions. How this relates to specific features of our self-understanding as thinking creatures is still unclear, but it seems likely that the modern mind to some degree exploits the bandwidth of cortical plasticity, synaptically adapting itself to prevailing social, cultural and technological conditions. Research in the field of situated cognition strongly suggests that the human brain dynamically interacts with structural features of its cognitive ecology, which act as scaffolds for many of our mental capacities and processes. Changing cognitive landscapes will thus accommodate differently tuned brains, which in their turn provide for different sorts of mental capacities and processes (Clark 2008; Robbins and Aydede 2009). At the very least this is a possibility that cannot be ruled out a priori.

Summing up, biology offers no relief from the Flintstones Fallacy. Indeed, new insights rather suggest that many traits of the modern mind may have been acquired in recent cultural history. It would certainly be mistaken to project these onto Stone Age ancestors.

4. PSYCHOLOGY

The risk of "overinterpetation" is widely acknowledged among scientists working on ancient minds. With regard to prehistoric tools, for example, archaeologist Thomas Wynn called for caution when bringing modern conceptions of tool production to bear on the production of stone handaxes:

> "It would be difficult to overemphasize just how strange the handaxe is when compared to the products of modern culture. It does not fit easily into our understanding of what tools are, and its makers do not fit easily into our understanding of what humans are" (Wynn 1995, 21).

Notwithstanding the appreciation of the risks involved, there is widespread confidence that our present conception of the mind can reliably be used as a starting-point for modeling earlier humans and hominids. Biological considerations aside, can psychology offer a basis for this confidence?

Conjectures about the mental traits and capacities of early hominids typically take the form of a 'minimal' psychological model. The model is minimal in the sense that it contains only those psychological competencies that are strictly necessary for explaining specific behavioural traits such as producing handaxes,

hunting and gathering, or generally coping with specific ecological and social conditions. The aim of minimalism is to reduce the risk of inadvertently attributing to premodern minds traits that are specifically modern, i.e., to avoid the Flintstones fallacy.

Is the minimalist strategy an effective measure against the Flintstone fallacy? There are three reasons for doubting this. First, for minimalism to be successful against the Flintstones fallacy it should be able to describe the behaviour that needs to be explained in a sufficiently "neutral" way, i.e., without implicating our modern self-understanding as mindful beings. This is the point made by Wynn in the above quotation. By describing relics from the past as "tools," for example, a host of connotations about modern production and use of tools is implicated, including expectations about the user's consciousness, instrumental rationality and imagination. It is not at all clear whether sufficiently neutral descriptions can be given; the Flintstones fallacy looms large here.

Secondly, for the psychological model of ancient minds to be truly 'minimal', it must assume that it makes sense to isolate specific mental traits and competencies and lift them from the ordinary context in terms of which we commonly understand human psychology. We have a relatively clear grasp of what specific competencies (e.g., imagination, memory, or communication) amount to in present-day peers, but what is left of these competencies when taken in isolation and projected onto an alien past? Without the socio-cultural backdrop of modern folk psychology the attribution of isolated competencies seems to make little or no sense. For example, what would it mean to ascribe a minimal capacity for communication to our ancient forebears? Is this supposed to involve also a capacity for having beliefs and desires, for thinking, reasoning, self-expression, imagination, and other mental aptitudes that we routinely associate with communication in ordinary life? If not, then what is left of the notion of communication? In both cases minimalism defeats its own purposes: first by allowing modern self-understanding to paint in the model of the ancient mind (which is to commit the Flintstones fallacy), secondly by attributing mental traits that are void of meaning.

A final worry about the prospects for psychological minimalism concerns the implicit assumption that we can reliably tell which mental traits and competencies are needed for an agent to display certain types of behaviour. We are indeed fairly dexterous in assessing the relationship between competence and performance in present-day, normal, adult peers performing under normal conditions; that is the essence of folk psychology. Turning to abnormal conditions, however, or to abnormal humans (infants, seniles, people suffering from mental disorders and brain lesions), folk psychology soon ceases to be a reliable guide. It is to be expected that the same is true *a fortiori* of ancient minds, which are both abnormal and acting under abnormal conditions (as seen from our present-day point of view, of course).

A telling example is the interpretation of prehistoric cave art such as found in Chauvet and Lascaux, France. The received opinion has long been that the ancient artists of these paintings must be credited with "essentially modern minds" boasting sophisticated capacities for symbolization and communication; how else could one make sense of their beautiful, strikingly naturalistic paintings? This interpretation has been contested by Nicholas Humphrey (1998), who drew attention to resemblances between typical cave drawings and artwork produced in the early 1970s by a virtually languageless, autistic girl named Nadia between the age of 3 and 6 years. Nadia is obviously not a paragon of the modern mind with sophisticated capacities for symbolization and communication. What is more, Nadia's drawing abilities actually deteriorated once she had acquired a modicum of language. Hence, Humphrey argued, the attribution of advanced communication capacities to these ancient minds may have been jumping to conclusions.

What the example shows is that common intuitions about mental competency and behavioural performance are quite unreliable outside of their ordinary context. When we bound down into deep history convinced of these intuitions, we are prone to paint a caricature of our ancestors.

5. PHILOSOPHY

Modeling ancient minds on the basis of present self-conception poses a hazard, but that in itself does not prove the modeling wrong. It takes specific evidence in specific cases to falsify specific proposals for reconstructing ancient psychology. Understood as an empirically defeasible principle, then, it may still be warranted to work from the assumption that ancient and modern minds are substantially continuous. Indeed, there seem to be a priori reasons for thinking that this is the appropriate way to proceed. I shall consider a number of arguments to this effect. If allowed to stand they take a bite out of the Flintstones fallacy: painting ancient minds in modern colours would not be fallacious until proven otherwise. Yet I think that a closer look at the arguments actually supports the opposite conclusion, viz., that ancient minds are substantially different from modern minds unless proven otherwise.

First, it may be argued that the conceptual apparatus of folk psychology is logically indispensable for describing and explaining ancient minds. Studies that are not couched in these terms are not doing psychology at all: their subject is not the ancient mind but something else instead, for instance ancient anthropology. Hence, it is self-contradictory to claim that the vocabulary of present self-understanding does not apply to ancient minds.

This argument is well-known from discussions of eliminative materialism (cf. Von Eckhardt 1984). In the context of contemporary minds it makes good sense: not even cognitive neuroscience can do without folk psychology as a continuing constraint on what counts as an adequate explanation of properly

psychological phenomena. In a historical context the argument is much less convincing, however. If *present* folk psychology is supposed to apply *necessarily*, a wildly implausible form of psychological essentialism ensues. It would be logically impossible for the human mind to have undergone any substantial change at all, which is unacceptable both from an evolutionary and from a developmental point of view. Moreover, given the special role of contemporary folk psychology vis-à-vis understanding contemporary minds, it seems plausible to argue by parity of reasoning that the indicated frame of reference for understanding ancient minds is ancient folk psychology rather than present one.

The first argument is obviously too strong, but it is possible to settle for a weaker claim to achieve the same result. Even though it is not logically necessary that ordinary folk psychology suits earlier minds (which allows it to be empirically defeasible), it is still intuitively highly probable. Conversely, it is intuitively reprehensible to believe that earlier humans did not sport the same basic mental features that we have. A typical example of this line of thought is Ned Block's reply to the suggestion that earlier humans did not have conscious access to their own thoughts:

> "Could there have been a time when humans who are biologically the same as us never had the contents of their perceptions and thoughts poised for free use in reasoning or in rational control of action? Is this ability one that culture imparts to us as children? (...) There is no reason to take such an idea seriously" (Block 1995, 238).

For Block it is intuitively quite unlikely that humans "just like us" could be different from us with respect to basic mental traits such as consciousness. Hence, until evidence to the contrary is found, it is safe to assume that our present-day conception of conscious creatures applies to earlier humans as well as it does to us.

Can intuitions succeed where logic failed? I frankly admit that I share Block's intuitions and that I find them quite strong. Yet I think we should be critical of them; uncritical reliance on intuition breeds parochialism. Now, the argument hinges on the reliability of our common intuitions about the features that mindful beings can be credited with. As pointed out in the previous section, these intuitions spring from our present self-conception as mindful creatures, i.e., from modern folk psychology. It stands to reason that they can be trusted with regard to present psychological peers, i.e., with regard to those members of community with whom we share a common folk psychology. However, as we move to the fringes of that circle of peers (e.g., when considering pathological cases and infants), these intuitions tend to break down rapidly and cease to be reliable. It is quite unlikely that our intuitions perform any better with respect to ancient minds, taking into account that these are even further removed from the compass of present community. Indeed, modern intuitions seem to be quite inappropriate here. Given the fact that intuitions springing from modern folk

psychology work well for modern peers, it is to be expected that intuitions based on ancient folk psychology work well for ancient minds. If folk psychology has changed in the course of history (which can hardly be ruled out a priori), it follows that modern intuitions do not fit ancient minds. Of course it remains to be seen whether ancient folk psychologies can be meaningfully reconstructed, especially when the empirical evidence is scarce and ambiguous as in the case of prehistoric minds, and how much cultural and historical variation can be found. These strike me as empirical questions, however, not to be decided a priori (cf. Sleutels 2006).

That last suggestion can be contested. One may doubt on hermeneutical grounds that it is possible to find evidence of folk psychologies that are substantially different from our own. All interpretation is to some extent translation into one's own conceptual scheme. Any purportedly alien folk psychology will get translated into our own conceptual scheme, and will be assimilated to modern folk psychology in the process of interpretation. Even assuming for the sake of argument that there actually were folk psychologies substantially different from our own, these would be hermeneutically inscrutable. Only upon translation would it be possible to understand them as being instances of folk psychology at all, but then they would no longer appear substantially different from our own (cf. Davidson 1984; Rorty 1972).

It is admittedly hard to keep our present self-image from obtruding itself when interpreting other cultures (Winch 1964). As Jerry Fodor once put it,

> "there is, so far as I know, no human group that doesn't explain behavior by imputing beliefs and desires to behavior. (And if an anthropologist claimed to have found such a group, I wouldn't believe him.)" (Fodor 1987, 123).

Yet, the hermeneutical argument seems to overshoot itself by making deviant psychologies impossible to detect in principle. In practice, however, disciplines such as developmental, cultural, historical, and abnormal psychology are quite able to identify deviant folk psychologies, for which there is evidence in abundance. For example, autistic persons and young children can be diagnosed with an inability to attribute false beliefs to others (the so-called Sally-Anne test), indicating that they do not command the "theory of mind" used by the rest of us (Baron-Cohen et al. 1985). Work in ethnopsychology suggests that there is considerable cross-cultural variation in how people parse the mental domain, conceptualize their peers, and explain their behaviour (Lillard 1998). Studies in developmental and cultural psychology indicate that ordinary Western folk psychology is imbued with literacy; both pristinely oral cultures and pre-literate children show a manner of type-identifying and interrelating mental contents that is different from standard folk psychological practice (Olson 1994). As a final (and provocative) example, ancient Achaeans described their actions as being inspired by alien voices ('voices of the gods'), which raises questions about their ability to consciously control their own behaviour on the basis of

rational deliberation (Jaynes 1976). The hermeneutical challenge in all of these cases is not to let expectations from ordinary folk psychology overrule the empirical evidence. This may be difficult (Block and Fodor could not resist), but it is not impossible.

6. CONCLUSION

The Flintstones fallacy is an underrated risk in evolutionary psychology and philosophy. There is widespread confidence that we are by and large able to avoid the fallacy, even when projecting our conception of the mind back onto ancestors in deep history. If the differences between ancient minds and modern minds were well-understood, or if one could be sure that they are small, this confidence might be defensible. Neither of these is true, however. Standard biological arguments fail to establish that the basic structure of the mind is ancient. Standard procedures in psychology, based on our modern self-conception as mindful creatures, systematically downgrade putative differences between ancient and modern minds. A priori arguments from philosophy do not warrant the presumption that ancient minds were substantially like modern minds unless proven otherwise. Indeed, each of these fields has better arguments for the contrary view that the mind as we know it from present-day experience is not ancient at all, but was contrived in relatively recent history as a product of contingent cultural practices exploiting the considerable bandwidth of human neuroplasticity.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL RELATIVISM

ABSTRACT

The paper analyses the conditions and limits of intercultural communication in the light of a critical assessment of linguistic and cultural relativism. The analysis of linguistic relativism departs from Humboldt's claim that every language contains a specific world-view and from the famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, according to which our thought and perception of reality is influenced or even, in a stronger version, determined by language. Many cognitive scientists consider that the cognitive influence of language on thought is negligible; however, several studies show that language can enhance (or obstruct) some cognitive functions. At any rate, it is at the cultural level that the challenge of linguistic relativism is more relevant, because different cultures generate different webs of concepts. Davidson's critique of the idea of conceptual schemes fails precisely because he privileges the cognitive dimension of language (as representation of an empirical reality), neglecting its role in the constitution of a cultural space.

Linguistic relativism can be easily articulated with cultural relativism, the view that it is not possible for outsiders to evaluate and criticize values, practices and basic beliefs of substantially different cultures. Against relativism, ethnocentrism and a naive universalism that presupposes the existence of universally valid standards that make intercultural communication always possible, the paper proposes a contextualist account of human communication (inspired by Wittgenstein and Gadamer) that is sensitive to linguistic and conceptual differences and recognizes the existence of limits to intercultural communication. However, from a contextualist standpoint, these limits are not rigid and they can be overcome, at least partly and gradually, in the course of a cross-cultural dialogue in which the participants engage in a critical reflection aimed at correcting initial assumptions and divergent standards.

Keywords: Communication; culture; language; relativism; contextualism.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of intercultural communication has become a central problem in our globalized world. Intercultural communication faces several barriers or obstacles, and this paper will focus on the challenge of linguistic and cultural relativism. More precisely, its aim is to evaluate to what extent linguistic and cultural differences undermine the cross-cultural dialogue or mutual understanding between cultures. A preliminary point is to define relativism, a task which is more difficult than it may at first appear. In fact, relativism can be understood in different ways and, to complicate the situation, there are different varieties of relativism: moral, epistemic, ontological, conceptual or cultural relativism, for instance. Needless to say, one can be relativist in one of these domains, and not in another. In order to clarify the concept of relativism, it will be useful to consider the following attempts to define relativism:

> "Relativism is the view that truth and knowledge are not absolute or invariable, but dependent upon viewpoint, circumstances or historical conditions" (Grayling 2001, 308).

> "For the relativist, there is no substantive overarching framework or single metalanguage by which we can rationally adjudicate or univocally evaluate competing claims of alternative paradigms" (Bernstein 1983, 8).

> "Relativism is the view that every belief on a certain topic or perhaps about any topic is as good as every other. No one holds this view. (...) The philosophers who get called 'relativists' are those who say that the grounds for choosing between such opinions are less algorithmic than had been thought" (Rorty 1982, 166).

There is a fundamental oscillation in these conceptions of relativism. On the one hand, the first passage, by characterizing relativism on the basis of the context-dependency of truth and knowledge, contains a somewhat weak formulation of relativism, because one can accept such a thesis without accepting rival perspectives or viewpoints; one may recognize that knowledge and justification depend on a particular social, historical and epistemic context, and to claim, at the same time, that it is possible to compare and criticize competing perspectives. Even the context-dependency of truth can be downplayed, if it means simply that certain truths are not expressible in certain contexts. Bernstein's account of relativism as the absence of an "overarching framework" against which one could compare conflicting viewpoints is likewise inaccurate, because it conflates two points that should be clearly distinguished: one thing is to deny the existence of an "overarching framework," and another one is to claim that conflicting conceptual schemes or perspectives are incommensurable; the second proposition (the incommensurability thesis) is not entailed by the first one, because even in the absence of a common framework it is possible to compare

critically different perspectives in the light of their commonalities; examples of absolute incommensurability are, indeed, hard to find. Finally, Rorty presents a strong formulation of relativism, according to which one should accept or tolerate the conflicting claims or perspectives arising from different contexts. This strong formulation captures an important element of the meaning of relativism in everyday language, what I would like to call the thesis of *indifferentism* (in the sense of an indifferent acceptance of rival claims). When Rorty says that "no one holds this view" he is partly right, because in its radical form relativism is self-destructing, as Plato showed in the *Protagoras*. However, in the domain of culture, it is not uncommon to find people who advocate an acceptance of the variety of human forms of life and, accordingly, of the different and sometimes conflicting perspectives that are associated with them.

In brief, definitions of relativism are often obscured by a confusion between contextualism and relativism. The claim that knowledge or justification depend on a context (contextualism) does not entail indifferentism nor the impossibility of a critical dialogue between representatives of two different world-views. In what follows, I will analyze the thesis of linguistic relativism (2) and present the challenge of cultural relativism (3) in order to develop a contextualist account of intercultural communication that recognizes some insights of linguistic and cultural relativism, avoiding at the same time the unpalatable consequences of relativism (4).

THE CHALLENGE OF LINGUISTIC RELATIVISM

The cognitive role of language was generally neglected in the history of philosophy. It was only as late as in the 18th and 19th centuries that a group of pre-romantic and romantic authors took seriously the idea that language and thought were interwoven and formed an indissoluble unity. Wilhelm von Humboldt is a case in point. In his famous essay *On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and Its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*, Humboldt developed what could be called a constitutive view of language, according to which, far from being a mere vehicle of previously formed thoughts, "language is the formative [*bildende*] organ of thought" (Humboldt 1999, 54). On the basis of this claim lies a Kantian insight; the idea that the human mind does not receive passively the contents of experience, but organizes them actively. Humboldt stressed that the activity of mind in the constitution of the objects of our experience involved necessarily language. The experience of reality requires concepts, and concepts, in turn, require language; therefore, the experience of reality requires language. In Humboldt's words:

> "Just as no concept is possible without language, so also there can be no object for the mind, since it is only through the concept, of course, that anything external acquires full being for consciousness" (Humboldt 1999, 59).

Language operates as a constitutive mediation between thought and reality: it is a mediating faculty, but it does not establish a mediation between already formed *relata*. By mediating between thought and reality, language contributes to the constitution of both thought and reality. As a result, Humboldt (1999, 59) claims that "there resides in every language a characteristic world-view [*Weltansicht*]." He can be considered a forerunner of the so-called principle of linguistic relativity. However, he did not conceive of languages as prisons of the human mind; on the contrary, a speaker can have access to the world-views of other languages, although the projection of one's own linguistic categories limits to some extent such an access:

> "To learn a *foreign language* should therefore be to acquire a new standpoint in the world-view hitherto possessed (…), since every language contains the whole of the conceptual fabric and mode of presentation of a portion of mankind. But because we always carry over, more or less, our own world-view, and even our own language-view, this outcome is not purely and completely experienced" (Humboldt 1999, 60).

In the twentieth century, the above mentioned principle of linguistic relativity received an exemplary expression in the work of two American linguists; Sapir and Whorf. According to the so-called Sapir/Whorf Hypothesis, the language we speak influences *or* determines the way we think. This disjunctive formulation of their thesis is justified by the fact that they oscillate between a weaker account of linguistic relativity, according to which language influences but does not determine thought, and a stronger one, according to which language establishes, as it were, the rails of thought. At any rate, Sapir and Whorf have argued that (1) different languages apply different categories to the world, and that (2) linguistic structures and categories affect the way we perceive and think about reality. In Whorf's words:

> "We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems of our minds" (Whorf 1956, 213).

As a result, Sapir and Whorf concluded, like Humboldt, that different languages contained different world-views. The thesis that language affects thought has far-reaching consequences that go beyond the limits of academic studies, entering into the political domain. In his famous novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell describes the efforts of a totalitarian regime to reform the English language with the purpose of making it impossible to formulate critical

or subversive thoughts.[1] The so-called "politically correct" movement also claims that ordinary language contains deeply entrenched prejudices and biases that influence negatively the way we think; therefore, one should reform it, in order to erase them.

However, the thesis of linguistic determinism has been challenged in the last decades at different levels. In the first place, research done in the late sixties and in the seventies indicated that the influence of colour words on cognitive tasks was negligible, thereby contradicting previous studies, which had suggested that language influences the ability to recognize and remember colours. Particularly relevant in this context were Rosch Heider's (1972) experiments involving speakers of the Dani language (New Guinea), a language characterized by a colour vocabulary based on two basic colours (dark and light). According to the relativist hypothesis, Dani speakers should exhibit significant differences in the perception of colours, but Heider's experiments showed that Dani speakers perceive colours on the basis of some focal points in the colour continuum, the so-called focal colours. In opposition to the relativist hypothesis that colour perception is determined by language, her research showed that Dani speakers perceived and classified objects on the basis of these focal colours, which are largely shared by human beings. The conclusion is that the categorization of reality obeys to universal principles based on our biological constitution and not on the structure of our language.

At the same time, Chomsky's claimed that grammar had an innate and universal character and that language had a biological basis. His defence of linguistic nativism was highly influential and inspired the so-called Language of Thought (LOT) Hypothesis, advocated by cognitive scientists like, among others, Fodor, Pinker and Gleitman. According to this hypothesis, human beings possess a conceptual structure that is fundamentally universal and has a biological basis. The semantic structure of natural languages, far from determining our web of concepts, reflects this mental conceptual structure. In Pinker's (1994, 82) words:

> "Knowing a language, then, is knowing how to translate mentalese into strings of words and vice-versa. People without a language would still have mentalese, and babies and many nonhuman animals presumably have simpler dialects."[2]

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[1] Cf. Orwell (2004, 373): "The purpose of Newspeak was not only of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper of the devotees of the Ingsoc [English Socialism], but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted, (…) a heretical thought—that is, a thought diverging from the principles of the Ingsoc—should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words. (…) This was done partly by the invention of new words, but chiefly by eliminating undesirable words and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings."

[2] In the glossary of his book, Pinker (1994, 478) defines mentalese in the following terms: "The hypothetical 'language of thought,' or representation of concepts and propositions in the brain in which ideas, including the meanings of words and sentences, are couched."

However, this anti-relativist reaction has not buried the Sapir/Whorf hypothesis, which is still alive and partially supported by researchers who have found new evidence concerning the influence of language on thought. In the first place, there was a wave of new empirical studies focusing not on colour perception, but on spatial linguistic categories with influence on cognitive functions and on the perception of the world. A good example is given by Levinson's (1996) research on the cognitive effect of frames of reference (relative, absolute and intrinsic or object-centred frames) on one's sense of spatial orientation. In the second place, the rediscovery of Vygotsky's work in the eighties and nineties also contributed to a revaluation of the role of language on thought. According to the Russian psychologist, a language can develop cognitive capacities. For instance, the number system of a natural language affects the way one learns arithmetics; to give another example, complement clauses contribute to the development of a theory of mind. In the third place, there was also a "culturalist" reaction against cognitivist and biological approaches to language and to the process of concept acquisition. Authors like the above mentioned Levinson (2003) argued that the LOT hypothesis overestimates the influence of biology and genes on language and neglects the influence of culture.

I would like to conclude this discussion of linguistic relativism with a critical assessment of Donald Davidson's rejection of the idea of alternative conceptual schemes and, consequently, of untranslatability.[3] The basic structure of his argument against untranslatable languages can be reconstructed in the following terms:

> Premise 1: The meaning of a sentence is given by the conditions in which it is true;
>
> Premise 2: The truth conditions of a sentence are publicly accessible;
>
> Conclusion: There are no untranslatable sentences; translatability is a criterion of languagehood (cf. Davidson 1984, 184–198).

We can start the analysis of this argument with the second premise. Davidson claims that meaning, understood in terms of truth conditions, has necessarily a public character, because it would not even be possible to learn a language if there were no correlations between utterances and observable aspects of the world; and an unlearnable language is a nonsensical notion. However, we can accept that meaning has a public character without rejecting the possibility of different conceptual schemes (as Wittgenstein, for instance, did). In order to illustrate this possibility, we have to analyze the first premise, with its endorsement of a truth-conditional theory of meaning. The premise is objectionable, because there are viable alternatives to such a theory. Wittgensteinians, for in-

[3] It should be noted that by conceptual schemes Davidson understands "sets of intertranslatable languages" (cf. Davidson 1984, 185).

stance, advocate a use theory of meaning, according to which the meanings of words are given by their role in our *practices*. Because this theory does not restrict meaning to truth-conditions, it is more comprehensive and can accommodate a larger class of linguistic utterances. By recognizing the close connection between meaning and practices, a use theory does not reduce language to its empirical or cognitive dimension and can recognize its social and cultural dimension. And precisely the failure of Davidon's critique of conceptual schemes lies precisely in this point. When Davidson claims that meaning is public and denies that there are untranslatable languages he is motivated by a cognitivist bias (cf. Medina 2003, 474) that leads him to consider language only in its empirical and cognitive dimension. By neglecting the cultural dimension of language, he fails to recognize the possibility of different conceptual webs and, accordingly, that there are genuine cases of untranslatability. Different cultures or forms of life can, in fact, generate different concepts, concepts that can only be understood in the light of their associated practices. In Wittgenstein's words: "an education quite different from ours might also be the foundation for quite different concepts. (...) Here different concepts would no longer be unimaginable" (Wittgenstein 1981, §387). If some concepts, at least, owe their intelligibility to the practices into which they are interwoven, the existence of significant differences between cultures or, more precisely, the absence of shared practices between representatives of two different cultures may lead to real communication failures.

In sum, some empirical research indicates that language affects to some extent thought and the main philosophical argument against linguistic relativity (Davidson's critique of conceptual schemes) is not sound.

THE CHALLENGE OF CULTURAL RELATIVISM

The preceding discussion of linguistic relativism led us to recognize the important connection between language and culture, thereby undermining the prospects for a quick refutation of linguistic relativism. A connected issue is the threat of cultural relativism, the view that it is not possible for outsiders to evaluate and criticize values, practices and basic beliefs from substantially different cultures. The justification for this view lies in the idea that there are no neutral, cross-cultural standards in the light of which one could compare different cultures. The absence of such standards seems to lead us to a dilemma: either we use our own standards to evaluate other cultures, falling prey to ethnocentrism or cultural imperialism, or we simply resign ourselves to the diversity of cultures, renouncing to evaluate critically foreign cultural practices. Cultural relativists embrace the second horn of the dilemma, a move that would not be objectionable if some cultures were not characterized by unacceptable practices; suffice it to say that violations of human rights are sometimes justified with the argument that human rights, far from being universally valid, are simply a

product of the Western civilization. Cultural relativism lacks, in fact, the critical resources that are necessary for a genuine cross-cultural dialogue.

A close look at the history of the social sciences in the last decades, especially in the domain of ethnology and cultural anthropology, reveals some signs of cultural relativism. In fact, many social scientists claimed, in opposition to ethnocentric approaches, that a culture must be understood from within and not from the outside; on its own terms and not by our standards. This tendency, which can be called descriptivism, includes Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, Clifford Geertz's anthropological work and the neo-Wittgensteinian philosophy of social science that was developed by Peter Winch.

We seem, therefore, to be forced to choose between universalism, ethnocentrism and relativism. *Universalism* may be considered naive to the extent that it relies on a dubious presupposition concerning the existence of universally valid standards that would ground intercultural communication. In this sense, universalism can be criticized for downplaying the significance of the (sometimes huge) cultural differences that characterize the human landscape at a global level. *Ethnocentrism* makes us insensitive to the richness of other cultures and promotes cultural conflicts. *Relativism*, by accepting indifferently the diversity of cultures, does not engage in a fruitful cross-cultural dialogue. But are these the only games in town? No. In opposition to universalism, ethnocentrism and relativism make it possible to develop a contextualist account of intercultural communication that has the merit of avoiding the main pitfalls of the above mentioned positions. Contextualism accepts a key assumption of relativism, the idea that cultural values and rationality standards are context-dependent, but does not embrace the indifferent acceptance of the different views on reality that typically characterizes relativism. Contextualism can also distinguish itself from ethnocentrism, because the absence of universally valid standards for the evaluation of cultural practices does not makes us prisoners of our own standards, as the discussion of Gadamer's account of understanding as a "fusion of horizons" will make it clear. In sum, contextualists can engage in a critical and self-critical dialogue with other cultures. In order to develop a contextualist account of intercultural communication, I will draw mainly on the work of Wittgenstein and Gadamer.

A CONTEXTUALIST SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Wittgenstein, in his later work, offers a version of epistemological contextualism that helps us to elaborate a satisfactory account of intercultural communication. According to his epistemological reflection, there are *basic beliefs*, but, in opposition to foundationalist theories of justification, their privileged status cannot be explained in pure epistemic terms; they owe their status to *pragmatic and social* factors that may vary with the *context*. In other words, standards of

knowledge and justification are not invariable, and for this reason two subjects in two different contexts may develop different perspectives on reality.

Besides rejecting the idea of invariant epistemic standards, Wittgenstein's contextualism also claims that an epistemic subject does not have to justify all her beliefs, but only those beliefs that are adequately challenged by motivated, non-arbitrary doubts. A major theme of Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* consists, indeed, of an analysis of the grammar or correct use of doubt, an analysis that points out that doubt requires reasons and must be relevant in practice. As a result, we are entitled, by ordinary standards, to ignore many possible doubts (including sceptical doubts). Wittgenstein's contextualism entails, therefore, that "at the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded" (Wittgenstein 1975, §253). In opposition to traditional epistemological theories, we do not have to ground, or to provide evidence for, all our beliefs. There is, in fact, a special category of propositions that are beyond doubt and justification, and constitute the framework of our inquiries and justifications processes. Wittgenstein uses different expressions to designate these basic propositions or beliefs: certainties, hinge-propositions (*Angelsätze*) and "propositions that stand fast" (*feststehende Sätze*). It is our form of life that establishes what is certain, what is taken for granted, thereby constituting the background of our inquiries:

> "But I did not get my picture of the world [*Weltbild*] by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false" (Wittgenstein 1975, §94).

One may object that this characterization of Wittgenstein's contextualism opens the door to relativism. In fact, if each particular culture or community has its own worldview on the basis of ungrounded grounds, it seems that we are back to relativism. However, Wittgenstein rejects the epistemic indifferentism that characterizes relativism. When we are confronted with a quite different world-view, we may criticize it. Wittgenstein illustrates this point in the following passages, where he presents his attitude towards a community that rejects a scientific world-view:

> "609. (…) Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it? — If we call this 'wrong' aren't we using our language-game as a base from which to *combat* theirs?
> (...)
> 612. I said I would 'combat' the other man, — but wouldn't I give him reasons? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes persuasion."
> (Wittgenstein 1975, 80–81)

The notion of combat and the reference to reasons indicate that Wittgenstein is not an advocate of relativism understood as a form of epistemic indifferentism or egalitarianism. However, the idea of combat may suggest that, from a contextualist standpoint, the alternative to relativism is ethnocentrism, an option that we have already rejected. As we will briefly see, one can develop a contextualist account of intercultural communication that is immune to the charges of relativism and ethnocentrism by appealing to Gadamer and his conception of understanding as a fusion of horizons.

Another possible objection against Wittgenstein lies in his account of understanding as a practical capacity that requires the existence of shared practices or relevant commonalities between different communities. Departing from his account of meaning as use and his key notion of language game as the whole "consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven" (Wittgenstein 1958, §7), he argues that "to understand a language is to imagine a form of life" (Wittgenstein 1958, §19). A fundamental condition of intercultural communication consists, therefore, of affinities at the level of social or cultural practices. In the absence of shared or similar practices, the understanding of a substantially different form of life can easily fail. As Wittgenstein put it: "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (Wittgenstein 1958, 223).

From the Wittgensteinian standpoint, there are, however, resources to overcome these obstacles to intercultural communication. In the first place, there is what can be called the *genetic strategy*; we can improve the understanding of an unfamiliar practice by reconstructing its history. If this first strategy is not sufficient, we can adopt the *analogical strategy*, i.e., we can use analogies with familiar practices in order to grasp the meaning or significance of a strange practice. Finally, there is the *acculturation* strategy; if the preceding strategies fail, one can ultimately go native, to immerse oneself in the everyday life of an unfamiliar community, thereby getting acquainted with the practices that make language intelligible.

Wittgenstein's contextualism can be fruitfully complemented by Gadamer's hermeneutics, which is also a form of epistemological contextualism. More precisely, Gadamer adds two crucial elements to a contextualist account of intercultural communication: a conception of understanding as a "fusion of horizons" (which helps us to avoid both relativism and ethnocentrism) and an analysis of the formative (*bildend*) nature of intercultural communication. Departing from Heidegger's claim that understanding is not a simple human activity among others, but the mode of being that characterizes the *Dasein*, the human existence, Gadamer advocates the universality of hermeneutics, in the sense that our experience of the world has necessarily an interpretive character, because it is inevitably determined by our social and historical background, context or horizon. In order to emphasize this point, Gadamer rehabilitates at the epistemological level the ill-reputed notion of prejudice, rescuing it from the negative connotation that it had acquired in the Enlightenment's crusade against

superstition, obscurantism and tradition. According to Gadamer, prejudices, far from being obstacles to an objective knowledge, are sources of intelligibility and, accordingly, conditions of knowledge and understanding:

> "Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us" (Gadamer 1976, 9).

Gadamer articulates this defence of the epistemological role of prejudices with an account of tradition as a horizon of intelligibility and the background of our justifications processes, an account that clearly evokes Wittgenstein's notion of "picture of the world" (*Weltbild*) as the horizon of our epistemic practices. Like Wittgenstein's contextualism, Gadamer points out the groundlessness of tradition:

> "But is the dialogue with the whole of our philosophical tradition (…) groundless? Does what has always supported us need to be grounded?" (Gadamer 2003, xxxvii).
>
> "This is precisely what we call tradition: validity without grounding [*ohne Begründung zu gelten*; my translation]" (Gadamer 2003, 281).

The epistemological rehabilitation of prejudices, in the sense of preliminary conceptions that allow us to attribute meaning to our experience and have access to reality, entails, at the hermeneutic level, that the interpretation of texts, actions or practices cannot consist of a pure reconstruction of the thoughts, experiences or intentions of other people. Objectivity is, strictly speaking, impossible in hermeneutics because any interpretation arises from a certain perspective and remains always conditioned by the interpreter's cultural horizon. An interpreter cannot, as it were, step out of her horizon in order to transpose herself to a different horizon. Against a hermeneutics of reconstruction, Gadamer (2003, 164–169) proposes a hermeneutics of integration, according to which an interpreter understands the *interpretandum* by *integrating* it in her own personal horizon or by *applying* it to her personal situation. As a result, far from being a reconstitution of mental states or experiences from another person, understanding is a "fusion of horizons" (cf. Gadamer 2003, 306). Such an account of understanding has important consequences for intercultural communication, because it offers an antidote to both relativism and ethnocentrism. In fact, from the Gadamerian perspective the interpretation of *meaning* cannot be dissociated from a discussion of the *truth* of what is said. Exploring some etymological connections in the German language, Gadamer (2003, 292) claims that "the goal

of all attempts to reach an understanding [*aller Verständigung und alles Verstehen*] is agreement [*Einsverständnis*] concerning the subject matter." The hermeneutic experience is, accordingly, a dialogical experience,[4] and dialogue must be understood in this context as a *critical* and *self-critical* dialogue; critical, because in the process of understanding the interpreter must reflect on the truth of the subject; self-critical, because the openness to the otherness of the other suspends and challenges our prejudices, thereby promoting a critical self-reflection. When Gadamer describes the nature of hermeneutic experience, the experience of understanding other people, he stresses precisely its negative character. Following Hegel, he conceives of experience as a refutation of our expectations or prejudices: "Every experience worthy of the name thwarts an expectation" (Gadamer 2003, 356). It is in virtue of this negativity that hermeneutic experiences contribute to *Bildung*, to the formative process of human beings in their humanity. It is not by chance that Gadamer's *Truth and Method* starts with a discussion of some key concepts of the humanistic tradition, concepts like *Bildung*, judgement, *sensus communis* and taste. Gadamer's hermeneutics is inspired by the 18th century ideal of *Bildung*, understood as a free process of self-determination that cannot be subjected to external ends or purposes. Furthermore, *Bildung* involves a multiplicity of experiences and an exposure to a diversity of situations; in accordance with the humanistic tradition, this would require the knowledge of art, literature and philosophy. Echoes of the ideal of *Bildung* can be found in *Truth and Method*, where *Bildung* is conceived of as an interminable, non-teleological process of fusions of horizons, multiplication of hermeneutic experiences and correction of prejudices.

Gadamer's hermeneutics offers valuable resources to develop a contextualist account of intercultural communication that is beyond universalism, relativism and ethnocentrism. In what concerns universalism, Gadamer's hermeneutic contextualism recognizes that different cultures have different values, beliefs, practices or standards, and these differences might obstruct, in fact, intercultural communication. But he does not surrender to ethnocentrism or relativism. From the Gadamerian standpoint, it is possible (against relativism) to engage in a critical conversation with other cultures; and it is also possible (against ethnocentrism) to develop a critical and potentially transformative self-reflection in the light of unfamiliar and challenging perspectives. Furthermore, Gadamer highlights the formative significance of intercultural communication; to the extent that it promotes an openness to different, unfamiliar perspectives, intercultural dialogue multiplies our hermeneutic experiences, being, therefore, a privileged medium of *Bildung*.

[4] In order to emphasize the role of the dialogue in his hermeneutic project, Gadamer claims that the Platonic dialectic is one of the models of his hermeneutic reflection (cf. Gadamer 2003, 362–369).

Contextualism recognizes that there can be real obstacles to intercultural communication, but these obstacles are not rigid barriers, because they can be overcome with changes in the different cultural horizons that are involved. Intercultural dialogue, involving an effort at improving or correcting divergent standards and initial assumptions, is a powerful means to promote such changes. The fact that communication is sometimes impossible does not mean that there are ineliminable obstacles to human communication.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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THE CONSEQUENCES OF EARLY LITERACY FOR THE DISCURSIVE TRANSMISSION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

ABSTRACT

The books of the *Old Testament* contain elements of oral communication as well as the characteristic features of written elaboration. S. Niditch attempts to determine the probable oral-literate processes leading to the formation of the biblical message but does not answer the question concerning the history of the creation of any of the books. Biblical scholars examine the process of the shaping of the books as redaction criticism. This shaping, however, progressed according to different standards as evidenced by the literary characteristics of the text and literary "deficiencies" as well explicit elements of oral communication. The use of the term "editing" in relation to the process evokes inadequate ideas drawn from contemporary literary culture.

Attempts to discover the essential elements of the processes shaping the biblical books, based on the, to some extent, recreated history of *The Gilgamesh Epic*, leads us to a new concept of what such a book is. The discovered specificity of the biblical books can consequently propose a new, more adequate perspective of interpretation—the interpretation which has the characteristics of a discourse.

Keywords: Bible; *Deuteronomy*; the culture of writing; the scribal culture; ancient Near East; orality – literacy; discourse; interpretation.

INTRODUCTION

The presence of the features indicating both elements of oral communication and literate elaboration in the books of the *Old Testament* seem to be "natural," in the light of the already achieved knowledge on orality and literacy, in particular, on the long process of transition from oral culture and community to the literate. The real challenge is the question concerning the relationships between oral and literary elements in biblical texts.

It has been usual in biblical studies to refer to oral tradition however, without a deeper reflection on its transmission, while the history of the text is treated as redaction criticism. It corresponds to a research method popular with biblical studies and called *Redaktionsgeschichte*. The process of creation of a literary work assumed in this approach, however, is not adequate. It reflects the contemporary awareness of the text as a fruit of a developed culture of writing. These two determinants of the contemporary approach to biblical texts stem from the formation of the researcher and his or her particular awareness within the culture of developed literacy. At the same time, however, these two ways of understanding of the creation of the ancient text affect the way in which the biblical text itself is understood and, consequently, interpreted.

I intend to refer to the question of the process of the creation of such a literary work as the books of the Bible, to the knowledge about the literary activities undertaken in the working of the texts created by ancient writers. On the basis of the analysis of the characteristics of the text of the Book of *Deuteronomy*, I shall present conclusions concerning the process of the creation of a literary work, which differs from the contemporary processes of literary work creation. As a result, I intend to indicate the unique specificity of this work and suggest an interpretative approach more appropriate for it.[1] In advance, however, I shall present the concepts of relationships between the oral and literary processes in the shaping of tradition and written composition.

1. ORALITY AND LITERACY IN THE PROCESS OF SHAPING TEXT

1.1. Oral and literate processes in the formation of the biblical text, according to Susan Niditch

Susan Niditch, the author of the well known *Oral World and Written Word. Ancient Israelite Literature*, proposes four models which convey the relationship between oral and literary processes during the formation of the biblical message (Niditch 1996, 108–129). The first model assumes that some compositions of the Hebrew Bible were formed as oral performance (execution/presentation). Finally, oral compositions (cf. Isa 1, Am 5) underwent transformation and became the text written down. The second model assumes that there was steady growth through a number of oral performances. A skilled writer recorded some of such traditions. Reactions of the audience helped to shape the message. The third model is based on a literary practice of the imitation of oral style in which writers, shaped by the culture of dominant orality, use

[1] This study is a continuation of research carried out within the framework of a habilitation dissertation: Renata Jasnos. 2011. *Deuteronomium jak "księga" w kontekście kultury piśmienniczej starożytnego Bliskiego Wschodu,* Humanitas. Studia kulturoznawcze. Kraków, 257–279, 337–375. I recall the concept presented there of a process of creation of the ancient literary work, which is a book of the Bible.

oral patterns. The fourth model assumes written sources for the literate composition (a feature recognizable in deuteronomistic history).

Basing on the proposed four models—as Susan Niditch admits—one cannot recreate any details of the formation of any biblical text (cf. Niditch 1996, 129–130). The models do, however, shed light on various processes, in interaction with each other, rooted in the oral and written practices of Israeli culture, in the process of the creation of a biblical literary tradition.

1.2. Oral and written elements in *Deuteronomy* and the process of text formation

Taking into consideration the text of the *Book of Deuteronomy*, representative of these cultural phenomena (whose storyline goes back to the events of the 12th century BC, with a process of written elaboration extending approximately through the 7th–5th centuries BC), one can make a number of inspirational observations connected with oral and written elements of the process of text creation.

I would like to point out here two important issues, which provide the basis for the conclusion concerning the process of the creation of the biblical message. Firstly, in the text of *Deuteronomy* there are different marks of orality. On the other hand, the text of *Deuteronomy* as a work of literature shows various deficiencies: this composition is characterized by numerous repetitions and "overloading" through the accumulation of "editorial" elements.

1.2.1. Signifiers of orality in Deuteronomy. Early literacy in the service of orality

The compositions of oral character, built on cycles of repeated patterns and formulae (the so-called formulaic style) are one of the evidence of oral culture in the text of *Deuteronomy*, where there are two larger messages of this type:

1. An account of the conquest of the lands located east of the river Jordan (1,6–3,7) is based on a repeated scheme and formula. These narrations contain mnemonic sets of formulas (1,6–7; 2,3; 2,13; 2,24; – 1,8. see 21; 2,24.31; 3,2; – 2,4–5; 2,9–12; 2,19–23) and the repeated 'narrative pattern' (*Jhwh's* command—disobedience of the Israelites—the wrath of *Jhwh* the defeat of Israelites–their repentance (1,6–7 – 1,26 – 1,34–36 – 1,41; 1,42 – 1,43 – 1,44 – 1,45). One can extract units inserted and developed independently, which, therefore, do not belong to this dominant narrative pattern (cf. selection of judges 1,9–18; anger of *Jhwh* contra Moses 1,37–40); (cf. Jasnos 2011, 262).

2. The narrative cycle concerning the revelation and the stone tablets at the top of Mount Horeb consists of four parts (included in chapters 4–6 and 9–10) based on the same, repeated, and simultaneously developed narrative pattern (cf. synoptic comparison of four fragments of *Deuteronomy* concerning the inscription on stone tablets; see Jasnos 2011, 202–203, Table 7).

Apart from the presented larger cycles, *Deuteronomy* contains other compositions based on repeated formulas: two sets of curses (28,1–68; 27,15–26) and legal collections (e.g. 21,15–22,29). Numerous commands in *Deuteronomy* concerning (vassal) love and loyalty towards *Jhwh* (6,5; 10,12; 11,1; 11,13; 11,22; 19,9; 30,16; see Jasnos 2001, 235–294) are based on the calls, repeated in different order and in varying numbers. The deuteronomic call (formulated twice) to preserve the words of *Torah* teaching (6, 6–9 and 11, 18–20), can also be considered as an analogous set of formulas of a changed order. On similar wordings are based the two calls for making the fundamental choice (concerning good and evil, life and death, cf. 11,26–28; 30,15–20).

The text of *Deuteronomy* possesses, in addition to distinct parts with formula-like characteristics, numerous repetitions of the same topics, motifs and themes.[2] One can obtain the impression that they "return" periodically within the text, which testifies to the oral way of development of the deuteronomic message.

Deuteronomy has also some other characteristics of orality: tangle of oral-literate practices (cf. *Sh*^{e}*ma Israel* 6, 6–9 and the parallel 11, 18–20). Recording serves the culture of the spoken word. Written words are used for repetition, reflection and learning by heart.

The very purpose for writing is a significant indicator of oral culture, as it serves as public reading before a congregation. The audience has its own role and specific responses to speak, thus this is a form of communication known as *performance*. The *Torah* is to be read at regular meetings of the people for educational purposes (cf. 31,10–13), as is song, recorded at God's command, which is to be read before the assembly and learnt by heart (32,1–43; por. 31,19.22).

1.2.2. Literary deficiencies in the composition of Deuteronomy

In addition to obvious signs of orality, *Deuteronomy* also has characteristics that testify to intensive editorial work.[3] The literary activities, however, are not quite mutually coherent (cf. Jasnos 2011, 338–346).

The main composition is made up of legal collections (the so-called "code"), located centrally (ch. 12–26), and extensive speeches by Moses comprising the "code." However, the shape of the composition of the text was also strongly influenced by the pattern of the covenant treaty (an extensive collection of the covenant curses is found here 28,1–68 as well as, repeated several times, the proclamation of the fact of the concluding of the covenant, 27.9, 28.69). As a

[2] Examples: the theme of the wrath of God and the death of Moses before entering the land (1,37–39; 3,23–28; 31,1–2.7–8; 31,14; 32,48–52; 34,1–9); outlining of the perspective of slavery (4,25–31; 29,18–30,10.17; 31,16–21.28–30; cf. 32,5.15–25); acknowledgment of the covenant (4,13.23; 26,16–18; 29,8–12); motif of the circumcision of the heart (10,16; 30,6); (cf. Jasnos 2011, 339, 343–345).

[3] Jack Goody indicates the changes that occurred in the message under the influence of writing (see Goody 1987, 263–264).

result, various biblical scholars tend to accept the pattern of composition which is based either on the speeches by Moses, on the "code," the pattern of a treaty, or on a mixed structure (Braulik 1986, 7; Brueggemann 2001, 17; Craigie 1976, 23–24; Lohfink 1991, 15–16; Mayes 1981, 5; Nelson 2002, 2–9; von Rad 1957, 835). This reflects the problem of the text very well, whose composition underwent the strong influence of various forms (starting with the "code," through the treaty, to rhetorical form).

Moving on to a more detailed level of elaboration of the text, one can easily notice the same complexity. The text has a number of introductory and summarizing formulas, reflecting intensive composition and literary activities. The paradox lies in the fact that there are too many (sic!) of such elements (see Jasnos 2011, 338–347), because the relationships of the structure, present in excess, were not fully integrated.

The question arises as to what kind of a process leads to such formulation of the text, since it does not possess a coherent or unified structure and there was no "last editor" who would be responsible for it. Biblical scholars give various answers. According to Ernest Nicholson, "the book assumed its present form only gradually and over a considerable period of time" (Nicholson 1967, 36). Richard Nelson even speculates that "the expression 'microredaction' would be appropriate to describe such a process of accretion by small steps and changes by minor increments" (Nelson 2002, 8; cf. Brueggemann 2001, 18). According to Andrew Mayes the editing of *Deuteronomy* was "a process rather than an event" (Mayes 1981, 29).

Conclusion. The work stemming from orality and, at the same time, from early literacy is not characterized by a typically literary, precise composition, though it may also contain many compositional elements. Oral compositions were expanded as written texts. The result of this process is a significantly complicated composition of the text, which raises difficulties as to its analyses as a typically literary structure,[4] however one can try to bring the process of writing closer. The question concerning the way of the creation of such a literary work as a biblical book, should refer to existing knowledge about the literary activities undertaken in the work on texts by the ancient copyists, secretaries, the 'literary men'.

2. EARLY-LITERATE MODEL OF THE PROCESS OF SHAPING THE BIBLICAL MESSAGE—"A MODEL OF GILGAMESH"

Taking into consideration some of the known elements of the ancient Near East writers' skills (copying, literary compositions based on other texts, adaptations—cf. Hecker 1977, 245–258; van der Toorn 2007, 110, 115–141; Carr

[4] R. Meynet analyzes in biblical texts writing rhetorical structures within the specific type of Hebrew rhetoric (see Meynet 1989).

2005, 34–36), as well as the reconstructed essential steps in the process of shaping the ancient Gilgamesh epic (Tigay 1982, George 2007), one can propose a thesis concerning the nature of the process of elaboration of such a literary work as *Deuteronomy* (Jasnos 2011, 355–360). This process consisted in repeated literary activities that took place while the work was being copied, a process which provided an opportunity for the further elaboration of the text. In this process, the impact of oral forms was parallel and depended on their presence in the socio-religious environment of the writers.

2.1. The history of the text of *The Gilgamesh Epic*

Jeffrey Tigay examined the written evidence of the text of *The Gilgamesh Epic* from different periods of time and gave an overview of the process of shaping the epic as a literary composition. Here are the most important stages of this process. In the third millennium, various short Sumerian tales of Gilgamesh[5] are passed on, some of which are written down (7 of them have survived in record). By the 18th century BC, the spoken Sumerian language becomes extinct, but still belongs to the basic knowledge of an educated writer. At the same time, in the early second millennium, a greater composition is created in the Akkadian language, an old Babylonian dialect (Old Babylonian version, OBV), based on previously written Sumerian tales (Moran 1995, 2327–2328; Tigay 1982, 242; George 2007, 448; Jasnos 2011, 355).

About the process of development of the Old Babylonian version of *The Gilgamesh Epic* William Moran writes:

> "the various Gilgamesh traditions, Sumerian and perhaps Akkadian, oral or written, were sorted out, adapted, and profoundly transformed into a single composition […]. Thought preserved only fragments, it is clearly a work of great originality […]" (Moran 1995, 2328).

J. Tigay underlines that "the author combined these plots and themes [4 of 7 known tales] into a unified epic on a grand scale" (Tigay 1982, 242).

The further process of rewriting, differentiation (new textual variants, changes, included the story of the slaying of the Bull of Heaven; cf. Moran 1995, 2330; cf. Tigay 1977, 215–218; Cooper 1977, 39–44), and the spreading of texts of *Gilgamesh* (fragments of records found, e.g., in the Hittite capital Hittite H}attuša/ Boghazköy or in Ugarit and even in Megiddo—a plate from Middle Babylonian Period 14th–13th century BC; cf. Horowitz, Oshima and Sanders 2002, 754, 758) ultimately leads to an effective attempt at standardization. Late in the second millennium, the standard version (*Standard Babylonian version*, SBV) is created. This text, testifying to a developed culture of writing,

[5] According to *Sumerian King List*—a legendary fifth ruler of the city-state of Uruk (Warka, biblical Erech) Lives ca. 2700 (Tigay 1982, 13).

is known from copies found in the Assyrian royal library of Nineveh (7th century BC), although other fragments have been found in other places (cf. Moran 1995, 2330; George 2007, 450–452).

Attention should be paid to the changes that took place in the process of shaping the epic. The Narrative sequence between the key texts of the *Old Babylonian version* and the *Standard Babylonian version* was preserved. At the same time, the text underwent modification, expansion and inclusion (e.g., the inclusion of the episode of Ishtar on plate VI). The composition received a framework which is the repeated passage describing the walls of Uruk (previously only the epilogue) and a new prologue ('He who saw the Deep'), which gives the composition a new meaning and modifies the message. Gilgamesh turns out to be not so much a warrior and a hero but also a sage, experienced in hardship. The text takes on didactic features (cf. *Deuteronomy* also shows a strong sapiential influence and is very didactic in nature; Jasnos 2009, 81–94). Along with these changes, the complexity of terminology increased and the style became more convoluted, "decorative" (cf. *Deuteronomy*: accumulation, verbosity, overloaded text), with a shift from an oral, to a more literary dynamic (George 2007, 452; Cooper 1977, 39). In the *Standard Babylonian version*, in the extended prologue, the narrator asks the reader to take out a tablet hidden in a chest and read and earlier he says that it was Gilgamesh himself (!) who, at the end, described his efforts on a stone tablet (SB I.5–8, 23–27); (Abusch 2001, 618–620; George 2007, 451–452; Dalley 1989, 50–51).

Among the changes which took place in the process of creating the epic, J. Tigay distinguishes a larger transformations of the text, which included: restructuring of sections, changes in the roles of characters; assimilation; and additions. The second group of alterations identified by him is a change within the text, a transformation to a lesser degree. He also noted that the epic reflected and preserved traditional forms, not only literary, but also from the area of speech and rituals: wise sayings, blessings, curses and threats, songs and ceremonies related to weddings (Tigay 1982, 55–72, 73–109, 161–176).

2.2. *The Gilgamesh Epic* as a point of reference

The reconstructed history of the *Gilgamesh* text becomes an extraordinary testimony, different from the contemporarily known processes of the development of literary compositions. The scheme of the development—presented as a sequence of actions over time—is an illustration of the process of developing a specific characteristic of the literary works of the Ancient Near East. An essential act is to build a work, based on existing separate and independent texts. Then, the reconstructive message becomes the driving force of the process, for, in copying there are various kinds of changes made, motivated by the intention to improve, develop, complement, or even discuss (e.g. under the influence of oral tradition). Sometimes reinterpretations occur, which is done through spe-

cific literary actions and operations. New thought is extracted from the text through the introduction of a new theme, the prologue, the transformation of the structure.

It is necessary to emphasize the lack of any specified author of the work, which is a result of the process of its creation: long, involving a number of writers and also the nature of the work.

Although the history of *Gilgamesh* has not an analogy, since it goes back to the 3rd millennium, it is the best-documented history of shaping the composition of the Ancient Near East and can be a reference point for the analysis of other literary works, including the older books of the Bible.

2.3. *Gilgamesh* versus *Deuteronomy*—the features of the text as a literary composition

It is astonishing that so many features (compositional, literary and even similarity of motif) of *Deuteronomy* can be compared with corresponding features within the text of *The Gilgamesh Epic*:

1) It includes older autonomous compositions: the collection of laws; two hymnic compositions, a list of curses (furthermore, some of these compositions reveal a significant similarity to corresponding texts created in Mesopotamia; cf. collections of laws, lists of curses; cf. Fensham 1993, 247–255).

2) *Deuteronomy*'s traditions have their parallel versions (cf. account of the revelation and the covenant on the Mount Horeb/Sinai Exo 19–24; 31,18; 34; legal collections in the Pentateuch, esp. in Exo; an account of the first conquest of the lands Num 21; etc.).

3) The text is developed on the basis of integrated traditions creating an original whole (these numerous traditions are known from other books: the promises to the patriarchs Gen; the wandering in the desert Num; Israel as a chosen people Exo 19,5; the Death of Moses Num 27,12–14; etc.).

4) The development of composition through the inclusion of new prologues and endings (a distinct feature of *Deuteronomy*, the later parts are at the beginning 1–3, and the end 31–34).

5) The indication of the origin of the text directly from Moses (the so called 'honorary' authorship) occurring at the end of the process of shaping the composition, because this motif is present only in Ch. 31 (see Jasnos 2011, 177–178). Similarly, the authorship of the text of *The epic* was explicitly assigned to Gilgamesh only in the *Standard Babylonian version*.

6) The text of *Deuteronomy* in an advanced stage of development received sapiential and didactic features (cf. the sapiential introduction to *Standard Babylonian version* of *Gilgamesh*; see Braulik 1997, 225–271; Weinfeld 1972, 244–319).

7) As in *The Epic*, in *Deuteronomy* one can also find a reflection of the traditional forms of: speeches, literature, and rituals (proverbs, cf. 29,28; 25,4; bless-

ings and curses, cf. 27,15–26; chapter 28; threats, prophetic announcements cf. 30,1–10; rituals, cf. for example 26,1–11).[6]

CONCLUSION

Similarities between the features characteristic for their composition confirm the similarity between the processes lying behind the shaping of both *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and the biblical Book of *Deuteronomy*.

2.4. The process of the shaping of the biblical book (*Deuteronomy*) according to "the model of *Gilgamesh*"

"The model of Gilgamesh" in relation to other works, and especially the books of the Bible, should be regarded as a slogan, meaning just that the processes and mechanisms of shaping the epic were likely to have been active also during the long process of shaping the biblical book.

This leads to the further conclusion about the long process of shaping the work, which consisted of multiples of written works. This process cannot be reduced to a few or many acts of editing (which does not mean that there were not more decisive compositional and interpretational activities). We should not attribute the whole "set" of ideas expressed in the text to one school, since complex works often bring a wealth of content, themes and ideas, gradually assimilated over a longer period of time. The end of the process cannot be reduced to the editing of the final version, which gives the final meaning to the text, and "closes" it. Thoughts and ideas do not come only from the "last editor" who "made use" of literary motifs. Such a way of thinking about the text development, often presented by biblical scholars, reveals a modern concept of authorship. "Last" activities in a long process are often insignificant.

3. THE SPECIFICITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF INTERPRETATION

3.1. The specificity of the biblical text

Such a specific process of development of a given work brings a special result. Subsequent writers, while developing the text and re-interpreting it, did not rule out or reject the old elements. They tended to add rather than simplify or reduce; therefore, a kind of "overloading" of the text arose. They also tried to "extract" the new interpretation from the old text (presenting the new interpretation as rooted in the old text), in a better or worse way including and integrating

[6] Connected with covenant—ritual on the Mount Garizim and Ebal; In G. von Rad's opinion, *Deuteronomy* reflects an old cultic ceremony of a renewal of covenant (cf. von Rad 1984, 23).

its elements with the existing text. This ultimately led to the formation of a specific text, richer for us today than a coherent composition by a single writer – author. The work arising in this process differs from authorial works (which are a standard in the developed culture of writing): it lacks literary coherence (visible repetitions), includes accumulated and imposed interpretations of the presented events. However, it has a unique feature at the level of message: it reflects, more or less clearly, the included reinterpretations and stages of the developing tradition, a tradition shaped in a written form, though also under the influence of the oral message. Its riches are the contained layers of tradition, developed in writing, whose testimony is the text of the biblical book. It is therefore a record-witness of tradition shaping (cf. Jasnos 2011, 409).

This key feature opens up the space of ancient biblical discourse for the reader and interpreter.

3.2. Discursive transmission in biblical texts

In the case of the analysis of biblical texts, I use the term "discourse" in relation to the content expressed in discussion, dispute, polemics, or in verifying self-reflection, e.g. over the understanding of the world (cf. Ecclesiastes). Wherever in the case of the formulated statements we have to do with more than one understanding, one conception or one interpretation; also where there is a single concept and at the same time being subject to verification, critique, or authentication through discussion, through evaluation—in such cases we can talk about the discourse.

Discourse is not anything strange to biblical thought. It occurs at different levels of the organization of the biblical text (open discourse, the discourse between the "layers" of tradition which build the message of the text). The Bible contains texts which are formulated in the shape of a discourse. Sapiential book of Ecclesiastes, The book of Job, The book of Jonah, or numerous "prophetic polemics" against the worship of foreign deities constitute a clear example of communication based on discourse.

The book of Jonah raises the question of prophetic curses and oracles against Israel's historical enemies. Changing the perspective of the viewpoint makes us take the problem more universally: from the perspective of the Creator, the Ninevites are a great people, His creation. The book of Jonah ends with an open question, which emphasizes even more its didactic message based on discourse: "So why should I not be concerned for Nineveh?" The book not so much undermines the prophetic oracles against nations in general, but it provokes and makes us reflect on them more deeply.

The book of Job takes up the everlasting problem, one of the most difficult, and concerning the suffering of the righteous (it is also a dispute about the Deuteronomic conception of the interpretation of suffering in the category of "reward"). The whole core of the book, in the form of philosophical and religious

discourse of three interlocutors, is an expanded discourse. Psalm 89 is unusual, in which the psalmist leads argument with God—recalling the promises that God had sworn to David, and then announced their breaking! (see esp. 89,4–6.39–45.50). Discourses are often lead by prophets criticizing, recalling attitudes, opinions, often quoting their interlocutors (cf. Jer 21,13; Eze 18,19.25; Mal 1,2; 3,7–8.13–15).

A less obvious discourse occurs between the "layers" of traditions which build the message of the text. While in the case of the cited Psalm 89, the discourse is rendered openly, it is not so exposed elsewhere, but the text analysis leads to the conclusion about a confrontation of traditions or about reinterpretation of the previous text. As a result of these processes, biblical text is shaped, and the biblical tradition is created. It is marked by a discourse.

3.3. Discursive transmission inclines towards a discursive interpretation

The fact of the existence of such distinct elements of the biblical message in the form of a discourse, and on the other hand, discovering elements of the process of shaping the text of a discursive character, provides the basis for the adoption of a complementary, discursive model of interpretation. This gives rise to the reading out of the ancient discourse, which emerges from the Scripture where, in dispute with countrymen, in a polemic with other faiths and cultures, the words of the prophet, a sage, a priest echo out. It is about a method of analysis and biblical commentary which would seek the truth, formulating it not only in the form of a synthesis, but also in the form of discourse, especially where there are biblical foundations. The point is not about an ambiguous or relativized message, but about the extraction of difficult questions for which answers are not given but sought.

Although in traditional research theologians have become accustomed to seek interpretation of the nature of a synthesis, it must be admitted that these inspired texts often emphasize a reality unexplored by the human, problems unresolved to the end, stopping "at the doors of mystery."

For example, numerous questions posed by Job and a kind of "provocation" against God, leads him to a surprising confession. It is then when the summoned God reveals Himself, and it would seem that we can finally know the answers to the most difficult questions, that Job confesses: "I cannot understand, … marvels which are beyond me, of which I know nothing" (Job 42,3).

A discourse demonstrating the mystery may use a mythical form, as it is in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis. The forbidden fruit eaten of the tree of knowledge, paradoxically, on the one hand makes the man become like God (cf. Gen 3,22), but on the other makes him lose eternal life (expressed by his lost admission to the tree of life).

CONCLUSION

Preachers often evoke various existential situations in the context of liturgical reading of the biblical text. Meanwhile, the discourse begins already in the biblical text, shaped in an ancient community of believers, who lived in the face of many difficulties. These difficulties were related to the faith itself (prophetic polemic against idolatry), concerned state-political issues (falls, the slavery in Babylonia and a crisis of faith, cf. Eze 37, 11), referring to the original meaning of suffering (Job), and very many issues that are also valid today, although in a different dimension, amid different historical and cultural realities.

The interpretation of the Bible requires a discourse other than Ricoeurian. Making an interpreted text present, and revealing its communication with today's culture and existence are just a taste of a dialogue between antiquity and contemporary times. In fact, it takes place completely on our terms. It is only through the discovery of the ancient discourse in its own conditions that deeper biblical messages may be revealed. Only so highlighted a text can become the basis for modern dialogue or dispute, whether on the basis of revival, or "continuation."

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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EYES BANDAGED WITH TEXT. THE CATEGORY OF COUNTERTEXTUALITY AS MEANS OF ANALYZING THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TEXT

ABSTRACT

The paper presents a mode of researching epistemological and conceptual implications of text focused on the category of countertextuality. Parallel to the development of the orality / literacy theory within different areas of humanities and social sciences there runs a thread of various reconceptualization of text and textuality. It implies an increasing awareness of the non-neutral character of text (as a means of communicating knowledge within the academia) for the research results, which appears on both methodological and ethical grounds.

In the paper the example of the project of postmodern anthropology is invoked to show how the constraints of the norms of writing texts specific of anthropology in mid-1980's are articulated and what the proposed ways of writing are that would overcome the perceived flaws of text. The article focuses on the major manifesto of the postmodern turn in anthropology (*Writng Culture*), some other methodological articles of its authors, as well as some of the actual ethnographic researches. I highlight some of the major charges laid against text in these works and some of the major countertextual writing strategies.

Keywords: countertextuality; postmodern anthropology; orality/literacy theory; text; visualism; coevalness; dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of countertextuality introduced in this paper is intended as a working category to diagnose certain types of reactions and strategies related to the production of texts, in particular, texts produced in the social sciences and humanities. Text is a form loaded by a certain sense of obligation and expectations from the audiences as to its shape. If these are not followed the text might seem to belong to a genre which is not academic or professional, it can be per-

ceived as verging on literature, chaotic, vague, incomprehensible, invalid as a scientific endeavor or simply boring. My discussion of countertextuality will focus on the example offered by the "postmodern turn" or the "experimental moment" in anthropology. The project of postmodern anthropology largely questioned the established norms of writing on the grounds of their epistemological (as well as ethical) inadequacy in respect to the situation of fieldwork and in respect to the actual character of the researches and the interpretative effort undertaken by the ethnographer. The project also offered new strategies of writing that would counter the perceived limitations of text.

COUNTERTEXTUALITY—DELINEATING THE ANALYTIC TOOL

The category of countertextuality which I propose below encompasses the instances when text as an established form and a set of rules for writing is explicitly posed as a problem and questioned as a non-neutral means of transmitting verbal messages. By "non-neutral" here I mean that it affects the message in a significant manner, either by obliterating something that ought to be brought to light, or by suggesting something that ought not be suggested. In introducing the notion of countertextuality I have two aims. First, I hope it can be a simple, yet effective way of finding out in what ways the textual form affects the message, what is the textual bias. The general notion of countertextuality can cover statements of criticism of the established norms of writing, suggestions on how texts could be constructed in order to avoid or reduce the decried flaws, as well as actual attempts to write texts in non-normative manner, informed by the criticism. Such an approach which singles out a particular phenomenon of opposition to some types of texts, and in the case of postmodern anthropology one that is carried out with a deep awareness of the actual utility and the role of text within the given context (the institution of anthropology, the knowledge it produces), allows for constructing a model of text that will emphasize its specificity as a medium, but which will remain situated and will not aspire to universal validity. The second function this category has to perform, is to inquire whether such attempts at writing otherwise, in ways that are to avoid the recognized limitations of text, are, in fact, successful. Do they actually achieve their aim and produce texts devoid of their traditional flaws? Or, perhaps, is there a broader, if not universal, model of textuality which thwarts such efforts?

The research question standing behind the concept of countertextuality is rooted in the works and theses developed by the theoreticians of orality and literacy (including Walter J. Ong, Jack Goody and the representatives of the School of Toronto). Deborah Brandt, an American scholar carrying out a research on social and economic dimensions of mass literacy, in an effort to categorize different perspectives on the cultural role of literacy, has classified the approach of the literacy studies as represented by Goody, Ong, Olson, and Deb-

orah Tannen as a "strong-text literacy" (Brandt 1990, 13–32). She criticizes it for equating literacy with textualization, i.e., a prevailing subordination of writing and reading, as well as other cognitive processes to production and reception of texts. She claims that the way it presents the effects of literacy is itself text-oriented, or product-oriented, and as such it ignores the processual dimension of reading and writing. Indeed, if we contextualize Ong's perspective from Brandt's point of view, her claim could in itself pass as a strong proof of the importance of the textual bias. It would gain in strength if it were confirmed that the very researchers meticulously tracing it, were in fact guilty of just such text-oriented bias, inclining them to focus on what text suggests about its available modes of reading and writing, rather than to look at the actual practices of which text is but an element. Can one speak of a textual bias as a characteristic of the literate cultures of the West, including their modes of communication and the knowledge they produce? Following the suggestions (dispersed in the later works belonging to the orality / literacy current) to talk of literacies, in plural, rather than a universal literacy and its effects, I want to approach the textual bias as a historically specific moment in perception of literacy and its cognitive implications.

THE COUNTERTEXTUAL MOMENT—THE CASE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Parallel to the development of orality/literacy studies, in the 1960's, 70's and 80's the problem of text and textualized knowledge was brought up in various areas of humanities and social sciences. Anthropology and its postmodern turn was one of such instances. The criticism of the established forms of writing that the authors of *Writing Culture* brought forward can be seen as prone to the same kind of afore-mentioned criticism laid out by Brandt—it was equally text-centered. It did acknowledge the broad context of text production, and even demanded that awareness of the multitude of text types that filled both the field and the home environment of the ethnographers be included in their work. Nevertheless, it essentially discussed the qualities of the ethnographic texts, and it labored on the cultural model of literacy in which it was the text that was offered to the readers without the immediate context of the reality described. In that sense the postmodern turn in anthropology seems particularly prone to analysis aiming to verify the claims about text formed by the "strong text" literacy theorists. It is so, because the two overlap in their emphasis on the orality / literacy discrepancy—reflected in the poles of fieldwork and written ethnography. The model of loss occurring in the move from the spoken word to the written, which is so characteristic of Ong's thought, for example, is reflected in the charge of betrayal of the fieldwork reality accomplished in texts. Such sense of loss, disloyalty and inadequacy permeates the postmodern critique of anthropology. James Clifford realizes the threat of romanticizing the past inherent to such a sharp division—and, indeed, he renounces what he calls a "pastoral alle-

gory" as a mode of construction of ethnographic texts which suggests they describe a community in a prelapsarian state, outside time, before literacy, before the establishment (or right at the point of establishment) of intercultural relations. Nevertheless, he opposes completely neglecting the importance of the essentially oral character of fieldwork and the primary orality of the cultures which tended to be the subject matter of traditional ethnography.

> "The notion that writing is a corruption, that something irretrievably pure is lost when a cultural world is textualized is, after Derrida, seen to be a pervasive, contestable, Western allegory. Walter Ong and others have shown that something is, indeed lost with the generalization of writing" (Clifford 1986a, 119).

It is the act of putting into writing and textualizing that is posited in the works of the authors of the postmodern turn as crucial for the ethnographic effort, and which, in fact, organizes and defines, to a certain point, the previous and the later stages of research and popularization of anthropological knowledge, which, in turn, affect the intercultural relations.

Countertextuality is then a phenomenon of noticing certain constraints of the text and aiming at overcoming them within a redesigned written form, but one that labors within a framework in which the text does constitute an important product of communicative efforts, one that stands out from the processual efforts themselves, and which is their main focus. As such the text may turn out to be misleading and might obliterate what ought to be seen through it. By introducing the category I do not wish to imply there is any one text norm, that can be countered by universal means. Instead, I believe tracing coutertextuality helps outline culture and time-specific norms and objections related to text.

CRITICISMS OF TEXT

The authors of the postmodern turn in anthropology have, in fact, collectively developed a rich repertory of countertextual strategies and of charges laid against traditional ethnographic text. There is no space here to discuss them in detail. However, some examples of the countertextual motifs and strategies in the project of postmodern anthropology are worth presenting. It will be an illustration of how a particular model of textuality emerges, how it can be countered, and what problems arise with such attempts.

One of the major concerns of the authors of *Writing Culture* was the character of the subject-object relation that ethnographic writing builds. It comes into being through various primarily textual mechanisms. As the ethnographic research accomplished primarily through fieldwork blurs this distinction in actual interactions between the ethnographer and the locals, the text is where this distinction is reestablished and sealed. The well-established strategy to accomplish it has been to objectify the society described by means of the visual metaphor,

with the ethnographer as the observer (even if a participant one) and the informants' society as a visible (and thus to an extent stable and finely delineated) entity. As many have shown, the Western culture accords primacy to vision in its metaphors of acquiring knowledge. This was the same for anthropology. As Clifford writes in his introduction to *Writing Culture*,

> "the predominant metaphors in anthropological research have been participant observation, data collection, and cultural description, all of which presuppose a standpoint outside—looking at, objectifying, or, somewhat closer, "reading" a given reality" (Clifford 1986b, 11).

Visualism means that the observer, retaining certain distance from the observed community, claims the ability to see a stable, whole picture, which is described, *laid out* in the ethnographic text. Apart from the distance confirmed in the metaphor of research as merely observation, the visual metaphor also firmly links the activity of ethnographic research with the textual model. What is observed is stable enough to be read, Clifford states. This notion of research as reading a culture is, at the time *Writing Culture* was published, clearly related with the interpretive anthropology postulated by Clifford Geertz, with his idea of an anthropologist's role as reading the meanings of the ensemble of texts that is culture over the shoulder of the those to whom it belongs (Geertz 2000, 452). The focus on visuality makes text an imperialist enterprise—the observed have no way of looking back on equal terms. They do not usually produce competing texts accounting for how they observed the ethnographer, nor do they get to verify the image of culture presented by him or her in the text. What is more, Stephen Tyler argues, the rhetoric of visuality requires constructing "visible objects" to be read and described by the eager anthropologist-observer, such as: "culture," "society," or even "repetitive patterns of action," outside their discursive modes of constitution (Tyler 1986, 130). These entities (or nonentities, as Tyler calls them) are in fact constructed in text and for the sake of text.

Moreover, the translation of the experience of fieldwork into the textual description involves a synthesis and a framing of picture, which allows for constructing a temporal dimension of the text in a way which situates the described culture outside time, in the "ethnographic present." Johannes Fabian, a Dutch anthropologist, who, while not being a member of the postmodernist group, is an important inspiration for it, calls this phenomenon a denial of coevalness. By this term he means an anthropological mechanism or strategy which posits the researched cultures as functioning in a different, eternally present time, devoid of change. "Their" time, Fabian says, is not "our" time (Fabian 2002, 31). This, too, is a function of writing in a visualist mode: the distanced observer describes the observed community as if it underwent little or no transformation and as such was incomparable to the researcher's community. Such an attitude, in turn, is a warranty of objectivity and accuracy of the knowledge produced by the researcher: if he is distanced spatially and temporarily he is not conditioned by

the community he is studying. Thus the authority of the ethnographer is established.

In reference to this brief summary of some of the major aspects of the subject-object relationship in ethnographic texts as described by the critics of traditional anthropology, two points need to be emphasized. First is that Clifford, Tyler and Fabian, all more or less directly referring to Ong, show that the texts are the locus of the criticized aspects of anthropology. The textual norms require or make it possible to disguise the involvement and the conditioning of the researcher in the relationship with the researched group. This is why, with the help of the tools established within literary criticism, they call for analyzing the rhetoric of the ethnographic text and the way it establishes the ethnographer's authority. However, their criticism, as I have briefly shown, does not only pertain to the language of actual texts. They also become increasingly suspicious about the very model of text as applied to the social sciences, with its imperative of textualizing everything that is encountered in fieldwork, including dialogues, practices, rituals, etc. (Clifford 1986a, 143–144). Culture, says Tyler, is not what the ethnographer encounters—he encounters people talking and acting their experience. The denial of coevalness is something that happens in writing, through specific writing strategies. During fieldwork the ethnographer cannot help but be inextricably coeval with the people he is interacting with. It is then the norms and requirements of texts as means of producing, distributing or in fact performing knowledge that they criticize. What is important, however, is that while the majority of the representatives of the postmodern turn saw the experience of fieldwork as characterized by uniqueness and immediacy generally unrepresented in ethnographic texts, they also suggested that the perspective of writing informs the way the research itself is carried out. Here the evidence is scattered and lies either in the narrated sense of discouragement, when interviews do not yield an expected type of coherent and topical results, or in the way the arguments for reinvented writing strategies are formulated. This impact of text on fieldwork lies in the search for meanings (all behavioral patterns need to be meaningful in reference to the whole system of the given cultures), as well as in, for example, the metaphor of depth which entails that the ethnographer can see and articulate the meanings implicit to the given culture which its own members are either unconscious of or unaccustomed to express (Asad 1986, 160; Crapanzano 1992b, 120), and which is firmly rooted in the Western hermeneutical practices. As a result, Tyler writes evocatively, an ethnographer

> "sees the natives through eyes bandaged with texts, and would not see them otherwise, for the natives are not just signified by these texts, they are their signs, signifiers of them, and because they signify the discourse that signifies them, they are unities of signified and signifier…" (Tyler 1987, 101).

COUNTERTEXTUAL STRATEGIES

One of the primary countertextual strategies recommended by the experimentalists is dialogue and polyphony. The first step, however, is to bring out the subjectivity of the author's voice—thus turning the objectivized description of a detached observer into a possible multiplicity of voices in dialogue. The point is then to shift from a visualist to a discursive mode od writing. Let me quote Clifford and through him Tyler here again:

> "In a discursive rather than a visual paradigm, the dominant metaphor for ethnography shifts away from the observing eye and toward expressive speech (and gesture). […] The evocative, performative elements of ethnography are legitimated. And the crucial poetic problem for a discursive ethnography becomes how 'to achieve by written means what speech creates, and to do it without simply imitating speech'"(Clifford 1986b, 12).

The anthropologists follow the McLuhanian notion of fixed position of discourse that text suggests—but in the 1980's they want to show where it is fixed, and then show it is in interaction with a number of other positioned voices. The aim is to counter not only the impression made on the reader that the ethnographer is in power within this discourse. It also serves the purpose of "retroactively" imposing a mode of research that sees itself as negotiated, polyphonic. It disrupts the ethnographic authority on all stages of research.

The example of dialogue as a countertextual strategy is worth developing a little further to show how the representatives of the postmodern turn were also aware of a subversive but not permanently or completely successful character of their attempts. Any countertextual strategy is prone to becoming another textual convention. Two examples can only be invoked here briefly. One is the work by Vincent Crapanzano, titled *Tuhami: a Portrait of a Moroccan* (Crapanzano 1980), given by many as an example closest to the idea of postmodern ethnography. The book is devoted to a single informant, a Moroccan tilemaker. Crapanzano brings out his voice and follows the developing relationship between the two of them. Nevertheless, he mostly paraphrases Tuhami's words or quotes them in the sequence that the ethnographer finds fit for developing his narrative. Thus Crapanzano was criticized for, in fact, staging a dialogue and remaining the puppet master of the text. The other example is more radical: a monograph made of a series of dialogues induced by everyday situations, between an ethnographer, Kevin Dwyer and his Moroccan interlocutor, Faqir (Dwyer 1982). The conversations are quoted almost verbatim (there is always a question of how much "almost" is), with, in fact, no theoretical and very little interpretive apparatus (apart from the final section of *Moroccan Dialogues*, which is a more theoretical discourse on the state and nature of anthropology). The interpretative self-restraint was, however, criticized for giving little import on the actual society studied, which is a criticism implying the ethnography as a discipline still

has a primary function of explaining a society. Both were also criticized for, in fact, deceitfully leaving the reader on her own, disoriented and eventually relying on the author and the bits of interpretation provided by him. Thus the appearance of polyphony ends up still further masking the ethnographer's unique authority over the message of the text. This led some of the commentators to conclude that the tendency to read any text as a singular statement of one speaker, despite rhetoric gestures of plurality, is related to a more general practice of reading established in the Western culture, applied either to all texts, or to certain genres in particular (including the scientific genres) (Crapanzano 1992a, 9). Such a formulation of the problem of single textual authority (relating it to wider genre configurations and practices of reading) complicates the notions of "strong" and "weak" literacy models established by Deborah Brandt, which I have mentioned earlier. In short, it undermines the idea that the text-centered attitude ("strong-text literacy" in Brandt's terms) can be sharply distinguished from an attitude which treats text as an object of multiple, sometimes subversive, non-normative practices ("weak-text literacy"). It suggests that the autonomy of text is born in the sphere in-between the practices of writers and readers—the writer can intend a text to be read as plural, but, first, he remains the editing authority, and second, the readers are still inclined to read polyphonic texts as ultimately unequivocal, that is presenting some final and conclusive set of statements on a given subject.

CONCLUSION

The examples of countertextual strategies mentioned above are but some very basic ones and a less generalized reading of particular works (such as *Tuhami*) would show that there are more locals modes of constructing texts which serve the purpose of destabilizing what becomes too stable in a text and pluralizing what becomes too unequivocal. The aim of this paper was, however, to show that the strategy of tracing countertextuality, that is moments and areas where the text becomes problematic, as well as the attempts to modify the form, can serve a purpose of reconstructing and understanding some local, culture and time-specific models of literacies together with their cognitive implications, without tricky extrapolations. Some of the conclusions thus reached about the effects of the textual model would well confirm the diagnosis formed by the orality/literacy theorists. They could also complicate them, help elaborate them further, or, better still, contribute to an understanding of the context of development of the literacy-related theories and the way they are themselves testimonies of a certain kind of literacy, one that has a lot to do with the Western model of science and research.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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THREE MESSAGE DIMENSIONS. A NATURALISTIC APPROACH

ABSTRACT

Communication is perceived as a means of obtaining knowledge possessed by others and transmitting this knowledge from subject to subject. This process takes place in a communication area defined by a variety of parameters. The communication content (message) transmitted in the course of communication requires consideration of many aspects, therefore its description must take place in many aspects of the communication area.

Messages can be distinguished in three dimensions of the communication area: (1) semantic (referential, informative); (2) subjective (individual) and (3) cultural (social). Communication theory based on the multi-dimensional character of the communication area should enable the resolution of important problems. For instance in the first dimension it should be able to solve issues relating to the transmission of the semantic properties of a message and the connected problem of the constancy of the subjective reference in successive acts of the communication process; in the second, the problem of the variability of subjective content resulting from the diversity of experience and linguistic competence; in the third, the problem concerning the existence of a community of cultural meanings and the problem concerning the mechanisms of building common representations of the world.

The essay also seeks to specify theories enabling cohesive descriptions of the discussed message dimensions in keeping with the adopted naturalistic methodological and ontological assumptions.

Keywords: communication; message; semantics; individualism; naturalism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is perceived as a means of obtaining knowledge possessed by others and transmitting knowledge which we possess to others. Communication is a means by which we win knowledge about the social and natural world.

It can be—and usually is—assumed to involve a process whereby knowledge (information) is transmitted from a sender to a receiver with the help of linguistic signs. It is also assumed that this process takes place within a communication area defined by a variety of parameters. This area, in turn, has a variety of dimensions whose perception varies depending on the aspect of the communication process we choose to investigate. The fundamental dimensions are physical, psychological and cultural. The communication aspect we decide to deal with will determine our description of the communication area. Such descriptions can very rarely be reduced to a single aspect (where the process is described solely by, say, its technical properties and hence only one parameter is applied to the entire communication process). Many aspects must be taken into consideration for the content of the communicated message to be complete, therefore the meaning of the message should be described in equally many dimensions of the communication area.

The purpose of this essay is to outline the three mentioned dimensions of the communication area (and, consequently, the communicated content), and suggest theories which, in keeping with the here-adopted methodological and ontological assumptions, appear suitable for describing the content dimensions which form what may be called a "complete message."

2. COMMUNICATION AREA DIMENSIONS

The first step in defining the full content of a message is to distinguish the communication dimensions crucial for the theory at hand. We will concentrate on three dimensions: semantic (referential, informational), subjective (individual) and cultural (above-individual, social). Although the complete communication area is also co-formed by other aspects of physical, psychological and cultural reality, the above-mentioned message dimensions should suffice to produce the full meaning of a message within the communication area.[1]

Thus, a communication theory which makes account for the multidimensional character of the communication area should be able to cope with crucial communication theory problems. For instance, in the objective dimension it should resolve the issue of transmitting the semantic properties of a message, in the subjective—matters relating to understanding others, and in the social—the problem of the community (partition) of meanings.

Here I will mainly deal with message-related issues in three dimensions of the communication area. First, I will focus on the semantic (referential, informational) dimension and the related constancy of the objective reference during the successive acts of the communication process. Secondly, I will deal with the

[1] The present reflections are a supplement to my earlier outline of the meaning concept in communication. Other elements of the here-presented communication concept can be found in my text about the perception of the subject in the cognitive approach (Muszyński 1993, 2008).

subjective dimension and the connected variability of subjective content in cases where diverse subjects with varying experience and linguistic/subjective competence function as communication process components within the communication chain. Finally, I will discuss the cultural dimension and the mechanisms behind the construction of common representations of the world in the form of various narratives created in various codes. The first of these dimensions is semantic in character and, for our purposes, understood non-pragmatically (objectively). The second dimension is subjective and usually pragmatically (relativistically) perceived. The third, the social/cultural dimension, will be approached in connection with messages which come from the second dimension and function as mountingly widespread forms of individual representation. This dimension is both conceptually and objectively tied to the previous two. In her outline of a triple approach to meaning L. Cummings defined three approaches to meaning similar to the above-mentioned three message dimensions (Cummings 2005, Chapter 2). Cummings bases referential semantics mainly on truthfulness semantics, especially the ideas of A. Tarski and D. Davidson. She derives the psychological approach to meaning from concepts developed by N. Chomsky and J. Fodor, and the social approach from discourse analysis concepts and the conversational analysis theory. These three approaches to meaning do not serve the construction of a unified meaning concept or a feasible meaning theory. Rather, their purpose is to show the diversity of what we understand as meaning and the mutual relations between related theories. The main argument here is that meaning research is interdisciplinary and embraces many study fields. Cummings makes no direct reference to communication process analysis.

In our approach concord between the various message dimensions stems from a naturalistic approach to the individual components of the message (meaning). The conceptual and ontological conformity between the communication area and its dimensions results from a naturalistic approach which assumes (both in its ontological and methodological variant) that the research methods and research objects we employ are conformant (and at times identical) with those applied in the broadly understood natural sciences.

We should begin our analysis of the main problem at hand with defining the nature of the semantic properties of the message. This in turn will require definition of our understanding of the semantic relation itself. This relation takes place between the sign and its object of reference (designate) and its nature is differently described by different reference theories. It is worth noting that the here-adopted understanding of the semantic (and subsequently pragmatic) relation relates to the standard understanding of these concepts in the traditional semiotics of Ch. Morris.

In the subjective message dimension we need to make consideration for the relation between subject (sender/receiver) and sign (the stream of signs in a message). The sign in a message remains in a dual relation to the extra-

linguistic components. First, it stands in a semantic relation to the object of reference and, secondly, in a pragmatically-understood relation of speaking about the object of discourse. The distinction between object of reference and object of discourse was introduced by R. Rorty (Rorty 1979).

The relation of speech about the object of discourse is connected with the subject, which defines and constructs the object it speaks about in a given message. It is generally assumed that the object spoken about and the object the verbal sign relates to are one and the same. The semantic relation and the relation of speaking about something may run apart as the first is independent of the subject (its state of knowledge) while the second does depend on the subject's knowledge. The degree to which the speech relation depends on the subject and whether the relation of speaking about the discourse object is identical with the semantic relation is the study field of, among others, belief context semantics.

3. METHODOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN STANDARD COMMUNICATION MODELS

A review of known communication models reveals the diversity of the components which make up their communication processes. Most models carry the basic components of C. Shannon's model (sender, transmission, code, channel, receiver). Usually added to this are components typical for a given communication concept, like environment, culture, social groups, leaders, keep-gaters, opinion, mass media, the participants of the communication act, and their skills (memory, perception, needs, etc.).

The complexity of such models varies, nonetheless their graphic representations consist of very many elements and graphs (relations) marked in various ways (by bold or perforated lines, etc.). This vast diversity of components and the relations between them hinder the unification of a given approach, which usually leads to conceptual or ontological incohesion. Conceptual because there exist many different kinds of relations between, say, psychological, social, physical, individual or collective conditions, which makes it hard to define these elements coherently. This, in turn, leads to ontological incohesion as it is difficult to make these components behave in a uniform way amidst such diverse ontological categories as, e.g., individual memory and information flow in the mass media.

Such communication process models play a heuristic rather than explanatory or representational role and are not empirically adequate.

All such standard models refer to various components of the communication area. This diversity of relations and distinguished active components results in incomplementarity, making the development of a coherent communication theory impossible and descriptions of the full message difficult. The desired theoretical rendering of the communicated content and the entire communication process must meet the terminological and ontological cohesion criterion.

4. SUGGESTED MESSAGE DESCRIPTIONS—ASSUMPTIONS

The conclusion is that a description of the various dimensions of the communication area must be attained under uniform assumptions leading to a uniform communication concept. The achievement of an adequate uniformity level will require assumptions which enable the unification of a given communication concept. These assumptions are: the naturalistic (physicalistic) assumption, the ontological-individualistic assumption and the semantic-externalistic assumption. I will now offer a brief rundown of all three as well as their role in the here-proposed communication concept.

Ontological assumptions relate to that which exists. They concern the existence methods and existence criteria assumed by the specific components of a given reality concept. Ontological naturalism assumes the existence of a reality consisting of objects recognised by firmly confirmed natural theories, with the criteria for and evidence of their existence provided by the achievements of the natural sciences. In other words, naturalism assumes the existence of objects revealed by well-founded scientific theories.

In the case of phenomena like meaning, language, sense and perception research frequently refers to concepts offered by popular linguistic, psychological, semantic and hermeneutic theories. Basing on these theories we often distinguish categories which enable the description of chosen areas or reality (e. g., word, sentence, equivalence, meaning, communication, etc.). However, reference to the concepts of theories developed according to the methodology and ontology of the natural sciences (scientific theories) enables studies of reality by means of defining relations of a nomological character. These relations not only enable the description of researched phenomena but also explain them. The possibility of approaching semantic and psychological phenomena in this naturalistic way is a frequent subject of methodological and ontological debate. Cognitive science is rather optimistic about the emergence of scientific theories enabling the naturalistic study of diverse phenomena in a given field. Noteworthy here is the currently visible dualism in communication studies, where we encounter both the traditional approach based on popular language theory and theories rooted in cognitive science.

The individualistic assumption (in its ontological variant) typically recognises human individuals equipped with minds able to create social reality (e. g., by interaction) and mental and public representations (artefacts)—and thus build a common cultural reality—as the ultimate objects of psychological, social and cultural reality.

When it comes to the phenomena of cultural reality we may make reference to the concept developed by D. Sperber, which illustrates the theoretical functioning of both the naturalistic and individualistic assumption (in one of its variants) (Sperber 1996). Sperber interprets (and explains) cultural reality in the categories of individual representations and the processes underlying their repli-

cation (in the latter case by reference to epidemiological theory). Here, all cultural phenomena stem from the replication of single representation systems based on individual cognitive processes. In effect, all public representations, or intersubjectively accessible cultural products (the artefacts of social reality), have meaning only insofar as meaning is ascribed to them by individuals. The problem here is explaining the sharing of these individually ascribed meanings, which requires reference to subject-external conditions and the connection of the environment's individual components by means of relations which co-form the ascribed meanings (senses). The inclusion of subject-extenal conditions in the process of building content transmitted during the communication process calls for the externalistic assumption, which speaks about the share of environmental components in building the content of a created message and the access to these components by other subjects.

Under the externalistic assumption (grounded in philosophy of the mind and philosophy of language) extra-subjective (environmental) factors play an active role in determining the content of the subject's mental states, i. e., the content of our thoughts (beliefs, hopes, desires, expectations, etc.). This assumption is usually formulated as a sentence describing two systems (cognitive or concerning the conditions of organisms), which are identical when it comes to the level of base properties but differ in the property that results from the differences in the environments in which they function. In one variant of this assumption they can be formulated as the following thesis: If we have two systems S1 and S2 which do not differ in their internal properties and differ only in property C when S1 is placed in a different environment from the environment of S2, then property C is an external property of S1.

If this difference concerns the content of mental conditions we may suppose that it is the effect of environmental differences. This type of externalism is semantic externalism and relates to the semantic properties of these conditions. One of the better-known argumentations for the existence of difference in the meaning of a word used by two identical subjects from two communities which use the word in different conventions of meaning is the example analysis carried out by T. Burge.[2] Burge's mental experiment purports to prove that subject-external factors determine the content of the subject's thoughts.

5. MESSAGE DIMENSIONS—DESCRIPTIVE THEORIES

The above assumptions may enhance a uniform and coherent description of the message, however we will need reference to more detailed theories in order to fill them with sense. Here I will outline three theories enabling effective descriptions of the various aspects of the message.

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[2] Burge T., 1979, "Individualism and the Mental," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 4 (1), 73–122.

The first is the causative reference theory formulated by S. Kripke, H. Putnam and M. Devitt.[3] The second is N. Chomsky's individualistic language theory and the third the earlier-mentioned epidemiological theory of spreading cultural phenomena referred to by D. Sperber. All three meet most of the criteria laid down by naturalism, individualism and externalism.

5.1. The Semantic Dimension

The causative reference theory assumes that the current usage of a term carries reference to its original usage and that subsequent usages of the term by members of a given community transmit this reference (i.e. the term's semantic property). The reference of an own name or natural kind term is an object (in some cases a specific element like essence) named by a given name at the time of its establishment—or "baptism." Subsequently the original use of the name (term) is linked with its most recent usage by a causative chain.

Communication on grounds of the causative reference theory entails the creation of a causative chain of usages of individual tokens of terms, which inherit the semantic properties of the object established and defined by the term's initial usage. The mediating factor between the consecutive usages of a given type of term are the neuronal (cerebral) conditions of individual subjects provoked by appropriate stimuli (e. g., hearing or seeing a token of a given type of name) and themselves provoking adequate communication acts (e. g. the utterance of consecutive tokens of a given type of name).

Another way of illustrating the causative chain connecting the usages of diverse physical tokens carrying specific semantic properties or specific information is the xero principle. Outlined in F. Dretske's semantic information theory, this principle can be formulated as a thesis whereby if A carries information that B and B carries information that C, then A carries information that C.[4] Such causative relations underlie the laws of information flow, according to which the information contained in the original is not lost if the original is copied. Hence, an empirically adequate communication theory would assumably respect the xero principle. Dretske clearly states that its laws underlie the communication process and the transmission of semantic properties and information when he writes that, "this whole chain of events constitutes the communication system."[5]

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[3] Devitt, M., 1981, *Designation*, New York: Columbia University Press; Kripke, S., 1980, *Naming and Necessity*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; 1980; Putnam, H., 1975, "Meaning of "Meaning," in: Putnam, *Mind, Language, and Reality. Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[4] F. Dretske, 1983, *Knowledge and the Flow of Information*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 57.

[5] Op. cit., 58.

In this approach semantic properties and information obey transmission laws in a specific dimension of the communication area. This dimension underlies the semantic, referential and informational properties of the area and guarantees referential constancy for individual semantic copies[6] in their successive reproductions and reproductions of information or meaning.

5.2. The Subjective Dimension

In keeping with Chomsky's linguistic theory there exist only I-languages (internal, individual, idiolectic). There are only idiolects, the languages of individual users with their own psychological and biological roots. According to Chomsky public language—or E-language (external)—is an artefact created by linguists (Chomsky 1996).

I-language serves to express the thoughts of an individual subject, its communicative function a coincidental and secondary property. A language's ability to communicate its user's thoughts to another subject is not its fundamental property. A language user's linguistic skills are his subjective knowledge, accessible introspectively, and describing this knowledge is the actual task of linguists as such descriptions constitute a given language's grammar. The E-language concept is useful in describing the subjective dimension of the message in its purely linguistic (grammatical) aspect. Such descriptions, however, must be supplemented by additional properties—cognitive representations of the world and providing sense to situations—i.e. the idiolectic message must be supplemented by its semantic and cultural dimension. The semantic component of a message defined by the causative reference theory and the elements of the cultural environment, whose role in creating the message is contained in the externalistic assumption, enable the explanation of the character of messages tied to the individual idiolectic constructs of I-language. Only these supplements permit the use of an individual's idiolect to create a message whose semantic and cultural properties are shared by other participants of the communication process.

5.3. The Cultural Dimension

D. Sperber's nature of cultural phenomena theory (Sperber, 1996) is convenient for describing the cultural dimension of the message. Sperber's concept assumes that communication is a process in which subjective messages are created from an individual's experience and his functioning in relations with other

[6] A semantic copy is a token of a sign of a given semantic type which has the same reference regardless which formal (physical) type it belongs to. For instance, words (written or spoken) in different languages (i.e. tokens which look and sound differently) whose objective reference is the same object, phenomenon, process, property, etc. of the objective world belong to one semantic type. Cf. M. Devitt, *Designation*, op. cit.

individuals. Important here are representation replication relations based on naturalism, individualism and externalism. According to this theory all the cultural phenomena which function in social reality are the effect of the replication of individual representation systems based on individual cognitive processes. Hence all public representations have meaning only insofar as meaning is ascribed to them by individuals. One may well fear the consequences of such an individualistic approach to culture as it creates too many different individual representation of the same elements of social reality, which may result in incomprehension and informational and competency chaos within a given culture. Sperber, however, claims that the differences between individual representations are overestimated while the similarities (or even identity) of social representations are undervalued. Therefore messages resulting from experienced representations of reality neither differ that much from individual to individual, nor are as similar as demanded by the objective (above-individual) approach, which assumes the existence of common social representations somehow shared by all competent participants of a given culture. All the public meanings of representations are merely meanings ascribed by cognitive and comprehending individuals. This approach conforms with the individualistic (and naturalistic) assumptions about the nature of language and other components of social and cultural reality adopted by cognitive science. Thus, communication theories grounded on cognitive science ultimately regard communication as a process involving the transmission of messages/information between individuals and not the communication process of a community. In effect, all descriptions and definitions of communication as a social, cultural and above-individual act are to a greater or lesser degree brought down to descriptions and definitions based on theories about the mental conditions of individuals and their properties (e.g. skills, knowledge, individual representations).[7]

6. THE PROPOSED APPROACH TO THE MESSAGE—GENERAL REMARKS

Our overview of the various dimensions of a message refers to diverse dimensions of the communication area. The first concerns semantic relations based on objective cause-and-effect dependencies which take place between individual tokens of terms and mental (cerebral) conditions. It couples the terms used in a message, their earlier usage and the neuronal conditions of their users into one chain of causative relations. This historically-rooted chain of term us-

[7] The possibility of reducing the social (cultural) dimension to the individual dimension is a constant debate topic. Sperber's above-mentioned approach to the issue is moderately reductive. It assumes ontological reductionism but is not radically reductive in the methodological sphere, which strives to explain cultural phenomena by theorems on psychological conditions. Sperber's theory accepts procedures which are typical for the human sciences, e.g. a specifically-understood comprehension procedure. Such reduction is assumed here in view of the abbreviated form in which the multi-dimensionality of the communication area is described.

ages and user conditions creates a relation which also forms part of the communication area. This is the basic message dimension for scientific texts and those whose purpose is to relay information.[8] It organises the communication area required by information, reducing other areas to secondary status and eliminating pragmatic content interpretable in keeping with the appropriate rules of the adopted pragmatics. For instance the pragmatic relation is unimportant in the semantic dimension of a message about the atomic mass of gold.

Going out from the above assumptions and semantic theories the semantic message dimension must guarantee the possibility of transmitting knowledge and information about the same object the sender, and subsequently the receiver, are speaking and thinking about. In the here-suggested approach we are able to know the same, speak about the same and possess the same information solely because the referential constancy of the message is guaranteed by the mechanisms of causative reference and causative information theory. Language is a carrier of semantic properties and serves to transmit messages and information despite its individualistic rooting in the subjective structure of cognitive processes. The user's semantic competency can be understood as a kind of "silent knowledge"—processual knowledge acquired in the course of the communication praxis between members of a cultural community.

Given a greater dimensional completeness, messages within the communication area create content which underlies our comprehension and interpretation of the world of other minds, the "other" in the communication act. In keeping with the individualistic assumption we can differ in world outlook, statements and comprehension according to our individual perception of this world. Language which is I-language serves to express the content of subjective thought, and thereby the subjectivisation of thought. We do not need to be fully competent semantically—i.e. know all the semantic properties of the terms we use defined in the course of the naming act, as assumed by causative reference theory. Effective communication in the subjective or social dimension only needs reference to stereotype content based in the individual socialisation process and shared by a given language and cultural community. Successful communication usually requires no reference to semantic properties when it can suffice with stereotype content which is largely similar in the experience of many users in a given community. In Putnam's opinion this social sharing component, which he calls "stereotype," ensures an adequate communication level.[9]

The second message dimension refers to psychological relations connected with individual experience and the organisation of cognitive processes like con-

[8] In the semantic sense we can speak in this way about terms with an objective reference; causative reference theory usually concerns selected categories of terms: natural kind names, the names of many artefacts, features and activities, but chiefly proper names. This theory may also apply to crucial theoretical terms in scientific language and terms designating fictitious entities, which extends the analysis of the semantic dimension to diverse kinds of narrative.

[9] Putnam, op. cit.

centration, memory and perception. In this dimension reference to the processes of remembering, classification and experience-related association means building individual, subjective—but usually not private[10]—inferences between the components of our knowledge about the world. This is important for the construction of subjective message comprehension. Here, in keeping with the individualistic assumption, the social and cultural dimension is reduced to the subjective dimension.

It is worth noting that while the semantic dimension of the communication area is one-directional—its direction is determined by a chain of cause-and-effect relations which connects the successive usages of the terms which form the message—the subjective dimension, due to the predominantly negotiational (dialogical) character of the communication process, is two-directional (reversible) and assumes information (message) exchange in the course of successive communication acts which form the communication process.

The problem for standard communication theory is that subjective meanings based on individual convictions lead to differences in the comprehension of statements used in the communication act, which endangers the attainment of mutual understanding. However, less-standard communication theories assume that, „the proper response to the communication problem is to see the mutual understanding of the speaker's words as something that arises as a consequence of communication rather than a presupposition or prerequisite for it. (Jorgensen 2009, 137). This results from the suggestion, "[…] to see mutual understanding as a consequence of communication that arises from pressures towards convergence and coincidence in the use of expressions […]" (Jorgensen 2009, 146).

Diverse mechanisms, the subjects' cognitive mechanisms and their shared knowledge about their cultural background enable individuals taking part in the communication process to reconstruct messages which are more complete and contain many components shared by the participants. Also inference procedures, the construction of presuppositions, assumptions about the interlocutor's rationality and reference to the friendliness principle create a complex web of dependencies which is crucial for a more complete description of the functioning of this message dimension.

7. CLOSING REMARKS

Methodologically and ontologically compatible descriptions of the two above-mentioned message dimensions will require reference to the ontological and methodological assumptions which are common to both. In both cases de-

[10] Here I assume that the private content of experience differs from the subjective in that the latter can be publicly expressed by linguistic signs while private content is linguistically inexpressible. In a way this distinction relates to Wittgenstein's claim that private language is impossible.

scriptive compatibility will be best-founded upon the naturalistic, individualistic and externalistic assumptions. The adoption of uniform ontological assumptions with regard to the nature of the described entities and the relations between them, and uniform methodological assumptions with regard to the terminology and theory that describes these entities will enable a cohesive description and explanation of the communication process.

Standard communication theories claim that it is necessary to resign from many contextually rich communication process components. This results from the fact that Shannon's model makes no simultaneous mention of cultural background, social memory, individual perception processes, physical information carriers and group influence. The suggested approach refers not only to the processes of individual perception, memory and attention, but also to interaction and cooperation with another subject possessing similar abilities, the possibility of calling up certain components of this process (e.g. words, inscriptions, images) and the rules governing their replication, and the mechanisms by which the semantic properties of these replications are transferred by successive replications. It is also able to explain the constant character of these properties and their ability to transfer meanings and information about the world other than the mental conditions of the communication process participants. In this approach individual components combine with uniform causative relations enriched by overbuilt (supervenient, emergent) properties like meanings, information with aboutness properties, or relations of reference to something.

At this point the role of the externalistic assumption, about which least mention was made above, should make itself apparent. Its task is to build elements of the non-subjective world, the environment of the communicating subjects, into the description and explanation of the message. Reference to base relations of a naturalistic character enable us to supervene or explain the emergence of properties which can not be reduced to the physical level and function on a higher level, like intentionality or aboutness. The externalistic assumption allows these properties to be built in an area beyond the individual subject, an area embracing not only elements of the natural environment but also other subjects and the products of their cultural activity. This in turn enables a more complete definition of the cultural or social dimension of the message.

An approach which seeks a common base for descriptions and explanations of the semantic, subjective and social-cultural content transmitted in the course of the communication process seems more effective methodologically and objectively, also because it combines with the objective and methodological foundations of other sciences, especially the natural sciences. The characteristic features of communication are retained mainly due to the impossibility of eliminating of reducing properties like intentionality and semanticality, which are present in most components of the communication process. What is possible is their reinterpretation, which in turn enriches their reception in a way that is much more effective descriptively and explanatively.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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THREE APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SPEECH ACTS[1]

ABSTRACT

The paper reconstructs and discusses three different approaches to the study of speech acts: (*i*) the intentionalist approach, according to which most illocutionary acts are to be analysed as utterances made with the Gricean communicative intentions, (*ii*) the institutionalist approach, which is based on the idea of illocutions as institutional acts constituted by systems of collectively accepted rules, and (*iii*) the interactionalist approach the main tenet of which is to perform illocutionary acts by making conventional moves in accordance with patterns of social interaction. It is claimed that, first, each of the discussed approaches presupposes a different account of the nature and structure of illocutionary acts, and, second, all those approaches result from one-sided interpretations of Austin's conception of verbal action. The first part of the paper reconstructs Austin's views on the functions and effects of felicitous illocutionary acts. The second part reconstructs and considers three different research developments in the post-Austinian speech act theory—the intentionalist approach, the institutionalist approach, and the interactionalist approach.

Keywords: Austin; illocutionary acts; communicative intentions; constitutive rules; verbal interaction.

1. AUSTIN ON THE FUNCTIONS, EFFECTS AND CONVENTIONALITY OF ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS

According to John L. Austin, describing the world in not the only, or even not the central aim of language; we use words to do things, *i.e.*, to perform certain actions that bring about changes in our social environment. For example, we (*a*) inform our interlocutors that something is the case, warn them against

[1] This work has been supported by the grant "Filozofia analityczna: historia i najnowsze wyzwania" [Analytical philosophy: history and its newest challenges] from the Foundation for Polish Science.

certain perils, ask them to do something, promise them to do something, greet them, apologize them for our incorrect behaviour, and so on; we also (*b*) get our interlocutors to believe that something is the case, cause them to be on the alert for certain things, get them to do something, cause them to expect us to do something, insult or amuse them, get them to feel sympathy for us, and so on. According to Austin, the actions listed in point (*a*) are illocutionary acts; their function is to produce conventional or normative states of affairs. The actions listed in point (*b*) are, in turn, perlocutionary acts; to perform a perlocutionary act is to "produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons" (Austin 1962, 101). In short, both the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts change the context of their performance. However, the former, unlike the latter, have conventional rather than natural effects. In other words, one could not perform an illocutionary act—and, by the same token, one would not be able to produce its normative effect—if there were no "accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances" (Austin 1962, 14); but one could produce what counts as the perlocutionary consequence of one's utterance even if there were no language and linguistic conventions. The effect of an illocutionary act is necessarily conventional: it would be impossible to produce it if there were no accepted conventional procedures for performing the act in question. By contrast, what counts as the perlocutionary consequence of a speech act is a natural state of affairs that happens to be produced by performing a conventional act.

To make an illocutionary act, then, is to change the context of its performance by producing certain effects. The effects so produced, let us stress, should be carefully distinguished from act's perlocutionary consequences. According to Austin, the illocutionary act—as distinct from the perlocutionary one—affects the contexts of its production in the following three ways: first, (e_1) "the performance of an illocutionary act involves the securing of *uptake*" (Austin 1962, 116) on the part of the hearer; second, (e_2) „the illocutionary act 'takes effect' in certain ways, as distinguished from producing consequences in the sense of bringing about states of affairs in the 'normal' way, *i.e*. changes in the natural course of events" (Austin 1962, 116); third, (e_3) "many illocutionary acts invite by convention a response or sequel" (Austin 1962, 116). In short, there are three types of effects that can be ascribed to successful illocutionary acts: (e_1) the securing of uptake, (e_2) the taking of effect and (e_3) the inviting of a response or sequel. Generally, securing uptake consists in getting the hearer to recognize the force and meaning of the speaker's utterance. Normally, the securing of uptake involves hearer's forming a conscious mental representation of the speaker's act. For an act to take an effect, in turn, is to produce certain normative state of affairs conceived as the commitments, obligation, entitlements and rights of the communicating agents. For instance, a successful promise results in the speaker's being committed to do the action she refers to (Austin

1962, 102) as well as in the hearer's being entitled to expect the speaker to do this. A binding act of ordering, in turn, creates the hearer's obligation to do what he is told and the speaker's right to expect the hearer to do what he is told. What is more, the successful illocutions under discussion produce effects of the (e_3) type. For instance, the binding promise invites the speaker's response of fulfilment and the felicitous order invites the hearer's obedience or at least his explanation why he cannot comply with the speaker's order.

The mechanisms whereby the effects (e_1), (e_2) and (e_3) are produced involve, in one way or another, operating of illocutionary conventions. Austin claims that „the illocutionary act is a conventional act: an act done as conforming to a convention" (Austin 1962, 105). Unfortunately, he offers no systematic analyses of the concept of convention that could be used to ground his account of illocutionary acts and their effects (Harnish 2005, 13–14). Let us assume, however, that what he has in mind by claiming that illocutionary acts are conventional is the rough idea that the performance of an illocutionary act involves the invocation of a conventional procedure that has a conventional effect and includes the employment of certain conventional means. Assume, next, that a procedure is *conventional* if it is commonly accepted; by the same token, an effect is *conventional* if it is tacitly and collectively accepted by the interacting agents; finally, some illocutionary acts are conventional because they are performed with the use of conventional means—performative formulas, ritual phrases, grammatical moods—whose function is to indicate the illocutionary force of an utterance. There are, then, at least three different concepts of conventionality: procedure-conventionality, effect-conventionality, and means-conventionality. It is not clear which one of them Austin has in mind when he claims that „the illocutionary act is a conventional act." Is it conventional because of the conventionality of the procedure invoked by the speaker, because of the conventionality of its effect, or because of the conventionality of the means by which it is performed? I return to these questions in section 2.2 of this paper.

2. THE POST-AUSTINIAN SPEECH ACT THEORY AND THE DISPUTE ABOUT THE NATURE OF ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS

There are three research traditions in the post-Austinian speech act theory: the intentionalist, institutionalist, and interactionalist ones. Each of them seems to result from a one-sided interpretation of Austin's idea claiming that illocutionary acts are context-changing actions. Austin defines illocutions as conventional acts that affect the context of their performance by producing three types of effects: (e_1) the securing of uptake, (e_2) the taking of effect, and (e_3) the inviting of a response or sequel. According to the intentionalist approach, most illocutionary act types—such as statements, warnings, promises, requests, and so on—are communicative rather than conventional. It is, namely, claimed that in

order to perform a successful illocutionary act of the communicative sort is to issue an utterance with a communicative intention, *i.e.*, with the intention to produce the effect of (e_1) type by getting the hearer to recognize this intention. The proponents of the institutionalist approach claim that illocutionary acts are to be explained and typed by reference to their institutional effects conceived as commitments, obligations, rights, duties, and so on. In other words, they assume that all illocutionary acts are institutional and as such they produce effects of the (e_2) type. Finally, according to the interactionalist approach, the performing of an illocutionary act consists in initiating the reproduction of a conventional pattern of social interaction, and thereby in inviting the complementary action on the part of the hearer; the invitation in question is tantamount to the effect of the (e_3) type.

Let us assume, following Robert M. Harnish, that the „utterance of a sentence in a context is not sufficient for the performance of a speech act. The theories of speech acts can be organized in terms of what must be added" (Harnish 2005, 11). In other words, the structure of a successful illocutionary act includes at least three elements: words uttered by the speaker, the context of their utterances, and a third element whose nature is a matter of dispute. This element plays a decisive role in determining the force of an act and links the illocutionary practice with other domains of human activity, *e.g.*, mental, institutional or interactional. According to the intentionalist approach, the force-determining element is the speaker's communicative intention. The proponents of the institutionalist approach identify it with the normative state of affairs produced by the speaker's act. Those who adopt the interactionalist approach claim that it should be described by reference to a response invited by the speaker's act.

The purpose of the present section is to reconstruct the three approaches in question. Before we go into detail, however, let us note that the approaches presuppose different accounts of the nature of speech acts. According to the intentionalist approach, communicative illocutionary acts form a subclass of intentional actions, and as such they can be explained within the framework of belief-desire psychology (Harnish 2005, 16). In the institutionalist approach it is assumed that illocutions form a special class of institutional acts conceived as moves made by socially accepted rules and procedures. Finally, according to the interactionalist approach, illocutionary acts form a subclass of natural acts which help to achieve a coordination between interacting agents. In short, we are faced with the following trilemma: illocutionary acts are in their nature either (*i*) communicative, (*ii*) institutional, or (*iii*) interactional.

2.1. The intentionalist approach

According to the intentionalist approach, the structure of most illocutionary acts—such as statements, warnings, requests, promises, and so on—involves three elements: the words uttered by the speaker, the context of their utterance,

and speaker's communicative intention. It is claimed that the third element determines the force of the act. The proponents of the intentionalist approach are Peter F. Strawson, Stephen Schiffer, Kent Bach and Robert M. Harnish. They claim that what underlies the practice of producing and interpreting illocutionary acts is the agent's mental ability to form and identify certain intentions rather than the existence of certain conventional procedures and rules.

In *Intention and Convention is Speech Acts* Strawson distinguishes between two categories of illocutionary acts: (c_1) communicative and (c_2) conventional. The performing of an act of the (c_1) type consists in issuing an utterance with a certain communicative intention: with the overt intention to get the hearer to believe that something is the case (statements and other assertive acts), to get the hearer to perform certain action (requests and other directive acts), to get the hearer to be on the alert for certain things (warnings), and so on. To perform an act of the (c_2) type, by contrast, is to make a move that forms a part of a convention-governed and convention-constituted practice: to pronounce a couple man and wife, to pronounce the verdict of divorce, to redouble at bridge, to checkmate in the game of chess, and so on. According to Strawson, only acts of the (c_2) type are conventional in Austin's sense; acts of the (c_1) type are Gricean acts of non-natural meaning that can but do not must be performed by conventional means.

Following Grice, Strawson offers the following definition of non-natural meaning:

> "*S* nonnaturally means something by an utterance *x* if *S* intends (i_1) to produce by uttering *x* a certain response (*r*) in an audience *A* and intends (i_2) that *A* shall recognize *S*'s intention (i_1) and intends (i_3) that this recognition on the part of *A* of *S*'s intention (i_1) shall function as *A*'s reason, or a part of his reason, for his response *r*. (The word "response," though more convenient in some ways than Grice's "effect," is not ideal.)" (Strawson 1964, 446).

He claims that the definition provides a partial analysis of the concept of understating: the understanding of the speaker's act is the recognition of intention (i_1) behind his utterance or, in other words, the satisfying of intention (i_2). According to Strawson, the concept of understanding is tantamount to Austin's notion of uptake: in order to secure uptake the hearer ought to recognize one's intention (i_1). Strawson claims:

> "If the identification were correct, then it would follow that to say something with a certain illocutionary force is at least (in the standard case) to have a certain complex intention of the (i_4) form (…)". (Strawson 1964, 449)

More specifically, if two acts are illocutionarily equivalent, i.e., have the same illocutionary force, then they are equivalent with respect to the response *r* the speakers intend to produce on the part of their hearers by getting them to recognize the speakers' intentions (i_1).

In *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts* Bach and Harnish offer a refined version of the intentionalist account of illocutionary acts. They accept Strawson's distinction between the acts of the (c_1) type and the acts of the (c_2) type. They claim, however, that Strawson's definition of communicative intentions is not adequate and requires a substantial revision. According to Bach and Harnish, Strawsonian force-determining intentions are, in fact, perlocutionary: these intentions bring about certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience. It turns out, however, that in at least some cases one's utterance can legitimately function as a statement, warning or request even though one fails to intend the hearer to, respectively, accept the proposition one communicates, get the hearer to be on the alert for the danger one describes or get him to do what he is told. To do justice to such illocutions and to avoid explaining illocutionary acts in terms of perlocutionary consequences, Bach and Harnish develop their own definition of illocutionary communicative intentions. To perform a communicative illocutionary act, they claim, is to express an attitude. The attitude expression consists, in turn, in uttering a sentence with the reflexive intention to get the hearer to take one's utterance as a reason of thinking that one has that attitude (K. Bach and Harnish 1979, 15).

The distinctive feature of communicative reflexive intentions is that "their fulfilment consists in their recognition" (K. Bach and Harnish 1979, 13). For example, to state that *p* in uttering sentence *s* is to reflexively intend the hearer to take one's utterance of *s* as reason to think that one has (*a*) the belief that *p* and (*b*) the intention to get the hearer to form the belief that *p*; the hearer's recognition of one's reflexive intention consists in his taking one's utterance as reason to think that one has attitudes (*a*) and (*b*). Note that the intention (*b*)—which plays a decisive role in determining the force of one's act—is perlocutionary and as such is equivalent to the Strawsonian intention (i_1) for statements. According to Bach and Harnish, however, making a successful statement involves expressing rather than having the intention (*b*); the point is, namely, that one can express an attitude no matter one has it or not.[2]

In short, Bach and Harnish's version of the intentionalist conception allows for successful though insincere illocutionary acts. In this respect, the account of illocutionary acts in terms of attitude-expression has an advantage over Strawson's conception that requires the speaker to have the intention that determines the force of his act. Bach and Harnish's account has a few further theoretical merits. First, it defines successful communication in terms of the hearer's recognition of the speaker's reflexive intention, and thereby distinguishes the speaker's communicative success from the achievement of his perlocutionary goals. Second, it gives rise to a theoretically based taxonomy of speech acts,

[2] Bach and Harnish's account of illocutionary acts involves the so-called non-achievement use of "express." For a discussion of this topic, see (Harnish 2005, 16–17).

since illocutionary acts can be typed by reference to kinds of attitudes expressed by speakers (K. Bach and Harnish 1979).

Nevertheless, the intentionalist approach faces two serious problems.

Recall, first, that according to Strawson, Bach and Harnish, what underlies the illocutionary practice is the communicating agents' ability to form and recognize communicative intentions. One can doubt, however, whether communicative intentions are thinkable representations at all, i.e., whether it is possible for our limited minds to think their complex contents. It seems, for example, that Strawson's analysis of communicative acts is not complete or, in other words, that the list of intentions (i_1), (i_2), (i_3) and (i_4) can be continued *ad infinitum*. The intention (i_4) has to ensure the overtness of intention (i_2). The point is, namely, that every communicative intention—i.e., the intention whose fulfilment constitutes the speaker's communicative success—is by definition overt. For the same reason, however, intention (i_4) is to be overt too, since its fulfilment is a part of the speaker's communicative success. To make Strawson's analysis complete, therefore, we should ascribe to the communicating agent intention (i_5) thus enabling the hearer to recognize intention (i_4). The speaker's communicative success, however, involves the fulfilment of intention (i_5). For this reason we should ascribe to him intention (i_6) which has to ensure the overtness of intention (i_5), and so on *ad infinitum*. It turns out, therefore, that the proponent of Strawson's account has to concede that to perform a communicative illocutionary act, infinitely many intentions (i_k) should be formed in order to enable the hearer to recognize intention ($i_{k\text{-}1}$). Bach and Harnish avoid this problem by replacing the iterative account of communicative intention with the reflexive account. They assume, namely, that communicative intentions are reflexive in the sense that their fulfilment consists in their recognition. One can doubt, however, whether it is possible for the human mind to produce a representation whose content contains such a token-reflexive element (Recanati 1986; Bach 1987; Harnish 1991; Siebel 2003; Witek 2009).

Second, one can object to the idea that performing successful illocutionary acts such as statements, requests, warnings, and so on, comes down to uttering a sentence with the intention to produce the effect of the (e_1) type, i.e., with the intention to secure uptake on the part of the hearer. According to Austin, however, the central function of illocutionary acts—including statements, requests, warnings, and so on—consists in producing effects of the (e_2) type, i.e., in generating normative states of affairs conceived as commitments, obligations, rights, entitlements, etc. In other words, an illocution is successful if it is binding. The proponents of the intentionalist approach ignore this norm-producing function of successful illocutions, and, in this connection, they seem to redefine the Austinian concept of illocutionary acts (Doerge 2009).

2.2. The institutionalist approach

According to the institutionalist approach, the structure of a successful illocution comprises the words uttered by the speaker, the context of their utterance and a normative state of affairs the speaker produces in making his act. The state consists in the speaker's becoming responsible for the fulfilment of a certain condition. For example, making a statement involves expressing a proposition and taking responsibility for its truth, making a promise involves committing oneself to performing the action one describes, and so on. In short, the issuing of a successful illocutionary act involves the production of an effect of the (e_2) type—let us call it the "institutional effect" of the act—which determines the force of the speaker's utterance. The producing of this effect, in turn, involves certain rules or procedures that exist in virtue of their being collectively accepted by the interacting agents. In short, what constitutes the possibility of the illocutionary practice, i.e. what makes it possible to produce institutional or normative states with words, is the collective acceptance of certain institutional rules or procedures. The proponents of the institutionalist approach are Robyn Cameron, William P. Alston and John R. Searle.

In his paper *Sentence-Meaning and Speech Acts* Cameron claims that illocutionary acts form a subclass of effective institutional acts. The distinctive feature of the latter is that:

> "they effect, in a non-consequential fashion, some change (…) in the "institutional" or "conventional" world—the world of rights, duties, commitments, roles, status, and other social facts of the institutional kind—as opposed to the natural world. If I make a promise to someone, I create a promissory commitment between myself and him; similarly a marriage ceremony, an ordination, inauguration, or investiture, or a command issued within a command structure, effects something, makes a change within the realm of institutional fact. (In each case the change amounts to the fact that certain actions or sorts of actions, on the part of certain people, are now in order, or required, or proscribed.)" (Cameron 1970, 101)

In short, effecting institutional acts, in general, and illocutionary acts, in particular, produce effects of the (e_2) type: they "take effect" by changing the normative situation of the interacting agents. According to Cameron, they can perform the norm-changing function only against the background of socially accepted "constitutive conventions" (Cameron 1970, 98).

In *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning* Alston claims that performing a successful illocution requires to utter words in accordance with a certain rule and take responsibility for the fulfilment of the condition specified by the rule. Contrary to the proponents of the intentionalist approach, he claims:

> "The utterance is made the illocutionary act it is, apart from any conventional effect production that is essentially involved, not by any "natural"

> facts about the speaker—his beliefs, perlocutionary intentions, or whatever—but by a "normative" fact about the speaker—the fact that he has changed his normative situation in a certain way by laying himself open to the possibility of censure, correction, or the like in the case the conditions in question are not satisfied" (Alston 2000, 70–71).

The most popular version of the institutionalist approach comes from Searle, who in *Speech Acts* defends the idea claiming that "speaking a language is engaging in a rule governed form of behavior" (Searle 1969, 22). He also claims that illocutionary acts are basic units of human communication and that one's performing of a successful illocution involves one's producing of a certain institutional state of affairs: one's commitment to do something (promises), one's responsibility for the truth of the proposition one expresses (statements), one's attempt to get one's interlocutor to do something (requests), and so on (Searle 1969, 66–67).

According to Searle, the rules whose existence creates the possibility of the illocutionary practice have the form "*X* counts as *Y* in context *C*." They are illocutionary constitutive rules; their totality forms the institution of language. Generally speaking, every institution is a system of constitutive rules of the form "*X* counts as *Y* in context *C*" that provides a structure within which one creates institutional facts *Y* by performing action *X* in context C; in other words, the job of human institution is to create the possibility of producing new sorts of deontic powers: rights, entitlements, commitments, obligations, and so on (Searle 2005). For example, the utterance of an explicitly performative sentence of the form "I promise to do *A*" (the action *X*) in a certain context (the context *C*) counts as the undertaking of the obligation to do *A* (the institutional state *Y*). According to Searle, language is the most basic institution; it is, namely, a system of illocutionary constitutive rules that makes it possible to create other, more specific and extra-linguistic institutions.

The institutionalist account allows for the intuitions underlying the intentionalist approach, and avoids its weaknesses. First, viewed from the Serlean perspective, the Strawsonian distinction between the acts of the (c_1) type and the acts of the (c_2) type comes down to the distinction between the acts whose performance involves nothing but the linguistic constitutive rules and the acts whose performance requires the existence of some extralinguistic institutions. Second, like Bach and Harnish, Searle assumes that performing a successful illocution involves one's reflexively intending to produce the effect of the type (e_1) on the part of one's audience. Unlike Bach and Harnish, however, Searle claims that one can form such an intention only against the background of certain illocutionary rules that jointly define the institutional effect of one's act, i.e., define its effect of the (e_2) type: the intention of producing the hearer's uptake is equivalent with recognizing that the institutional states specified by the rules in question obtain (Searle 1969, 50). In other words, the proponents of the

institutionalist approach allow for the idea stating that illocutions are intentional actions and they justify the fact that the central function of illocutionary acts is generating normative states of affairs.

There are, however, at least two serious challenges to the institutionalist approach. First, as Harnish notices, commitments and entitlements are higher-level properties that can hardly be accommodated within the naturalistic picture of the world. In other words, the theory of institutional facts can hardly be regarded as an adequate basis for a naturalistic reduction of speech act theory (Harnish 2005, 23). Second, one can object that the theory of constitutive rules can be used to account for a narrow class of conventional illocutionary acts, i.e., those that form a part of conventionalized and ritualized practices. The problem is, one may add, that the most ordinary illocutionary acts are indirect and as such, it seems, they cannot be accounted in terms of the rules of the form "*X* counts as *Y* in context *C*." To meet the first challenge, Searle attempts to account for the ontology of institutional fact in terms of collective acceptance. He, namely, assumes that the rules of the form "*X* counts as *Y* in context *C*" exist in a given community if they are collectively accepted by its members. To meet the second challenge, in turn, one can refer to Marina Sbisà's distinction between two concepts of conventionality: means-conventionality and effect-conventionality. One can, namely, admit that few acts are conventional because of the conventionality of the means by which they are performed; but all illocutions are conventional because of the conventionality of their effect, i.e., because of the fact that their effects are institutional states that exist as they are collectively accepted by interacting agents.

2.3. The interactionalist approach

According to the interactionalist approach, performing a successful illocutionary act consists in uttering certain words in a certain context and in initiating, in uttering these words, the reproduction of a certain conventional pattern of verbal interaction. Normally, the pattern consists of two parts: the speaker's part and the hearer's part. Therefore the initiation of its reproduction consists in the production of the speaker's part and thereby in inviting the production of the complementary hearer's part. The main idea of the interactionalist approach is that illocutionary acts are typed by reference to their invited responses or cooperative outcomes.

The category of conventional patterns of interaction has been proposed by Ruth G. Millikan. In *Language Conventions Made Simple* she claims that natural conventions, in general, and language conventions, in particular, consist of reproduced patterns of activity whose forms are arbitrary relative to their functions (Millikan 1998). For example, using forks and using chopsticks are two equally effective strategies of placing food in one's mouth. In other words, the form of any of these two types of activity, i.e., using forks in Europe and using

chopsticks in Asia, is arbitrary relative to its function. For this reason we can call them conventional patterns of behaviour because, first, they proliferate by reproduction, and, second, they have been reproduced because of the weight of their cultural precedent.

Some conventional patterns are reproduced by counterpart-reproduction rather than by direct copying. Assume, following Millikan, that within every counterpart-reproduced pattern one can distinguish two aspects or parts whose joint reproduction is guided by the need to fit one another. According to Millikan, the function of a counterpart-reproduced pattern is to help to achieve coordination between interacting agents: the leader and the follower or, if the interaction involves the performance of speech acts, the speaker and the hearer. In *Proper Function and Convention in Speech Acts* Millikan claims:

> "In the case of conventional directive uses of language such as paradigm uses of the imperative mood, the pattern that is conventionally reproduced begins with an intention or desire of S's that H should act in a certain way. It is completed when H has acted that way as a result of guidance, in accord with conventional rules for guidance, from conventional signs made by S. That the pattern is not completed until H has acted as directed is clear, for new instances of the pattern would not be initiated by speakers were it not that hearers sometimes complete such patterns. The first part of the pattern is conventional, is reproduced, only because both parts are sometimes reproduced. […]
> Similarly, when S tells H that something is the case in a conventional way, it is conventional for H to believe it. That the pattern is not completed until H has been guided into belief in accordance with the conventional rules is clear because new instances of the pattern would not continue to be initiated by speakers were it not that hearers sometimes believe what they are told" (Millikan 2005, 152–153).

In short, performing an assertive illocutionary act consists in initiating the reproduction of a conventional pattern whose speaker part involves the uttering of an indicative sentence; the hearer's part of the pattern involves the hearer's cooperative response, i.e., his believing what the speaker asserts. To perform a directive act is to initiate the reproduction of a complex conventional pattern whose speaker part involves the uttering of an imperative sentence; for the hearer to complete the reproduction is to do dowhat he is told. Illocutionary acts, therefore, can be typed by reference to the responses they conventionally invite, i.e., by reference to what can be called their interactive effects (Witek 2010). Note that the invitation of the interactive effect of an act—that Millikan calls the acts conventional outcome—is the production of the effect of the (e_3) type.

Undoubtedly, the idea of interactive effects of illocutionary acts requires more detailed elaboration. Note, for example, that in many cases our interlocu-

tors respond to our assertive acts by correcting or challenging the propositions we express rather than by believing them. Nevertheless, their responses can still be regarded as cooperative and conventional in the light of certain patterns of interaction. By the same token, the hearer, who „who, instead of complying with what he is told, negotiates the conditions under which the speaker's request can be fulfilled" , can still be regarded as behaving cooperatively and conventionally. To allow for these forms of conventional cooperation, I propose to distinguish between the primary and secondary interactive effect of an illocutionary act and to stipulate that it is the former, not the latter, that determines the act's force and type-identity. I assume that the main function of illocutionary acts is the evoking of their primary effects in accordance with primary illocutionary conventional patterns (e.g., accepting information, carrying out a request, etc.) whereas the occurrence of their secondary effects (e.g., challenging what the speaker states, negotiating the carrying out of a request, etc.) results from reproducing secondary illocutionary conventional patterns and allows for the cooperation in order to proceed even if the hearer refuses or delays the production of the primary effect of the speaker's act.

The interactionalist approach offers an original account of what Austin calls the hearer's uptake. According to the standard reading—suggested by Austin and assumed by both the intentionalist approach and the institutionalist one—the securing of uptake consists in getting the hearer to understand the force and meaning of the speaker's act. Let us consider, however, what it is for the hearer to understand the speaker's act, i.e., what it is for him to respond to the act by producing the effect of the (e_1) type? According to one answer, this is the forming of a mental representation of the force and meaning of the speaker's utterance. It seems, however, that in at least some cases the hearer's uptake consists in the way he reacts to the speaker's act rather than in his having certain mental states. In some cases, for example, taking one's utterance to be a binding order consists in simply responding by complying with what one says, no matter whether the response is produced consciously or not. What matters here is that it is produced non-accidentally by completing the reproduction of the relevant pattern of social interaction.

The most serious challenge to the interactionalist approach is an explanation of the norm-generating function of an illocutionary act, i.e., the investigation of the relationship between the inviting of the act's interactive effects and the producing of its normative effects. In other words, the idea of illocutionary patterns of interaction should be used to account for the discursive mechanisms responsible for bringing about changes in the social domain of rights and commitments.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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THE WORD "WORD" AND THE CONCEPT "WORD"

Three Solutions to Grelling's Paradox

ABSTRACT

In this paper three different solutions to Grelling's paradox, also called the heterological paradox, are given. Firstly, after given the original formulation of the paradox by Grelling and Nelson in 1908, a solution to this paradox offered by Frank Plumpton Ramsey in 1925 is presented. His solution is based on the different meanings of the word "meaning." Secondly, Grelling himself advocated the solution proposed by Uuno Saarnio in 1937. Saarnio's solution is based on the exact definitions of the concept of word, and the concept of denoting. Thirdly, a solution to this paradox was proposed also by Georg Henrik von Wright in 1960, but his solution consists of saying that the word "heterological" does not name a *concept*—or it names a concept only up to a singular point.

Keywords: Grelling's paradox; word; concept; meaning; denotation.

INTRODUCTION

Grelling's paradox, also called the heterological paradox, was first published in a joint article written by Kurt Grelling (1886–1942) and Leonard Nelson (1882–1927) entitled "Bemerkungen zu den Paradoxien von Russell und Burali-Forti" (1908, 307, 308). In the original it runs as follows, (quoted in English from Pechaus 1995, 269):

> "Let f(M) be the word that denotes the concept defining M. This word is either an element of M or not. In the first case we call it 'autological,' in the second 'heterological.' Now the word 'heterological' is either autological or heterological. Suppose it to be autological, then it is an element of the set defined by the concept that is denoted by itself, hence it is heterological, contrary to the supposition. Suppose, however, that it is hererological, then it is

> not element of the set defined by the concept that it is denoted by itself, hence it is not heterological, again against the supposition."

A solution to this paradox was first offered by Frank Plumpton Ramsey (1903–1930) in his article *The Foundations of Mathematics* (1925). Ramsey's solution is based on the different meanings of the word "meaning." However, Grelling himself advocated the solution proposed by Uuno Saarnio (1896–1977) in his article *Zur heterologischen Paradoxie* (1937). Saarnio's solution is based on the exact definitions of the concept of word, and the concept of denoting. A solution to this paradox was proposed also by Georg Henrik von Wright (1916–2003) in *The Heterological Paradox* (1960). Von Wright's solution consists of saying that the word "heterological" does not name a *concept*—or it names a concept only up to a singular point. What follows, I shall give short explanations of the three above mentioned solutions to the paradox, which differs with each other.[1]

1. RAMSEY'S SOLUTION

In (1925, 183) Ramsey pointed out that the paradoxes were essentially two different kinds: Group A. Paradoxes which involve notions directly expressible within a formal language such as in *Principia Mathematica* or in the system of Zermelo-Fraenkel Set Theory, and which are called logical paradoxes. Group B. Paradoxes which involve notions such as "truth" or "definability," which are not directly expressible within a formal language usually sufficient for the expression of mathematical notions, and which are called semantic paradoxes.

As an example of semantic paradox Ramsey gives "Weyl's contradiction about 'heterologisch'" and made a footnote to Hermann Weyl's (1885–1955) *Das Kontinuum*, 1918, in which Weyl, in turn, referred to Bertrand Russell (1872–1970). After presenting the paradox Weyl added ironically (quoted in English from Weyl 1918 [1994, 6,7]):

> "Formalism regards this as an insoluble contradiction; but in reality this is a matter of scholasticism of the worst sort: for the slightest consideration shows that absolutely no sense can be attached to the question of whether the word 'heterological' is itself auto- or heterological."

The reason for Weyl to attribute this paradox to Russell was understandable, for Russell states a similar paradox in terms of "predicability" in *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903, 80, 97, 102). That is, a predicate "not-predicable of itself" is, and it is not, predicable of itself; which is self-contradictory.

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[1] In (Palomäki 2000, 98, 99), still another solution to the paradox is given, where the solution is based on Pavel Materna's (1930–) theory of concepts as presented, e.g., in his *Concepts and Objects* (1998).

Ramsey states Grelling's paradox as follows. Let a word *w* be the symbol for a predicative function *P*, and let *R* be the relation of meaning between *w* and *P*, then "*w* is heterological" is equivalent to "$(\exists P)$ $(wRP \wedge \sim P(w))$", where *P* range over predicative functions. Now $(\exists P)$ $(wRP \wedge \sim P(w))$ is itself a predicative function, which we will call *H*. So "*H*"*RH*, and then $(\exists P)$ ("*H*"*RP*), and therefore, *H*("*H*") $\equiv \sim H$("*H*"), which is a contradiction (cf. Ramsey 1925, 205).

As a solution Ramsey denied the premise "*H*"*RH*, when deducing $(\exists P)$ ("*H*"*RP*). For "*H*"*RH* is trying to say that "*H*" means *H*, but the sense of in which "*H*" means *H* is not the same as the sense of meaning occurring in the definition of heterological and denoted by *R*, i.e. there are different meanings of meaning. That is, where *w* means *P*, "*H*" means $(\exists P)$ $(wRP \wedge \sim P(w))$, so $\sim$ ("*H*"*RH*), which solves the contradiction, (ibid., 206–208).

Thus, according to Ramsey, the contradiction is due to an ambiguity in the word "meaning". Moreover, there is no all-inclusive relation of meaning for predicative functions, i.e. the meanings of meaning form an illegitimate totality, (ibid., 209).

2. SAARNIO'S SOLUTION

In (1937) Uuno Saarnio gives a solution, of which he had extensively corresponded with Kurt Grelling himself, and of which Grelling wrote in a letter to Saarnio (Dec. 8, 1936), that the basic idea of it seems to be "richtig und einleuchtend." Saarnio states the paradox by quoting the original text (see above), and his solution goes as follows.

Firstly, as a basic relation between word and its referent Saarnio takes the relation of denotation (*bezeichnen*), and denotes it by *S*. The relation *S* is an irreflexive, asymmetrical, intransitive, and many-one relation. By means the relative product of *S*, and the set theoretical membership relation $\in$, (and its converse $\in'$), Saarnio defines two other denotation relations as follows:

1. The relation of *supposition*, where a word denotes a particular object that belongs by the epsilon relation to the set of all those objects. For example, the word "book" denotes a particular book *Principia Mathematica*, which belongs to the set of all books, i.e. "book" *S Principia Mathematica* $\wedge$ *Principia Mathematica* $\in$ {book} $\rightarrow$ "book" $(S \mid \in)$ {Book}.

2. The relation of *copulation*, where a word denotes the set of objects, to which a particular object belongs. For example, the word "book" denotes the set of all books, to which a particular book *Principia Mathematica* belongs, i.e. "book" *S* {book} $\wedge$ {book} $\in'$ *Principia Mathematica* $\rightarrow$ "book" $(S \mid \in')$ *Principia Mathematica*.

Thus, the relation of supposition is a relative product $(S \mid \in)$, and the relation of copulation is a relative product $(S \mid \in')$. These relations have also the powers of their relative products. For example, if "foursyllable" *S* {foursyllable}, and

"foursyllable" $\in$ {foursyllable}, then by $(S \mid \in')$, we will get "foursyllable" $(S \mid \in')$ "foursyllable", that is the zeroth power of the relative product $(S \mid \in')$, and is denoted by $(S \mid \in')^0$. If "book" S {book}, *Principia Mathematica* $\in$ {book}, and "book" $\notin$ {book}, then "book" $(S \mid \in')$ *Principia Mathematica*; and the relative product $(S \mid \in')$ has its first power. If "substantive" S {substantive}, "book" $\in$ {substantive}, "book" S {book}, and *Principia Mathematica* $\in$ {book}, then "substantive" $(S \mid \in')^2$ *Principia Mathematica*; and the relative product $(S \mid \in')$ has its second power, etc.

Secondly, the concept of *word* is defined in a three different way:

1. A *word* is a series of letters or sounds, i.e. grapheme or phoneme.

2. A *word* is such a series of letters or sounds, which belongs to the domain of the logical sum of the following denotation relations:

$\mathrm{D}'S \cup \mathrm{D}'(S \mid \in')^0 \cup \mathrm{D}'(S \mid \in') \cup \mathrm{D}'(S \mid \in'^2) \cup \mathrm{D}'(S \mid \in'^3) \cup \ldots = \mathrm{D}'S_1$,

i.e. of which definitions contain only one *S*-relation.

3. A *word* is a system $\{\mathrm{D}'(\sim S), \mathrm{D}'S_1, \mathrm{D}'S_2, \mathrm{D}'S_3, \ldots\}$, where S_1 contains only one *S*-relation, S_2 contains two *S*-relations, S_3 contains three *S*-relations, etc.

If something is a word according to the definition 2., it is also a word according to the definition 1., but not *vice versa*. On the other hand, the definition 2. is included as such to the definition 3., being its second member. The first member of the definition 3., $\mathrm{D}'(\sim S)$, consists of those graphemes and phonemes, which do not denote anything. Now, this system of words is divisible into two disjoint subsystems, viz. autological and heterological system of words. All the elements of the first member are heterological words, for only the second member can have autological words as its elements, that is, when $S = \in$. The rest of the second member's elements, and all the other words, are heterological words.

To prove that graphemes "autological" and "heterological" do not belong to the second member of the word system, i.e. to the $\mathrm{D}'S_1$, the following definitions of autological and heterological words are given:

$$\textit{autological} =_{\mathrm{df}} \mathrm{D}'(S \cap \in) = \mathrm{D}'(S \mid \in')^0 ,$$

where the relation product $S \cap \in$ is not empty. Heterological words forms the complement set of the autological words, i.e.,

$$\textit{heterological} =_{\mathrm{df}} \mathrm{Word} \setminus \mathrm{D}'(S \mid \in')^0 = \mathrm{D}'(S \cap \sim\in).$$

Thus, by definition of autological, the grapheme "autological" S {autological}. For the set {autological} has a relation $\in' \mid (S \cap \in)$ to another set α, we will get "autological" $S \mid \in' \mid (S \cap \in)$ α, i.e. "autological" $S \mid \in' \mid (S \mid \in'')^0$ w, where α is a set, and $w \in \alpha$. However, the set α cannot be same as the set {autological}. That is, the first part of that relative product, $S \mid \in'$, cannot become its zeroth

power, for if the grapheme "autological" $\in$ {autological}, then the word ""autological"" would have two different meaning; by definition, ""autological"" $S\,|\,\in'$ "autological", and if "autological" $\in$ {autological}, then ""autological"" S {autological}, too. Accordingly, the grapheme "autological" belongs to the D'$(S\,|\,\in'\,|\,(S\,|\,\in')^0)$, whereas all autological words belong to the D'$(S\,|\,\in')^0$. These two sets are disjoint.

Similarly, the grapheme "heterological" is not a member of D'S_1. By definition, "heterological" S {heterological}, and {heterological} $\in'\,|\sim(S\,|\,\in')^0\,w$, i.e. "heterological" $S\,|\,\in'\,|\sim(S\,|\,\in'')^0\,w$, where w is a grapheme. The first part of this relative product, $S\,|\,\in'$, cannot become its zeroth power without the second parts becoming its zeroth power too, which is impossible. Accordingly, the grapheme "heterological" belongs to the D'$(S\,|\,\in'\,|\sim(S\,|\,\in')^0)$, whereas all heterological words belong to the D'$\sim(S\,|\,\in')^0$. These two sets are disjoint. So, the graphemes "autological", and "heterological" cannot be words according to the definition 2., i.e. they do not belong to the D'S_1. Instead, they belong to the D'S_2.

Finally, by using the definition 3., the heterological and autological words are defined as follows:

$$\textit{autological} =_{\text{df}} [\text{D}'(S\,|\,\in')^0],$$

where [ ] means the unit set, and

$$\textit{heterological} =_{\text{df}} \{\text{D}'(\sim S), \text{D}'S_1 \setminus \text{D}'(S\,|\,\in')^0, \text{D}'S_2, \text{D}'S_3, \ldots\}.$$

Thus, saying that a word w is heterological is to be based on the following implication:

$$(w \in^2 \text{heterological}) \rightarrow (w \sim(S \cap \in)\ \alpha), \text{ where } \alpha \text{ is a set of words.}$$

3. VON WRIGHT'S SOLUTION

In (1960) von Wright proposes a solution, where the word "heterological" does not name any concept at all, if we take the word-character of "heterological" for granted. So, unlike Saarnio, he regards the concept of word as being unproblematic (ibid., 4). Neither he believes the distinction between meaning and reference to be relevant in his discussion of the paradox (ibid., 3). Accordingly, he states the paradox as follows. (For he is using both the phrases "names a property" and "names a concept," I shall use the later phrase, and make the appropriate changes to the presentation as well.)

Def. 1. A word w is *autological iff* w falls under the concept, of which w is a name.

Def. 2. A word w is *heterological iff* it is not the case that w is autological.

Substituting for the definition Def. 2. the definition Def. 1., we get:

Stat. 3. A word *w* is heterological *iff* it is not the case that *w* falls under the concept, of which *w* is a name.

Substituting now in Stat. 3. for the variable "*w*" the word "heterological", we get:

Stat. 4. A word "heterological" is heterological *iff* it not the case that "heterological" falls under the concept, of which "heterological" is a name.

In the other words:

Stat. 4'. A word "heterological" is heterological *iff* it is not the case that "heterological" is heterological.

The truth-condition of this statement is a contradiction, i.e. Grelling's paradox.

Now, the argument ran as follows. ***If*** a word "heterological" names a concept, of which words fall under *iff* it is not autological**, *then*** "heterological" is heterological *iff* it is not the case that "heterological" is heterological; the consequent of which is a contradiction. Formally: $(p \rightarrow (q \equiv \sim q)$, where p = "A word 'heterological' names a concept, of which words fall under *iff* it is not autological", and q = "'Heterological' is heterological."

Since $(q \equiv \sim q)$ is false for any value of q, its negation, $\sim (q \equiv \sim q)$, in turn, will be true for any value of q. Hence, by *modus tollens* we will get the following proposition:

$$(p \rightarrow (q \equiv \sim q) \wedge \sim (q \equiv \sim q)) \rightarrow \sim p.$$

I.e., the word "heterological" doesn't name a concept—or at most only up to a singular point, that is, when the concept is applied to its own name (ibid., 23).

Solving the paradox in the above explained way von Wright takes it to be related to Wittgenstein's comments on the paradox in *Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik*, V-28, 1956, [1984, 395], (quoted in English from von Wright 1960, 25):

> "Why shouldn't it be said that such a contradiction as: 'heterological' $\in$ heterological $\equiv \sim$ ('heterological' $\in$ heterological), shews a logical property of the concept 'heterological'?"

CONCLUSION

Paradoxes have had a stimulating effect on the development of modern logic. The attempts of the logicians to propose so many different "solutions" to the same paradox shows only that there are different, but not necessarily mutually exclusive ways of treating a subject matter. For example, firstly, Ramsey's

solution is based on the different meanings of the word "meaning," whereas Saarnio's solution is based on the theory of words, where words form a hierarchical system of which autological words is a sub-system, all the other words being heterological. Secondly, Ramsey used the word "predicative propositional function," and Saarnio the word "word," when they stated the paradox, although Grelling and Nelson stated it by using the word "concept." Although von Wright used the word "concept" in his solution as well, but contrariwise with Ramsey and Saarnio, von Wright has not really "solved" the paradox. Instead, because of the impossible consequence, von Wright rejected the premises as an incorrect (cf. Enders 1975, 118).

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY AND SOME CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ON THE QUESTION ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

ABSTRACT

Natural language is one of the most enigmatic and sophisticated human capabilities with regard to both its evolutionary history and the level of complexity. The diversity of positions and debates on this subject clearly demonstrates that it is not yet a part of a science but rather an amalgam of different issues capable of being analyzed philosophically. The scarcity of evidence, restrictions of the comparative method and continuous discussions on the adaptive status of language are only a handful of current issues. The main aim of this paper is to provide a critical analysis of crucial current approaches to the problem of the reconstruction of language evolution and pinpoint the most important methodological and philosophical arguments in the discussion. The paper also supports the view that only the multi-level approach to the problem, which encompasses both the genetic and cladistic levels, can offer a satisfactory explanation.

Keywords: language evolution; comparative method; adaptationism; deep homology.

It is truly difficult to imagine a fiercer controversy in contemporary evolutionary biology than a dispute on the evolution of language and on methods which can be legitimately applied to its problematic type of scrutiny. The issue in question has even been declared as "the hardest problem in science" (Christiansen and Kirby 2003) by some researchers, certainly not with the intention to be interpreted literally, but in order to lay the emphasis on the sparseness of empirical evidence and manifold methodological restrictions imposed on this interdisciplinary problem.

TERMINOLOGICAL DEBATES

An absolute necessity to approach this matter from various scientific and philosophical perspectives has become a source of important debates concerning some crucial technical concepts. Evolutionary biology, cognitive psychology, linguistics, sociology and neurosciences, to name just a few involved disciplines, use the notion of language in a very specific local sense which, despite being easily applicable in their own field of research, is often too narrow or too vague in a broader interdisciplinary philosophy-laden debate. An easily overlookable distinction between I-language and E-language is a very illustrative example of this problem. Although being deeply rooted in Ferdinand de Saussure's l*angue/parole* distinction, which appeared in his *Course in General Linguistics*, it was not widely acclaimed until Noam Chomsky's influential work (Chomsky 1986). Chomsky argues that the biologically grounded theory of language should focus on certain neurocognitive aspects of an individual such as the mechanism of language acquisition and be labelled I-language, whereas language studied by historical linguists, called by him E-language, is quite a different issue constituting an aggregated epiphenomenon of the former one. The straightforward conclusion is that the meaning of the phrase "language evolution" strongly depends on this distinction and can mean a biological as well as social process, and in some rare cases even the combination of both.

Even in the very core of the evolutionary-developmental biology, there are certain notional pitfalls, e.g., the term "faculty of language," which without additional predicates are burdened with vagueness equal to that hovering over the notion of "language" itself. It was aptly demonstrated by some scholars (Fitch, Hauser and Chomsky 2005, 179–210) that the term in question needed an extensive clarification. Some general cognitive processes like short- and long-term memory, audition, vocal production, signal learning or even metacommunication (e.g. a dog wagging its tail to signal that its subsequent aggressive behaviour is an element of harmless play) are widely-spread among vertebrates and not uniquely among humans, therefore being only a preliminary for a satisfactory theory of language. This set of cognitive modules and processes involved in understanding and using language can be tentatively called the faculty of language in the broad sense or FLB. Similarly, the faculty of language in the narrow sense or FLN is a subset of FLB mechanisms which are both unique to humans and to language.

Lastly, it is crucial for a theory of language to separate "language" from "communication." Communication is an indisputably ubiquitous phenomenon in all five kingdoms of living organisms, which is why we are constantly astonished by the variety of adaptations allowing different organisms to make use of chemical, electrical, tactile, olfactory, auditory and visual signals. Whether it is a vervet monkey producing an alarm call or a cuttlefish changing its colour, the purpose of communication is to convey a message in order to scare off a preda-

tor, attract a potential mate or tighten up some social bonds. Human communication also includes a wide range of facial expressions, gestures or body poses which due to their constant meaning and specific purpose can be used to instantly express our intentions, moods and attitudes towards something or somebody. Despite being defined as body language expressions, they certainly lack some important features like an unlimited peculiarity of expression, flexibility of usage in novel circumstances or a possibility of expressing pure nonsense, which are considered the hallmark of language (Fitch 2010, 24–27). In the light of this distinction certain expressions like "the body language" or "the language of cats" should be considered oxymorons rather than legitimate scientific terms. However, it certainly does not imply that all or even some language subcomponents are uniquely human. It was accurately stated by Tecumseh W. Fitch that it can simply be a new arrangement of pre-existent components which made the appearance of language possible.

COMPARATIVE METHOD

A lack of an appropriate and interdisciplinary valid terminology is certainly not the only obstacle to formulate a satisfactory theory of language evolution. The second group of current debates about this problem is dominated by some methodological considerations concerning the use of the comparative approach, reconstructing evolutionary scenarios and the problem of deep homology between humans and other, not necessarily primate, species. The comparative method is undoubtedly one of the central pillars supporting the evolutionary approach to language. Despite being an inestimable information source in other areas of research, fossils cannot provide substantial clues about the communicative behaviour and the use of the proto-language. The anatomy of the hyoid bone and its relative position in the body, although important, settles only the question about the capability of voice production, which is purely potential until accompanied by some unnecessarily detectable neural changes. In spite of a recent discovery of new early hominid fossils in Chad (Brunet et al. 2005, 752–755), which hopefully can shed some light on the Last Common Ancestor or LCA of human and chimpanzee, researchers are severely restricted in their attempts to harness the comparative method to work. Establishing the research upon the ethology of modern *Pan troglodytes* (the "common" chimpanzee) and *Pan paniscus* (the bonobo or the "pygmy" chimpanzee) is burdened with another methodological obstacle, i.e. the reconstruction of the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness or EEA. Neither *Pan troglodytes*, which inhabits the equatorial region of Africa, nor *Pan paniscus*, which prefers the thick rainforest of central Africa, live in circumstances comparable to those affecting early hominids. Both major climate changes during the last 5–7 million years and scarceness of evidence, which can be used to pinpoint our latest common ancestor's location, constitute an important dilemma for scientists wishing to

extrapolate environmental pressure of early hominids from the habitats of modern chimpanzee species (Richardson 2007, 141–173). Richardson also remarks the obvious vicious circle in reasoning which can easily appear during such a type of reconstruction. Because of close interconnections between LCA and EEA hypotheses and their strongly speculative nature, it is extremely important to avoid founding the reconstruction process of one hypothesis upon another, which in many cases presents an important challenge.

DEEP HOMOLOGY

While **EEA** reconstruction puts emphasis on correlations between an environment and adaptive traits, another complementary approach focuses on similar sets of genes which are present in cladistically distant organisms. This type of correlation is called a deep homology.

The basis of this reasoning lays on the hypothesis that the human possesses some regulatory genes which despite having a long evolutionary history are absent in other primates. The vivid examples are Hox genes which are responsible for the proper development of body parts in the correct order. *Drosophila melanogaster* (the fruit fly) with some Hox genes mutations develops an additional pair of legs instead of an antenna or another pair of wings on the thorax, which explains why regulatory genes tend to be very invariable since even minor mutation can lead to a drastic reduction in survival rate. It was, indeed, the duplication of Hox genes which allowed vertebrates to overcome some of the restrictions imposed on regulatory genes and go one step further on the road to complexity. The role of regulatory genes is so universal that they often underlie convergent evolution and can have a similar function in rather unrelated organisms, like Pax-6 involved in development of camera-eyes of both vertebrates and octopuses (Tyack and Miller 2002, 142–184). This phenomenon is called deep homology. There is some evidence suggesting that deep homology plays a crucial role in the development of human language abilities. One of the Fox genes, namely FOXP2, has been demonstrated to contribute to human speech production by controlling motility of the tongue and the lips. A lack of this particular gene causes severe oro-motor dyspraxia and difficulty in acquiring speech. Surprisingly, this gene is absent in other primates and, thus, being the only currently known gene both unique to humans and involved in speech production. Almost unbelievably, the same gene is not only present in birds but also plays an important role in vocal learning and has an impact on similar brain regions (Fitch 2010, 55–57). Language need not to be a completely novel phenomenon in terms of regulatory genes underlying it but certainly can be a new combination of some previously existing elements. Some of these elements are very primitive (e.g. pons which is present even in lampreys), while other are relatively novel (e.g. neocortex), but all of them are determined by each other's history. Evolutionary history of the structure consti-

tutes the set of anatomical and physiological constraints which have a profound influence on a process of adaptation. This is why some researchers (Jacob 1977, 1161–1166) use the metaphor of tinkering which clearly illustrates how every evolutionary novelty is interwoven with older structures. Tinkering is an accurate word because it points out both the lack of a pre-existent project and a high risk of developing possible "flaws" in the structure—"flaws" which are unavoidable because of existing constraints. A scotoma or a blind spot is a classic example. In vertebrates it was formed as a direct result of the optic nerve piercing the retina, but it is non-existent in cephalopods, which developed camera-eyes independently on the basis of a different body plan where the optic nerve is completely hidden behind the retina.

The deep homology phenomenon also reformulates some basic assumptions of the comparative method, which not only can now be applied to anatomical changes of phenotypes in closely related species but also gives clues about some genetic components regulating homological features in different clades.

EPIGENESIS AND PHENOTYPIC PLASTICITY

Positions in the debate about the language evolution are frequently dichotomously classified as either "nativism" or "empiricism" without giving a proper consideration to the variety of factors involved in this process. The adequately stated questions should read as follows: "to what extent is language innate?" or "what kinds of external stimuli are necessary to trigger our instinct to learn language?". It is nearly a universal rule that most aspects of complex behaviour, especially in vertebrates, have both environmental and genetic components (Marler 1991, 37–66). The former, composed of the sensory input and the channelling process, is crucial for activation and proper timing and can substantially alter survival chances of an organism. The later constitutes necessary constraints which frame the overall result of exposition to a stimulus. For instance, the length of the critical period for language acquisition is severely constrained by the process of myelination, which is crucial for brain maturation and in the long run affects survival. However, the complete absence of vocal stimuli during that period squanders the only possible opportunity to acquire language. The same is true for certain species of birds which, despite being wired for sound emission, must be allowed to listen to their parents' calls at least once. These are clear examples of the process of epigenesis which can easily supersede some nature/nurture artificial distinctions (Ridley 2003). The study of epigenesis encompasses heritable changes in gene expression caused by factors other than DNA sequence. Epigenesis is a truly ubiquitous phenomenon and plays an important role on every level of organisation starting from cellular processes. Cell differentiation is, as well as language learning, regulated by both genes and environmental input. Substances excreted by cells constitute a kind of input which instructs neighbouring cells to go a certain pathway and transform into,

e.g., epithelial or adipose tissue. Ridley clearly points out that genes do not provide an unalterable blueprint for an organism or an organ. It is a product of the gene-expression which regulates the expression of other genes and their products in a complex cascade of mutual interactions which are often influenced by manifold environmental inputs. The epigenetic perspective on the language evolution tries to mediate between strong oppositions and to avoid any one-sided and depauperate views by paying equal attention to both genetic and environmental factors affecting developmental aspects of language and the process of language acquisition. Epigenesis underlies the so-called phenotypic plasticity which is the ability of an organism to alter its phenotype in response to some environmental stimuli. The set of possible phenotypic changes encompasses not only anatomical and physiological alternations but also modifications of behaviour.

A very instructive example is a rising incidence of coronary heart diseases which is caused by a mismatch between a metabolic phenotype determined by poor feeding during early childhood and subsequent adult nutritional environment rich in saturated fats and processed fibre-depleted food (Hales 2001, 5–20).

IS LANGUAGE AN ADAPTATION OR A BY-PRODUCT?

The third important group of debates on the evolution of language raises the problem of the major evolutionary force which affected vocal tracts and neural connections of the early hominids. The "selectionist" position states that it is the natural selection which shaped the whole process, which is a reason why language should be considered as an adaptation to EEA. There are several difficulties of this position. First of all, the process of inferring adaptive advantages of a certain trait is often founded upon methods of reverse engineering, which purpose is to establish links between anatomical structures and their possible adaptive importance, and forward engineering, which is concerned with modelling possible adaptations on the basis of the environment. Despite being a highly sophisticated method of inquiry, reverse engineering is not universal and can give false results if applied to traits which are not an outcome of adaptation (Sterelny and Griffiths 1999, 215–253). If a trait is a result of constraints rather than an adaptation it is still conceivable to formulate a credible explanation for its existence. The more complex the trait is the more convoluted the reasoning may be, and therefore the language evolution serves as a model example. It is the case not only because of its intricacies but also because of a high number of possible scenarios for its reconstruction. The ideal situation would be the utilization of a meta-criterion capable of assessing the plausibility of the evolutionary scenarios, but clearly such a criterion exists currently only in the sphere of wishful thinking.

Defending the position of sexual selection as a major factor in the language evolution is even more difficult. A peacock tail is a very straightforward result of sexual selection because it clearly hinders survival by its sheer weight and high nutritional costs. Nevertheless, it is also a good criterion of the owner's general health status and access to food sources, both of which are extremely important for potential mates and consequently affect a probability of genetic material expression. One variation of this reasoning, namely Red Queen Hypothesis , which was created by Leigh Van Valen (Van Valen 1973, 1–30) and recently popularised by Matt Ridley (Ridley 1995), states that this colourful tail is simply a result of arms race between parasites and their hosts, and signals a potential mate that the peacock immune system is capable of exterminating harmful foreign organisms. An effective immune system is usually an objective measure of the overall health and, thus, a good reason for mating. However, the action of sexual selection usually leads to some type of sexual dimorphism; as mentioned in the case of peacock (hens are mostly grey and lack a beautiful tail) or bighorn sheep (ewes have significantly smaller and less twisted horns). Apparently, sexual dimorphism in humans does not include the use of language, which is equally mastered by both sexes.

Unfortunately, assuming that language is a by-product of certain constraints does not provide any firmer ground. In fact, the adaptation/constraint dichotomy is slightly superficial and prone to abuse, and therefore the problem needs some clarification (Endler 1986, 224–243). Natural selection acts exclusively on present phenotypes, and is completely powerless to select anything beyond them. The fact that red fur is an optimal adaptation for certain environment is completely meaningless if the gene pool contains only genes coding a white and black fur variant. Selection must patiently "wait" for the appearance of a red-fur mutant. Still some mutations are simply impossible because of physicochemical ramifications. These are the reasons why constraints cannot be perceived as an independent evolutionary force but rather as a simple consequence of following certain evolutionary pathways. For instance, an insect body plan is both a successful adaptation and an important constraint preventing them from reaching a large size. Explaining language as a result of certain constraints is also founded upon a proper understanding of adaptations which produced these constraints.

Some researchers (Lewontin 1998, 107–131) consider these difficulties serious enough to adopt methodological scepticism and claim that a certain question like that concerning the evolution of language must remain unanswered. Lewontin denies neither the importance of adaptations in biological explanations nor the possibility of language being indeed an adaptation, but rejects adaptationism as a justifiable methodological position.

CONCLUSION

This analysis of crucial debates on the evolution of language clearly demonstrates that this problem is not fully regarded by researchers as a part of a science. Philosophical debates over the nature of language and methodological limits of the evolutionary process reconstruction constitute a crucial field of research. In my opinion, it is also an illustrative example of the methodological approach of evolutionary biology which is radically different from that used in physical sciences. It is, in fact, the comparative method, which is a foundation of the evolutionary way of thinking, allows biologists to organise the historically variable results of natural selection. Examples and arguments cited in the paper demonstrate that the evolution of language, like a multitude of other evolutionary processes, should be analysed on different levels of complexity. The Author's position is that both the evolutionary biology (LCA and EEA hypotheses) and genetics (the deep homology phenomenon) offer an important insight into the problem. A rapidly developing field of epigenetics also provides some important clues in the debate. The complementarity of these approaches clearly demonstrates that, like in the case of every historical phenomenon, the reconstruction of the language evolution cannot blindly follow the ethos of physical science. It is the comparative method which can encompass the diversity of phenomena connected with the evolution of language and offer a satisfactory synthesis.

Contrary to some common beliefs, the evolutionary view of language is definitely not thoroughly reductive. The phenomenon of epigenesis with regard to language undoubtedly shows that it is the complicated cascade of both genetic and environmental factors (like cultural learning) which initiates the process of acquiring language consequently, and at the same time evokes the traditional philosophical question about the emergent properties. The problem of deep homology is also of high philosophical importance because of its close connections with the debate on the genetic versus organismal approach to natural selection.

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DIALOGUE AND UNIVERSALISM
No. 1/2013

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THE POTENTIAL RELEVANCE OF *THE TEST OF THE NEWS* BY LIPPMANN AND MERZ FOR CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to signal the potential relevance of *A Test of the News*, written by Lippmann and Merz, for Critical Discourse Analysis. It seems that the study is overlooked by CDA's experts as a pioneering work in press analysis. In order to demonstrate links between CDA and the research, in the first part, the work of Lippmann and Merz is situated within a wider picture of the theoretical and historical background as well as common views on politics and the role of the press. Then, the reasons for the choice of the Times as a medium of research and the Russian Revolution as a topic are stated. The authors' methodological assumptions are discussed in brief. The second part begins with an attempt to define the concept of CDA. The next section presents a theoretical framework of CDA in order to indicate that Lippmann's and Merz's analysis demonstrates a similar theoretical approach. Additionally, the tools used by authors are compared with those used in CDA. The parallel between the central role of the media discourse in CDA and the concern of the authors of the role of the press is also discussed. Since the active role of the reader and the hearer in constructing the meaning of the text corresponds with the views of the authors on the discrepancy between the real world and its representation, the next section is devoted to this issue. Finally, readers' abilities, discussed by Lippmann and Merz, are viewed in relation to the significance of reader's experiences in constructing the meaning of a text.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Lippmann; news analysis; public opinion; media discourse.

1. INTRODUCTION

A Test of the News, written by Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz (1920) in 1920, may be considered as an early example of an evaluative press analysis which is nowadays conducted under the label of Critical Discourse Analysis

(CDA). Various moments are suggested as the beginning of this discipline. Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000, 454) indicate Fairclough's *Language of Power* as the fist work on CDA, whereas van Dijk (2002, 352) and some other scholars (Wodak 2010, Kress 1990) claim that it began in the late seventies by the publication of Fowler's (2003) book. The publication of Lippmann and Merz tends to be overlooked in this respect and apparently, is not taken into account as a possible groundwork for primary tenets of CDA. This may be due to the fact that the sources invoked to underpin CDA are selective and hardly ever refer to American linguistics and the pioneering work of researchers who had a significant impact on critical approaches to language, such as Louis-Jean Cavet (Blommaert and Blucaen 2000, 454). This article is an attempt to evaluate critically the potential relevance of Lippmann and Merz's analysis to some fundamental aspects of CDA. Although an article has been recently published where *A Test of the News* is recognized as a precursory example of research on international communication and it is described as "one of the earliest and most comprehensive studies of foreign news" (Hardt 2002, 25), there is a tendency to overlook this early critical survey that sheds some light onto the relationship between discourse and power in the press.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE TEST OF THE NEWS

2.1 Views on the role of the press

It is of vital importance to situate Lipmman's and Merz's debate on the press in a wider panorama of a theoretical and historical context. The research was conducted in the years 1917–1920, just after the First World War. Lippmann's engagement in propaganda work during the war made him more critical about the traditional political science that ascribed importance and supremacy to institutions rather than to people in the politics (Steel 1980, 172). It was then believed that an average man was able to make important decisions when provided with crucial facts. A positive view of human nature was predominant. With regard to politics, Lippmann inferred that "decisions in a modern state tend to be made by the interaction, not of Congress and the executive, but of public opinion and the executive."(172). Hence, the central role of the press began to be taken for granted. Newspapers were perceived to be the "bible of democracy, the book out of which a people determines its conduct" (Lippmann 1920). Congruently, the war propaganda made it more evident that public opinion could be easily molded. Why was it so?

Lippmann attempted to address this issue by making an assumption that "incompetence and aimlessness, corruption and disloyalty, panic and ultimate disaster, must come to any people which is denied an assured access to the facts" (Lippmann 1920, 11). Lippmann makes it clear that the main problem with public opinion is that it can be easily manipulated by the press. It happens especially when newspapers reports are unreliable. The author seemed to believe

that this problem stemmed only from the poor quality of news reporting. He advocates that "a sound public opinion cannot exist without the access to the news" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 1). It is so because without news public opinion cannot form its views on current events and consequently it cannot make decisions. Furthermore, according to Lippmann the press should provide unbiased information on which public opinion is formed. It is seen as newspapers' primary duty in democracy.

In his later work, *Liberty and the News*, Lippmann redefines the concept of press liberty. According to him, the problem that "the liberty depended on a press free from censorship and intimidation" (Steel 1980, 172) disappeared. The press was "free" in that sense but it still failed to fulfill its role (172). Why was it so? Lippmann and Merz strongly believed that the main responsibility for this failure could be ascribed to journalists and the quality of their professional work. Therefore, the credibility, accuracy and reliability of news reports became their main area of research. They decided to conduct a test of news and verify whether the "supreme duty in a democracy of supplying the information on which public opinion feeds" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 2) was fulfilled by correspondents. The fact that the authors examined over one thousand issues of a daily press reports for thirty-six months can be perceived as a proof of their diligence and conscientiousness.

2.2 Controversial reports from Russia

The research of Lippmann and Merz might be presumed as a direct reaction to controversial reports from Russia by Walter Duranty (Hardt 2002, 26). They were in contrast with other reports and thus might have been perceived as an example of propaganda (Harrision 1980). Since a mounting public demand for accurate and credible information provided by press correspondents occurred and the authors seemed to share this view, the reports must have been especially striking for them. The demand was created mainly because the United States were becoming increasingly engaged in foreign affairs (Hardt 2002, 26) and, consequently, the news coverage gained gradually more attention. By calling the press the bible of democracy, which tells people what to do, Lippmann represents commonly accepted beliefs and expectations about high standards of news reports.

2.3 The Times

As far as the choice of the newspaper is concerned, Lippmann and Merz selected *The Times* as the medium of their research because they considered it as one of the best newspapers in the world in terms of the quality of presented information. They chose it since it was "technically admirable" and "easily accessible." In the study, the authors focused on the credibility of sources on

which reports were based. They enlisted names of correspondents that were unreliable in their opinion**.** They demonstrated frequent instances of the lack of informants' names in newspapers quotations. It is worth noting that the duty of checking sources' reliability was attributed to journalists. The authors presented the view that "it seems to us, the correspondent and his employer owe a responsibility to the public for an examination into the sincerity of programs which one of them offers as evidence"(Lippmann and Merz 1920, 26). According to them, the test of the Times' credibility was failed because professionals relied on untrustworthy sources, which frequently supplied contradictory "facts." Journalists did not bother to make sure that what they received and passed over came from truthful informants. The Times' "reputation for accurate reporting" (Steel 1980, 172) was questioned not only because the journalists failed, but also because the paper failed to fulfill its democratic duty to provide the public with reliable news. As a conclusion, the authors suggested that "it is time to demand that the correspondent take the trouble to identify his informants sufficiently to supply the reader with some means of estimating the character of the report" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 41).

2.4 Importance of Russian Revolution

The selection of the 1917–1920 Russian Revolution as the subject of news reports is also remarkable. The authors recognized this historical event as the most critical in their recent history. They argued that "the Russian Revolution was selected as the topic, because of its intrinsic importance, and because it has aroused the kind of passion which tests most seriously the objectivity of reporting" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 1). In view of the Red Scare and later events in the United States during the Cold War, their prophetic comment on arousing-passion is particularly striking. The results of their research were appalling not only due to the fact that correspondents failed to do their job accurately, but also because of a political bias they uncovered. It emerged that there existed a significant proximity of press and propaganda. The Times gave precedence to events of little significance and reported others that did not take place. Lippmann and Merz discovered that propaganda effects were achieved by appropriate linguistic tools. Although linguistics was not the authors' main concern, some vital aspects of news language were demonstrated in *A Test of the News*. Additionally, the analysis revealed a link between newspapers' discourse and power.

2.5 Methodological assumptions

To relate the research to CDA, it is of vital importance to look at methodological assumptions made by the authors. As indicated before, their main purpose was to conduct a test of news' accuracy. The method they had chosen is

noteworthy. They were fully aware that using a concept of truth for measurement was precarious. They stressed that "the 'whole truth' about Russia is not to be had" since "able and disinterested observers furnish contradictory evidence out of which no objective criteria emerge" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 2). For these reasons, they abandoned the quest for "real" and "true truth." As they declared in the introduction, they used a completely different method. At the beginning, they decided to test the reliability of news' reports. It means that they wanted to check whether a reader "was misled into believing that the outcome of events would be radically different from the actual outcome" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 2). As a result of these assumptions and the authors' pursuit of a better way to test the news, a new method emerged. Weingast makes an assertion that the authors "did a pioneer job" since "though they did their research before the days of the 'content category,' their labors were distinguished by a unique objectivity" (Weingast 1950, 298). They tested the reports against points of reference, which now would be defined as "content categories." In the words of Lippmann and Merz "the reliability of the news is tested in this study by a few definite and decisive happenings about which there is no dispute" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 2). Gradually, by the use of this method they revealed that the paper had mentioned fictitious events, that some facts were concealed and uncritically passed over. Gathered data were classified according to categories of optimistic, pessimistic and neutral information. They discovered that optimistic reports far outnumbered pessimistic ones although the situation was not good. They counted that it was "reported no fewer than ninety-one times that the Bolshevik regime was on the verge of collapse" (Steel 1980, 172). An enduring misleading optimistic bias was spotted. The authors describe it as follows: "The very fact that it was necessary to proclaim the solidarity and strength of Russia was a suspicious fact" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 6). Taking into consideration these findings, the study finishes with bitter conclusions on the reliability and credibility of the news. The authors summed up the research by saying simply that the reports failed the test of news reliability as "improperly trained men have seriously misled a whole nation" (42).

3. CDA, ITS MAIN TENANTS AND *THE TEST OF THE NEWS*

3.1 Fuzziness of CDA concept

In order to related *A Test* to the main tenants of CDA, it is crucial to describe this discipline in brief. There is a considerable number of articles and books that attempt to enlist and elucidate the main principles of CDA as it is indicated in a conference presentation by Wodak (2010). It is certainly not easy to specify this discipline precisely, which fact is clearly conceded by Gunther Kress in his article entitled *Critical Discourse Analysis* (1990): "The label of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used by a significant number of scholars with a diverse set of concerns"(84). He also makes references to an editorial statement of

an academic journal *Discourse and Society*, which determines its enquiry domain by referring to scientific correlations between such concepts as power legitimization, dominance, racism, sexism, imbalances in international communication and their reproduction and reinforcement in different types of discourses including media discourse. Due to the fact that CDA is highly indefinable and it seems to cover many areas of scientific research, this article is not an attempt to add to the debate but it aims rather at indicating that *A Test of the News* was ahead of its times and demonstrated some characteristics that can now be found in chosen aspects of CDA.

3.2 CDA Theoretical Framework and Linguistic Tools

The relevance of *A Test* for CDA can be also indicated from the linguistic perspective. In CDA connections and mutual dependences between discourse and all sorts of power are examined by the use of texts' linguistic analysis. However, CDA focuses on "naturally occurring" language rather than abstract language systems and is more interested in larger units than isolated words and sentences (Wodak 2010). In that sense it seems that the work of Lippamann and Merz can be qualified as an early example of CDA. The authors depicted various techniques of representation used to reinforce the domination and political power. It is noteworthy that various specialists (for example Fiske and van Dijk) postulate a diversity of tools that can be used in CDA, especially in analysing the language of newspapers (Fowler 2003).

The techniques used by Lippmann and Merz may be identified within the theoretical framework of CDA. For instance, they marked that "emphasis is an important factor in journalism. It is sometimes achieved simply by silence" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 21) which is analogous with a CDA's tool called omission. They observed such methods as metonymy when exposing the fact that "heavy losses" meant few causalities. The already mentioned category of bias present in *The Test* is central in CDA newspapers' analysis. The authors pinpointed also the need for attribution, reiteration and selection of facts (Hardt 2002,29). For example, they took news from a single month (January 1920) and cited fragments that were supposed to suggest the Soviets' possible invasion in Europe. They listed 13 press clippings in which various synonyms of attack were employed.

The authors further mentioned the use of frequent references to authorities and a focus on leaders. This can be perceived as an example of the relationship between discourse and power, which is one of the main features of CDA. In the Times authorities were mentioned to make the news more credible. However, as previously indicated, Lippamnn and Merz insisted that it was done in an untrustworthy way. They gave the following example. The Russian Minister said that the army of Russia was never stronger. On the basis of this statement a reporter inferred in an article that the army was indeed strong. As the authors

put it, the only rightful conclusion was that the Minister said that they had been stronger and not that it was so indeed. This is only one example of numerous observations made in this area in *A Test*.

They also pointed out that the focus on leaders, for instance on Kolchak, was one of the techniques to reproduce the dominant bias. This procedure of leaders' exposure can be perceived as another example of the relationship between power and discourse. In the Times Kolchak was made a main figure and was presented as a potential savior for some time. In the articles that intended to recognize him as a potential leader and a person that might take over the power in Russia, the type of verbs that are used is remarkable. Only assertive "will" was employed whereas "might" and "should" were hardly employed. Furthermore, even though it was becoming evident that his offensive was coming to an end, it was still paradoxically reported with "a note of cheer" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 26). In general, references to leaders were perceived as a way to reinforce the dominant power of Soviet Russia and to discredit it. Moreover, they emphasized the relationship between discourse and power. In brief, although language examination and linguistic terms were not the main concern of the authors, it seems that on the basis of the above examples their work might be considered as a pioneering work in text analysis that is now conducted by CDA researchers.

3.3 Centrality of Media Discourse

Another reason that allows to claim the relevance of *A Test* for CDA is the fact that an emphasis is put on media in this discipline and newspapers were the authors' main concern. The role of press was considered by Lippamnn and Merz as a fundamental problem. Congruently, media discourse is frequently referred to as one of the major domains of CDA. Among numerous authors who give pride of press to analysis in CDA the following names might be mentioned. For instance, Kress states that the mass-media language is within the CDA's research field (Kress 1990, 92). Next, Fowler in his book*, Language in the News* (2003): *Discourse and Ideology in the British Press*, published as early as in 1979, focuses entirely on media discourse and demonstrates how linguistic tools may be used in practice to analyse press language. Blommaert and Bulcean list media language among CDA's preferred topics and van Dijk "applies a theory of news discourse in critical studies of international news" (Van Dijk 2002, 356). The fact that Lippmann and Merz focused their attention on the discourse of foreign news reports adds supportive arguments to claim that *A Test* might be seen as an early example of CDA.

3.4 Facts versus pictures in our heads

Another vital similarity between CDA and *A Test* can be noticed. It is related to the reader's role in constructing the text. CDA's experts underline the active part of the listener and reader in this process. When defining the concept of communication Fiske underlines reader's active participation in constructing the text "reading is the process of discovering meanings that occur when the reader interacts and negotiates with the text" (Fiske 1990, 3). In *The Test* some interesting comments are also made about the role of the reader in constructing the meaning of the text. It is indicated by an observation that an existence of a considerable discrepancy between the real world and the way how readers perceive it exists. It is claimed that there is a significant difference between the facts, how they are presented in the press and the meaning of the text that readers construct on the basis of newspapers reports. Initially, Lippmann and Merz observe that this divergence depends highly on the nature of news reports. To quote Hardt: "Their discussion contains an implicit acknowledgment of the difficulty to believe in the ability (or willingness) of the press to reproduce reality or universal truth despite the commonsense belief that the press is a mirror of society and reflects- or ought to reflect- the way things are"(2002,30).

However, the mentioned discrepancy depends on the reader too. Everyone adds to the news his or her hopes and fears, own prior knowledge and attitude, what can been seen as a way of negotiating and interacting with the text. Lippmann developed the concept of the active role of readers into a theory in his later book *Public Opinion* (2007), in which he revealed more about the ways in which "pictures in their heads" are formed. In *The Test* Lippmann had initiated his crusade to question the common belief and trust in human ability to make decisions when provided with facts and to reveal public opinion mechanisms. He examined in details the assumption that people construct a preferred meaning from a given text. As a result he created a new model of communication in which the active role of the reader and a hearer is perceived as central.

3.5 Readers' abilities

Fiske observes that the construction of the meaning depends also on the reader in a different way. Previous experiences, the social position and the culture where he or she comes from influence the reading significantly. To quote Fiske (1990): "readers with different social experience or from different cultures may find different meaning in the same text"(3). Although from a slightly different standpoint but Lippmann and Merz also underline the significance of divergence between readers' input in the text. The authors "raised (unanswered) questions about communicative competence and the ability of readers to participate in the interpretation of news" (Hardt 2002, 32). In general, they distinguished between two types of readers. Those who are more experienced and can

evaluate the news critically and less able "casual readers." In the words of Lippmann and Merz: "trained readers were enabled to reach conclusions quite opposite from those insisted upon in the general intent of the news" (1920, 6). Casual readers were more at risk to trust the reports. They will probably "accept news from correspondents whose usefulness is about that of an astrologer or an alchemist" (42). However, in the concluding paragraphs an optimistic suggestion is made that "a powerful engine of criticism is appearing in the community which will no longer naively accept the current news on contentious events" (42).

On the other hand, as it was discussed earlier Lippmann and Merz attribute almost entirely the whole responsibility to the quality of correspondents' work. They perceive reasons of the test failure in the violation of basic journalistic standards such as accepting untrustworthy sources of information. Although they undercover and admit explicitly the influence of the dominant power on the news' choice and the way of presenting facts, they seem to underrate the role of such "lobbying". Somehow, they conceal institutional impact. In the words of Hardt their work "fails to address the more complicated relationship between professional conduct and institutional interests; that is, compliance with specific commercial or political goals at the expense of professional freedom" (Hardt 2002, 36).

4. CONCLUSIONS AND CRITICAL RECEPTION

Although Lippmann and Merz put a lot of effort to ensure the highest standards of their work and they criticized the paper's bias, it seems that they themselves did not avoid partiality. On the one hand, they keep saying that the misleading results of the news were caused by the "hopes and fears" of journalists and editors and that "their motives might have been excellent" (Lippmann and Merz 1920, 3). According to their assumptions, journalists were themselves misled by their excitement about the contemporary events and this made them less alert to unreliability of the sources they used. On the other hand, the authors reiterate that "from the point of view of professional journalism the reporting of the Russian Revolution is nothing short of disaster" (3). In the introduction they explain why they conducted this study. As the main reason they mention growing public distrust in the news. They suggest that doubts range from accusations of unconscious bias to the belief that news are colored (1). Similarly, their own believes keep changing in the same way throughout the whole text. They project their own believes about the poor quality of news on the research. They seem to be prejudiced against the quality of journalists work. They assume from the very beginning that they failed the test. Nevertheless, their significant contribution to the tradition of critical press analysis is undeniable. They made pioneering work that will hopefully be recognized by CDA's experts in the future. Certainly, their research require more attention from scholars.

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