



## Communication: term, notion, or concept

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### ABSTRACT

*The study is a meta-analysis that circumscribes Fundamental Communication Science and deals with clarifying the ontological status of "communication". It seems that three contradictory and inflexible positions have appeared: communication as a term, communication as a notion and communication as a concept. It is generally accepted the use of communication as a "term" in unscientific rhetoric. Then it can be noted that communication-notion may accede in non-specialized contexts. It shows that there is a naïve representation and a specialized representation of communication. Finally, it is shown that in the scientific domain there is the need to use communication-concept configuration: scientific knowledge requires concepts.*

**KEYWORDS:** communication ontology, General Communication Science, Fundamental Communication Science

### 1. Naïve representation of communication

In everyday life, as in scientific work or other special types of activities every common man communicates, voluntarily or involuntarily, transmits significances, senses, meanings. We receive, collect, process, extract, take, detect, produce or consume communication when talking to someone, when contemplating an art object, when listening to music or when reading, when listening to a verbal communication or when simply looking at something, when discussing or writing, when considering whether to sit closer or further someone or to touch something or someone, etc.

Anyone knows what communication is. But even if what someone really thinks communication would be, it does not fall in what General Communication Science considers to be communication, it does not mean that that someone is not communicating. It just means that their conceptual apparatus is deficient. Moreover, in terms of communication, practice exceeds theory almost unnoticeably (Craig, 1989; Craig, 1999; Fârte, 2004; Craig, 2008). As we can see, everyday communicative activity can take place beyond any epistemological device and theoretical engagement.

Naïve communication can live without the concept of communication, but scientific communication cannot. Every man is a "poet" in communication. He produces and especially consumes it often without realizing it, without being aware of it. Communication helps us and encourages us even when we do not know. Involuntary fact or intentional act, communicative event in a word, communication is one of the few scientific and essential practices that do not necessarily need a theoretical investment of effort (Craig, 1996; Craig, 2006). But the true "poetry" of communication, science, philosophy, hermeneutics and its pleasure, all these do not exist, no matter how good, yet, was the first impression, and cannot exist without a conceptual basis. Specialized communicative activity cannot be deprived of a communication science (Berger & Chafee, 1987; Berger, Roloff & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2010).

Communication, like mother language, is theoretically learned after we know it already. In order to acquire the grammar of the mother language, nobody can disapprove of it, means that we already possess the "grammatical" language: we speak that language already (Ghicov, 2008). Thus grammar appears as a theorization of speech. And all these are available for communication, as well as for any other activities.

In fact, ontologically, what is "communication"? They argued that it would be a term, a notion, or a concept. According to Umberto Eco "communication" would be a "term" with at least two senses (Eco, 1982, p. 57).

Considering "communication" a notion makes of it a logical and fundamental form that reflects the necessary and general characteristics of a class of objects, which it is not. The notion has a content and a sphere - which does not fit any communication. If notions are essential, they then are concepts. Seeing communication, on the other hand, a simple term, as a primary element for the construction of a structure, is improper again. Communication, as we shall see, is a building itself. "Con-

cept" comes from the Latin "conceptum" meaning "thought", "thoughtful", "designed". By "communication" we reflect on reality, conceive a thing, we think about it. In our opinion, "communication" is not simply a "term", not a some "notion", but a concept whose complex content, like a short definition, remains to be outlined.

### 2. Scientific representation of communication

First, as in all areas of life, there is a social naïve representation of communication articulated within the limits of "common sense" as Hegel says (1965, p 46). This means that in their own way, everyone, regardless of the training they have, has a vision of communication which by balance, moderation and normality is circumscribed to common sense area and is part of the horizon of a social representation, widely shared. Common sense, a real psycho-sociological lubricant, is the first level of gnoseologic argumentation for any of us. For some, however, it remains the only one. On the other hand, there is a "science" on communication, some knowledge, a basic kind of intellectual ritual of greeting factual information, a scientific representation, a specialized representation (Dinu, 1999; Vlăduțescu, 2006; Teodorescu, 2006; Broască, 2012). It is the situation of the one who knows what communication is and seeks what he knows (Dobrescu, Bărgăoanu & Corbu, 2007).

If the knowledge spirit in its state of common sense reveals the concept of communication as deadlock, entering into its possession without searching for a specific communicational grid, revealing it as a random, the scientific spirit builds, anticipates, projects communication, finding outside what it internally and conceptually has (Anderson, 1996; Rus, 2002; Tran & Stănciugelu, 2003; Marinescu, 2003; Iușă, 2012; Cobley & Schulz, 2013). Within General Communication Science, the Fundamental Communication Science branch, as in any other field, it is required a theoretical basis. The great and fine difference between naïve representation and representation of communication is not coming from the fact that a naïve man would relate to a naïve reality and a scientist, to a scientific one. No way. The "innocent" man sees reality just like the "scientist", but the latter has the advantage of a different perception. The un-theoretical spirit feels caught in the whirlpool of communication as a process, he is pushed to participate, whereas the scientific spirit sees from up and from a distance, he has a detachment given by the domination conscience of the object by which he gains his freedom. The scientific spirit is thus freer, stronger and more efficient. He knows what he does and does what he knows, while the innocent spirit remains only to "he knows what he does." In addition, one's situational ambiguity is opposed by the other's lucidity. For the first, the control comes from outside, it is dominated by communication. The second is an internalist (locus of control is inside) that dominates, by concept, communication, for him, it is not a threat but a challenge. He has a communicative thinking opposed to the communicational "opinion" of the innocent. The theoretical capital welcomes experience and makes it more relevant, more pertinent, more conclusive and more useful. The experiential realization of a thing is not theoretically only a more productive one having as basis "a science of creating the thing" (one that turns the knowing subject into a professional, a scientist), but furthermore, it is practically, emotionally and intellectually more productive (Omer Chinan, 2012). Communicative experience is more profitable when it is based on a theory, on a theoretical engagement (Gadamer,

2004; Vlăduțescu, 2009).

Nothing is more useful and practical than a good and relevant theory. The basis of such reasoning, permanently installed as true in our century was put in the history of ideas by Plato who, through the voice of Socrates, who can be even Socrates, shows: "People called us to discuss the means of making their children better, planting virtue in their soul. In this case, should we not first have the notion of what virtue is?" (Plato, Lahe 190b). Virtue cannot be taught or learned, unless the concept of "virtue" is previously known. Similarly, we cannot do a communication study without a concept of "communication". Knowledge without concept is subject to error undoubtedly. The idea is found in Immanuel Kant: "All knowledge requires a concept, no matter how uncertain" (Im. Kant, 1994, p. 141), as well as in Hegel: "In knowledge, the need for a concept is the main thing" (Hegel, 1996, p. 21 and p. 23). Without the

tools with which the reason would systematize it, the reality remains a fact imperceptible to humans in the order of knowledge: "The observer must already have the concept of the thing to see its appearance and be able to really explain the object" (Hegel, 1963, p. 38). The concept in naive representation is passive, the one of the scientific representation is productive and offensive. Knowing through the concept is "the royal road to science" (Hegel, 1965, p. 46) and it is to be followed.

### 3. Conclusion

As in all areas of life, there is a social naive representation of communication (articulated within the limits of common sense) and a scientific representation. Since some theoretical approaches use communication-term and communication-notion, it is necessary that in the future, if possible, the scientific community should use communication-concept.

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