

MEANING, PURPOSE, SIGNIFICANCE, SIGNIFICATION

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***ABSTRACT:**BECAUSE BY NATURE MAN IS A COMMUNICATIVE BEING, WISHING TO CONVEY INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT HE THINKS, HE ALWAYS USED A VARIETY OF FORMS AND MEDIA. THIS IS WHY, DURING ITS EVOLUTION, HE HAS LEARNED TO INTERPRET THE UNWRITTEN AND WRITTEN SIGNS, USE THEM AS COMMUNICATION TOOLS TO ARTICULATE SOUNDS INTO WORDS, TO ASSIGN MEANING AND PURPOSE, BUILDING MESSAGE. IN THIS PAPER WE PROPOSE THE DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS - A SIGN, MEANING, SIGNIFICANCE, SIGNIFICATION, COMPREHENSION, ELEMENTS NEEDED TO BUILD A MESSAGE - THE HEART OF ANY HUMAN COMMUNICATION, IN ORDER TO FURTHER APPROACH SPEECH AS THE SUCCESSION OF MESSAGES FOCUSED ON THE TOPIC.*

***KEY WORDS:**MEANING,SIGNIFICANCE, SIGNIFICATION, PURPOSE*

Man's relation with himself and the surrounding world as a whole is expressed through communication. From being a simple instrument of knowledge, communication is elevated to being a unifying context, as everything is being communicated:

“Everything is communication. You cannot escape it. Any activity, be it scientific or ordinary is situated within a shell called communication. Communication provides the rules of perception for anything in this world. For science, art or everyday activities are but sectors contained within communication. Communication will therefore reflect the whole game of science and activities. Its rules will be universal. In this context, it becomes queen” [1].

The universal and comprehensive concept of communication cannot be compressed within one definition. American researchers Frank E. X. Dance and Carl E. Larson have tried to select the relevant definitions and have come up with 126 options. Accomplished almost 30 years ago, their enterprise allowed specialists to organize information according to the socio-economic sciences' specificity, to accepted theoretical models and methodological approaches that are being used.

Therefore, Frank E. X. Dance considers the concept of communication associated to multiple meanings such as: transfer, exchange, transmission or sharing; transmitting information from a source to a receiver; a process where a source transmits a message to a receiver with the intention of altering its following behavior; a verbal exchange of thoughts and ideas; interaction (even at a biological level); a process of transmitting information, ideas, emotions or skills through the use of symbols (words, images, graphics, diagrams) [2].

Denis McQuail states that each of Frank E. X. Dance highlights other components of the communicational process: transmitter/ receiver, intent, the linear/circular character

of communication or its active/reactive perspective. Therefore, communication can be regarded as either a process of transmission or as a process of reception, since messages can be transmitted without having an intended receiver or can be received without having been consciously transmitted [3].

Another aspect of transmitting- receiving messages is intent, “which some definitions consider a characteristic of communicating”[4].

If we admit that intent is a necessary condition of transmitting-receiving messages, we can get to excluding non-verbal communication, for example, from all forms of communication.

From the perspective of the process, communication can be regarded either as a linear and unidirectional transmission of messages (process school) or can be considered, according to the Palo Alto school, as a circular and interactive process. There is also the option of approaching communication from an active perspective, when the transmitter tries to influence the receiver or the communication context or from a reactive perspective, when the transmitter accepts the influence and adapts to the context.

Another perception of communication is related to the process of *interaction*, defined by physicist as the mutual action of two bodies, materialized in two paired forces: action and reaction. In communication, interaction implies the exchange of messages between people, or, using the appropriate terminology, between transmitter and receiver, in a circular and interactive process. By extrapolating this definition from Physics to Semiotics, we can attach to communication the meaning of *semiotic interaction* [5] especially if we consider also the definition as *a process of transmitting information, ideas, emotions or skills by use of symbols (words, images, graphics, diagrams)*, synthetically expressed in the triad: symbol, speech, language. The multiple variables of communication allow us to consider it as polysemy and, at the same time, diverse and colorful, due also to the degree to which the modern techniques of human communication have increased.

J Fiske reclaims the definition of communication from the interaction point of view, adding to it the attribute of “social interaction through messages” [6].

Concluding, from the perspective of achieving the communication process, related to different ways of defining the message, we have two major schools of thought:

- The *process School*, where communication is the linear transmission of messages between transmitter and receiver, and the message is what is being transmitted in the communication process, or, differently said, through message encrypting respectively decrypting processes;
- The *semiotic School*, where communication is perceived as the “production and exchange of significations” [7], a context where the message represents a construction of signs that, by interacting with other receivers, produce meanings. The semiotic school highlights both communication in its capacity to generate significance, and also the way the messages or texts interact with people with the purpose of producing meanings.

Unlike the process School, where communication is regarded as a linear action of transmitting information between transmitter and receiver, the semiotic School, by operating with meanings, will prefer *reader* to *transmitter*, situation in which, by being involved in encrypting/ decrypting the text, it actively participates to creating meaning. Encrypting becomes significance, and decrypting reaches a superior level, that of interpreting and understanding texts. The semiotic School operates with notions such as: meaning, sign, meaning, significance, which allow the transmitter to reach a deeper intent and content of the constructed message.

The milestones of Semiotics, or, the “general theory of signs”[8] have been chronologically places before Shannon and Weaver have elaborated the informational theory of communication, and that means that the semiotic School is older than the process School. As a matter of fact, the “background gap of the informational theory of communication has proven to be ignoring the sign theory and the meaning of the transmitted messages”[9].

By examining how messages are generated, encoded, transmitted, decoded, interpreted thus signifying the process and the formation of meanings, semioticians have managed to overcome information model and communication reconsideration. Through the new paradigm, communication becomes a dynamic process of negotiation of meanings in relation to the transceiver, ie text reader. The message will now be a "construction of signs which, through interaction with other receptors, produces meanings"[10].

Whether it is defined as the general theory of signs, or the science of symbols, meaning, significance, myths, semiotics a contemporary episteme discipline within the scope of investigation, includes language and social practices of signification and communication. The basic postulate of semiotics is the descriptive capacity of meaning and intelligibility[11].

„ Without knowing something more about the nature of meaning we have learned to better know where it manifests itself and how it shifts.... Only a semiotics of multiple forms under which the meaning and its modes of existence present themselves in their interpretation as horizontal instances and vertical levels of significance may become a language that will allow you to talk about meaning, whereas the form of semiotics is nothing but the sense of meaning "[12].

Semiosis or the signification act requires a dynamic interaction between sign, interpretant, object and results in the production of meaning. J. Fiske shows that the study of meaning involves three basic elements: the sign, its meaning and the users of this sign; moreover, it states that in the semiosis, the interpreter of the interpreter does not use the sign, but the "proper signification effect", defined as the mental concept produced by the sign and the experience that the user possesses. So the meaning is not an absolute and static entity but a dynamic process, active, changeable over time.

The assertion "meaning is use" is associated with Wittgenstein's philosophy in that the meaning of a sign consists of the set of practices that accompany the acceptance of a symbol. To demonstrate that we understand a word - Wittgenstein says - it will be necessary to define and then to use it properly in environments or data practices . We can say that we understand the meaning of a word if you use it in predefined ways. If you try to use it in a manner that differs significantly from predefined conventions, understanding the meaning of a word or phrase will be questioned. Expression's ability to have meaning is not a state, a possession, but simply a use of signs. This is the time to exemplify a common expression misleading : words do not "have a meaning" but "are used in order to mean something". Expressions themselves never have meaning, but people are the ones who use them with meaning. The meaning of an expression is that expression's semiotic function. To have in mind a word , a picture, an object is one thing, but to understand it is something else. Wittgenstein even suggest that this understanding is achieved through an additional presence, so that the words can be understood if accompanied by ideas. For example, understanding can be regarded as possessing a technique or skill and this aspect is the core expression that " meaning is use. "

Wittgenstein's statement "to understand a language means to understand a way of life" was created for professionals in a challenge to build a general theory of meaning having as foundation The Man, Reality and Language. The place of communication in an exchange of symbols is secondary to the socio-historic presence of humans, a presence that translates into signs since the beginning. A way of life means a lot of signs and symbols created in a culture and a civilization. Language as an organized system of signs, is a constituent part of culture and civilization. We can say that understanding a language facilitates the integration of the individual into the community which determines the ownership of rules and lifestyle. So by understanding the process, we can get both mastery of coding signs (language understanding) and socialization (understanding lifestyle).

Ștefan Afloroaei captures multiple facets of „meaning” in philosophical and semiotic literature:

"(...) For Frege, meaning defines the conceptual achievement of a significance or idea. When we can get a notion out of abstraction and use it in concrete form, we say that we are in possession of its meaning. In other instances, we do not pretend of having such a thing. On the contrary, the use of some expressions suffices for the desired effect "[13].

The meaning of words and other linguistic expressions relate to public or general consent to use them in certain ways that can be described. The transmitter offers a message but how this will be received, its meaning and significance will depend not only on the code used, but on the receptor's sensitivity and preparation, but especially on what is transmitted beyond words.

„Meaning can distort the fragmented character proposed by a statement, it can explore new avenues, its ultimate purpose consisting in initiating a meditation, a challenge on the human being. It can neither be transmitted nor learned. It is not communicated, no matter how intensely it is experienced within the discursive universe. Superordinated reality, sometimes impossible to analyze in plans and content that make it up (meaning and designat), meanings may be referred to indirectly through their interpreter's expression capacity, through synergistic strategies and ways "[15].

The complex alchemy of meaning, states D. Bounoux [15], involves three concepts: meaning, sense, direction. Significance is the relationship between the signifier and the signified of the same sign, an integral part of it, or the way the world is understood through the relationship between concept and designated physical reality. Gottlob Frege considers that "by a sign expressing both the sense and meaning of the sign" moreover "the link between sign, sense and significance is such that the sign has one determined purpose, and it, in its turn, a determined significance, whereas a meaning does not correspond to only one sign "[16]. Considering the above it follows that there is a distinction between the effect and significance, each of them being a signification means.

Ioan Drăgan shows that meaning is signifying with a directly referential and denotative character, while meanings are of a connotative and interpretive nature [17]. In addition, he identifies in semiotic theories five main orientations of defining meaning: the rhetoric of image (R.Barthes) according to which by facilitating symbols and myths meaning becomes a "connotative and cultural derivative", "the layered model" (U. Eco) considers the meaning as the expression of the stratification of interpretative codes, "the systematic model" (L.Porcher) for which meaning is a "combinatorial and commutative" phenomenon, "the structuro-generative model" (J.M.Floch) sees meaning as a result of

generative and progressive path", and „the rhetoric-iconic model" applied especially in advertising, built after the pattern: concept, image, product, interpreter.

Semioticians and linguists have concluded that the significance (Bedeutung), signification (Sinn) and meaning (Verstehen) correspond to the three bodies of the language: the word, the sentence and phrase, which is further proof that "meaning can not be seized in a solitary statement "[18] even if it makes sense. Referral meaning becomes possible only in a broader context, which generate "different meanings that clarify and intersecting each other" [19].

Focused on generating and communicating meanings, Traian D.Stănciulescu describes the act of signification (semiosis) over four essential stages: the stage of primary signification where man as its receptor forms , develops and practices the power to process the information received and to transform it into a personal semiotic language,the message encoding stage when man plays the transmitter and is forced to build a message (text/ speech) according to its own code and then pass it on to the receiver; the message transmission stage that involves both message receiving and decoding in relation to the recipient's own system of signification, the secondary signification stage which targets the effect of the message on the receiver [20]. Following feed –back upon the transmitter that then becomes the receiver, the cycle repeats itself, defining a new semiosis, subjected to the first . So we can say that there is no communication without signification as " any process of communication to or between human beings involves a system of signification as itsw own prerequisite " [21].

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