

The imaginary and the communication hypostasis

O imaginário e a hipostasia da comunicação

El imaginario y la hipóstasis de la comunicación

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Abstract *This paper aims to review the definitions and vagueness of the concept of imaginary and symbolic, and to relate its limits and its reach within the research in Communication. The difficulties of the approach in Communication to a notion of course of the sense are addressed. Inherited from the School of Grenoble, this notion underlies the theory of the imaginary. Communication is here considered to be insufficient for the study of the catalysis of imaginaries and the production of symbolic images which are present in communication phenomena. This is due not only to the inadequacy of a process that is described in terms of sender–message–receiver, but especially to the self-evidence of imaginary and symbolic, as expressed in language, resulting in a reduction of the imaginary to its social symptoms.*

Keywords: *Communication; Imaginary; School of Grenoble*

Resumo *Este artigo busca revisar as definições e indefinições da noção de imaginário e simbólico e relacionar seus limites e seu alcance dentro da pesquisa em Comunicação. Equacionam-se as dificuldades de abordagem pela Comunicação da noção de trajeto do sentido que, herdada da Escola de Grenoble, embasa a Teoria do Imaginário. Verifica-se que a Comunicação não dá conta de estudar a catalisação de imaginários e o fabrico de imagens simbólicas presentes nos fenômenos comunicacionais, não só pela inadequação de um processo descrito em termos de emissor–mensagem–receptor, mas sobretudo pela suposta autoevidência do imaginário e do simbólico como manifestos na linguagem, desembocando numa redução do imaginário aos seus sintomas sociais.*

Palavras-chave: *Comunicação; Imaginário; Escola de Grenoble*

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Resumen *El objetivo de este artículo es repasar las diferencias e indefiniciones de la noción de imaginario y simbólico y relacionar sus límites y su alcance dentro de la investigación en Comunicación. Se pone en ecuación las dificultades de abordaje por la Comunicación de la noción de trayecto del sentido que, heredada de la Escuela de Grenoble, fundamenta la Teoría del Imaginario. Se observa que la Comunicación no es suficiente para estudiar la catálisis de imaginarios y la producción de imágenes simbólicas presentes en los fenómenos de comunicación, no sólo por la inadecuación de un proceso descrito en términos de emisor–mensaje–receptor, sino, principalmente, por la supuesta auto-evidencia de lo imaginario y de lo simbólico como manifiestos en el lenguaje, resultando en una reducción de lo imaginario a sus síntomas sociales.*

Palabras-clave: *Comunicación; Imaginario; Escuela de Grenoble*

Date of submission: 22/07/2013

Date of acceptance: 26/08/2013

Factory of images

Specialization brought new weaknesses and new professions. For those who have a stomach ache, a gastroenterologist; for those who do not know how to do shopping, a personal shopper; for women with cystitis, a uro-gynaecologist; for those who do not know how to dress, a personal stylist; for those who do not know how to deal with communication technologies, a personal nerd; for the humanity that is disconnected from the sacred and the rituals, the imaginary technicians.

Different from the activity of a *personal* something, the imaginary technician's actuation is collectivised. Whereas the *personal* provides the promise to respect the individuality, journalists, filmmakers, advertisers, all of them imaginary technicians, make their offers available through mass media. Thus by undertaking to supply the imaginary, a creative source, Communication adopts the colours of a demiurge.

The responsibility for this role is social and anthropological. What is involved are not only the pieces which configure the collectivity that is interlinked by associations, groups, institutions, but also those who act in the collective psychic equilibrium, that is to say, Communication does not only put into circulation informative images, which express (conceal), a reality, but also symbolic images which make reality and which act directly in our anthropological roots. This double-faced-ness is essential for the studies of image and imaginary in Communication because it provides two different doors of access to the researcher: one opens to a ground floor living room of socially culturally and historically identifiable phenomena, the other leads to a subterranean staircase which plunges into the biopsychic imperatives. None is better than the other, under the condition that we do not halt on them, which would block the passage, preventing the access to the *trajectory of meaning* (DURAND, 1997), where there is the proper imaginary.

Communication Studies are naturally interdisciplinary; it is an area of knowledge relatively young which, in order to constitute itself, continuously drinks from the wells of Sociology, of Anthropology, of Semiotics, of History, of Psychoanalysis etc., disciplines which also supply

the Imaginary Studies. Nonetheless, this disciplinary sharing does not represent a pacific zone of understanding in which it is possible to examine the respective problems of knowledge with the same conceptual tools. It is still the double-faced-ness of the imaginary which allows it to serve as a topic for a communicational study and, by inverting the positions, which requests from it to be taken into consideration as a heuristic perspective in the exploration of a communicational object of study. In the first case, the communicational research can stick to its usual tools and to its twin domains, such as Sociology and Semiotics. In the second case, the comprehension of the laws of the imaginary and a really trans-disciplinary boldness are required (that is to say, that it occurs through but also beyond the discipline, entering forms of non-disciplinary knowledge) in order to study the communicational object, because then the imaginary will not be a topic, but a perspective. The difficult is quite great, because if Communication studies the symbols as a means of information exchange, the Theory of the Imaginary studies Communication as a factory of images.

Communication studies did not pass far from the questions of the imaginary; they searched help for their approaches in psychoanalysis and in sociology.² Nonetheless, the imaginary is a domain of quick sands and not everybody treads on the same basis when he/she intends to discourse about it. In spite of the numerous studies on image which Communication started, there is not yet a theoretical tradition in this domain about

² In Brazil, the imaginary studies began in the 1970s with Danielle Perin Rocha Pitta, who founded the Centro de Pesquisas sobre o Imaginário in the Departamento de Antropologia da UFPE [Centre of Researches on the Imaginary in the Anthropology Department of UFPE – Federal University of the State of Pernambuco] and J. C. de Paula Carvalho, who created the Centro Integrado de Pesquisas do Imaginário (CIPI/USP) – Integrated Centre of Researches on Imaginary - at USP – University of São Paulo, afterwards denominated Núcleo de Pesquisas do Imaginário Social e Ação Cultural – Research group of Social Imaginary and Cultural Action – (NISE/ECA/USP – Escola de Comunicações e Artes – Communication and Arts School/University of São Paulo), that has as its directors J. C. Paula Carvalho and Teixeira Coelho. From then on the interest not in the School of Grenoble's approach, but in the topic of imaginary multiplied. In June 2010, according to Barros (2012), 253 groups were registered at the CNPq (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico – National Council for Scientific and Technological Development) – who presented the word imaginary in their name, in their line of research or in the keywords of their line of research. Today, at the beginning of 2013, this number reached 308, which means an increase of more than 20% in less than three years. These 308 groups are distributed over 24 different areas. Communication occupies the fourth place, with 9% of the groups, against 7% in 2010, that is to say, an increase of 2% in two years. A mapping of the limits and of the reach of the notion of imaginary in these researches as well as the methodologies the groups use is still awaiting achievements.

the source of this image which is the imaginary. They study the flowers of the season and they forget their perennial roots.

Symbolic, plurivocal category

Few authors attempted to minimally establish what the imaginary is and to draw the consequences from there. Lacan (2001) was one of them; he situated the imaginary as an instance of the alienation of the “I”, correspondent, in the human development, during the first years of life, when one does not yet have consciousness of who one is and how one came into the world. One thinks to be a double of the other – in general the mother. In Lacan this imaginary is completely distinct and independent of what he calls symbolic, the place of the unconscious. In Lacan the symbolic is established by means of a kind of castration imposed by the authority (in general the father), that separates the mother from the baby. There language plays a fundamental role, according to Lacan (2001), because it is through it that the symbolic can be understood. This is why Lacanian psychoanalysis confers great importance upon the choice of the words, upon the lapses, upon the puns, upon the *lapsus linguæ*. Finally Lacan denominates *real* that which escapes from language (that is to say, from the symbolic and from the imaginary, it is that which language cannot symbolise and that which art attempts to symbolise).

Lacan indicates the brotherhood between what is symbolic and what is humanising, because it is socialised:

What characterises the human species is precisely the fact to surround the cadaver with something which constitutes a sepulchre, to maintain the fact that “this remains”. The tomb, or any other sign of sepulchre, deserves the name of symbol, of something humanising with all the due precision (LACAN, 1953).

Quite different from the humanisation promoted by the Lacanian symbolic is the fight between the classes promoted by the symbolic production in Bourdieu: “[...] the symbolic power is, in fact, this invisible power which can only be exerted with the complicity of those who do

not want to know that they are subject to it or even exert it” (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 8).

In Bourdieu (1989), as well as in Lacan (2001), the symbolic is the fruit of a constraint, that is to say, of an authorized repression (by the State, by the father). Nonetheless, if in Lacan the conformity to this leads to a humanising symbolisation, in Bourdieu there is the fabrication of creeds for the acceptance of a dominant discourse that makes the individual’s socialisation viable through the symbolic violence.

Castoriadis (1982), for his part, emphasises that the symbolic is an instance of language, but also of other manifestations of the imaginary, which is illusory:

The deep and obscure relations between the symbolic and the imaginary appear immediately when we reflect about the following fact: the imaginary must use the symbolic not only in order to express itself, which is obvious, but in order to exist, in order to pass from the virtual to something more (CASTORIADIS, 1982, p. 154).

Castoriadis does not have a theory of the imaginary; he himself affirms that he uses the word in a common sense, as a synonym of invented thing (1982, p. 154). What this author wrote was a social theory which starts with a criticism of Marxism and culminates with the question of alienation. In this point, he introduces the notion of symbolic and imaginary, in their acceptance of common sense in order to explain the institutions, the automation of which, in relation to society, would constitute alienation.

In Bourdieu (1989) as well as in Castoriadis (1982), the symbolic and the imaginary where it derives from are disqualified either as the origin of an invisible and therefore consented authoritarianism or as the mark of alienation. The Saussurian inheritance – which will also be strong in communication studies – subsists in the three authors, since they consider the symbolic as something which is in the place, which is the significant of a signified elsewhere. And although Lacan (2001) endorses Lévi-Strauss’ idea (2011) with respect to the precedence of the significant in relation to the signified, we are still very far from the precedence of

the image over the concept (DURAND, 1997; WUNENBURGER, 1995) which is to be found in the basis of the theory of the imaginary coming from the School of Grenoble.

When semantics studies the symbols in language, when psychoanalysis studies the symbols in the dream, when semiotics studies the general system of symbols, and when communication studies the symbols as a means of information exchange, are they speaking of the same thing? What appears as a question of lexicon conceals a paradigmatic abyss. All these disciplines and others provide ways to the exploration of the imaginary and although it is not a war of hermeneutics, we must take into consideration the improbability of some hybrids when the theoretic excavation reaches a certain level of complexity.

Double-faced-ness, a heuristic challenge

Since fifty years the French school of anthropology of the symbolic imagination has sought methods and tools for a modelisation of the imaginary and it situates itself at the crossing of the ways traced by the Jungian psychoanalysis, by the comprehensive sociology, by the philosophical hermeneutics and phenomenology and by the figurative structuralism.

Wunenburger (2011) explains that the set of knowledges about the imaginary oscillates between two poles: one formalist, structural, which seeks the design of the system of images without taking into consideration its experienced and existential meaning, like in Lévi-Strauss (2011); another hermeneutic specialist, who privileges the contents of meaning and their emotive and intellectual impact, like in Paul Ricœur (1978).

Gilbert Durand (1997) sought to articulate the regularity of the individual and cultural-collective images and he showed that they introduced themselves into an anthropological trajectory which initiates (temporarily, not ontologically) on the neurobiological plane³ and ex-

³ Gilbert Durand related Vladimir Betcherev's (1857-1927) theory of reflexes to the imaginary. In counterpoint to Pavlov, Betcherev demonstrated the existence of three hereditary reflexes, anterior to those acquired and common to the whole human species: the postural, the digestive and the rhythmic. Betcherev's reflexology confirms Durand's theory, which, on its part, converges with Jung's theory of the archetypes and of the collective unconscious.

tends itself to the cultural plane. It is how this French author found a third way between structuralism and hermeneutics and he criticised at the same time Ricoeur's historicist hermeneutics and Lévi-Strauss' abstract structuralism:

[...] Durand sustains that imagination thanks its efficacy to a indissoluble connection between, on the one hand, the structures which permit to reduce the diversity of the singular production of images to some isomorphic sets and, on the other hand, the symbolic significances, regulated by a finite number of schemes, archetypes and symbols (WUNENBURGER, 2011, p. 32).

According to Durand (2003, p. 133), the figurative structure embraces the permanent and significant form and contents at the same time. The figurative structuralism would not be more than “[...] the epiphany of the image, of the imaginary and their great regions, where the forms and the contents are indissolubly articulated in its significant target” (DURAND, 2003, p. 117). Such articulation of form and contents, which confers alchemistic chords upon the theory of the imaginary, occurs under the impulsion of a concordance between stimuli that are inherent in the human condition, the same in any stage of civilisation “since Cro-Magnon” (DURAND, 2001), and the constraints that are established by the environment vary in accordance with the historical, social, cultural, etc. context of the phenomenon which is being focused on.

The localisation of the imaginary between these two poles which establish the *trajectory of the meaning* (DURAND, 1997) is perhaps the most important contribution of Durand's theory and at the same time that which presents more difficulties to the researcher, especially in the domain of communication. Such double-faced-ness of the imaginary authorises the researcher to approach the question from the archetypal bias and from the phenomenological bias. According to Badia (1993), the same double-faced-ness would be the basis of the “*affaire Burgos*”,⁴

⁴ In 1966, Gilbert Durand, together with Paul Deschamps and Léon Cellier, proposed the foundation of the Centre de Recherche sur l'Imaginaire (CRI) – Centre of Research on the Imaginary – which was officially recognised

which, in the first movement of what would be known as the School of Grenoble, opposed “[...] the anthropologist of the imaginary to the ‘poéticien’ of the imaginary” (BADIA, 1993, p. 19). If this opposition did not have continuity as a conflict, it would be all the same at the origin of a double bias in the studies of the imaginary, an archetypal one, with strong roots in Eranos’ gnosis, including Jung and a phenomenological one linked to comprehensive sociology, which achieved great visibility, inclusively a mediatic one, through Michel Maffesoli and his followers.

It is not that Maffesoli’s work is opposed to Durand’s. On the contrary, in the whole work there are frequent references to Durand’s notions, such as *trajectory of the meaning* and *anthropological constant*. Nevertheless, it is necessary to precise that in Maffesoli the notions of the theory of the imaginary, supported by Durand, are taken as metaphors, which are more used in order to allude to some region which he wants to designate than to plunge into a search for motivations for the phenomena which are being studied. This proceeding, by means of allusions, of light touches, the refusal of the excavation in the search for meanings is part of Maffesoli’s heuristics that is well explicated in the introduction of *Common Knowledge* (MAFFESOLI, 2007). Bypassing the concepts, Maffesoli finds his way of saying with his message in a coherent way, but the same constituting quality of the form which keeps him faithful to his principles introduces a qualitative difference with regard to what would be an archetypology of the imaginary. It is like this that Maffesoli’s work (1997; 1998; 2012 and others), although, for example, he recognises the importance of the archetype and does not deny the

in 1968. Then the School of Grenoble began. In the 1980s, Jean Burgos, one of the members of the CRI, contested Durand’s scientific authority; after all the members of the CRI had been consulted, Durand’s “presidency and excellence” was confirmed (BADIA, 1993, p. 19) and Jean Burgos quitted. From then on, Durand sought with CNRS (Centre National de Recherche Scientifique – National Centre for Scientific Research) - the integration between French and foreign laboratories of research on the imaginary, which culminated in the creation, in 1982, of the CRI-Greco 56 (*Groupement de Recherche Coordonnée sur l’Imaginaire* - Group of Coordinated Research on the Imaginary). Today the original CRI which Durand founded does not exist any more. A new research centre is being created this year: 2013, the CRI2i, which already was born as international (*Centre de Recherches Internationales sur l’Imaginaire* – Centre of International Researches on the Imaginary). The CRI2i was structured in October 2012, in Cluj-Napoca, at the closing of the *Congrès des Centres Internationaux de Recherche sur l’Imaginaire* – Conference of the International Centres for Research on the Imaginary, by a group of more than 30 researchers from four continents, led by Phillippe Walter, J.J. Wunenburger and Corin Braga, with Gilbert Durand’s approbation, he died two months later.

existence of a collective unconscious as it is supported by Jung, brings these notions to a phenomenological surface where the first (archetype) acquires a near relationship with the stereotype and the second (collective unconscious) seems to fund itself to an optimistic acceptance of social imaginary.

The entrance into the imaginary through the sociological level, a more frequent option of Brazilian communication studies, although they have doubtlessly brought important progresses for the comprehension of a contemporary time which seems to sustain itself entirely on online communication, broadens and restricts at the same time the notion of imaginary. It broadens it because it uses the term in an abusive way, without considering the trajectory of meaning or it only considers one of its poles, which paradoxically restricts its field. Hence there is the risk not to speak of images, imagineries, symbols any more, but of social symptoms, as Durand well teaches (2003, p. 120, : “[...] the intimations of these situations, of these events and of these means well connect the imaginal to the material objectivity, they frequently smash the signification and reduce the symbol to a mere syntheme”.

The epistemological difficulties brought by the double-faced-ness of the imaginary are not unimportant. If we assume the truth of the *trajectory of meaning*, philosophical consequences will follow. As we already mentioned it, the two poles of the trajectory are divided into pulse and coercion, one archetypal and the other figural; the pulses are constant and the coercions variable. The eternal and the ephemeral will have an agreement, an agreement which is given by the imaginary. Nonetheless, the eternal is not connected to a static structure nor is the ephemeral resolved in the hermeneutics of the figure; the imaginary studies, as Durand wanted it (2003), are interested in the irruption of the eternal into the ephemeral and this interest is being served by the figurative structuralism the author proposes. According to Durand's explanation (1997), the imaginary only exists in the movement of the trajectory between the two semantic poles. Thus, to some extent, when the researcher dwells on one or the other pole, he does not examine the imaginary but any other thing, which helps to constitute it, but which he avoids

There we see why the imaginary, which inhabits the trajectory of the meaning, does not assimilate itself to the so-called social imaginary. There is a difference which is not merely heuristic, which is even ontological, between that which is designated as imaginary by the School of Grenoble and the social imaginary. In one case, we speak of the resultant of a process of *coincidentia oppositorum* between invariability and diversity, with highly positive connotations, since this imaginary would point out the disequilibria, but it would also be conveyor of the equilibrium-bringing power. Then the imaginary is unavoidable. In the other case, we think of the imaginary as socially instituted and it would also be a factor of alienation of the real. This lets us think that the imaginary could “be avoided” in case it reached a superior degree of political conscience. It does not offer pregnant symbols to the study, to use as a metaphor one of Cassirer’s (2001)⁵, concepts, but only syntheses, which are its sociological symptoms.

Hypostasis of communication

The fertility of a symbolic image is not linked to its quantity of social symptoms, but to the intensity of its conjunction form-content, which doubles the trajectory of meaning (biopsychic imperatives/external coercions). The conjunction does not accept mediation. But it is precisely in this point that communication theories begin to have difficulties to work with the symbolic image and with the imaginary, due to its birth almost twinned with the language theories and the subsequent evidence of the mediator role of the symbol. Indeed research in Communication begins at the end of the 19th century together with linguistic research; and as Serra (2007, p. 3) points it out, linguistic research becomes a kind of research in Communication.

In the course of the last hundred years, Communication studies developed themselves in multiple directions, due to the complexity of their

⁵ By symbolic pregnancy Cassirer (2001) designates the fact that the sensible data is never a pure phenomenological datum, but it always presents itself already with its signification.

object, which even led to consider the area as multi-paradigmatic due to the impossibility of determining the predominance of one theory. Nonetheless there are some nodules which persist in the multiplicity of approaches: Communication theories will always speak of a mediation, be it human or technological; thus the media are conveyors of signs which, in a way or other, will have to be received and decoded.

The paradigm which was dominant at the beginning of Communication studies, which was inherited from the informational pattern, was contested by different theories, but its fundamental structure persists through the renovation of the researches. It is like this that the hypodermic triad sender – message – receiver will continue to orient not only the functionalist theory, but also the critical theory and even the New Communication of Palo Alto. The latter actually does not dwell its preoccupations on a manipulation of meanings by acting upon a passive receiver, but it equally valorises the *effect* of communication on behaviour and even assimilates communication to behaviour. To a certain extent New Communication minimises the role of the subject in communication, since it is grounded on the social system, so that the meaning is alien to the subject.

By accusing the improbability of communication, even Luhmann (1992), does it, anchored in the triad sender-message-receiver: who communicates will never have the guarantee of having been understood; the senders will not know if the receivers paid attention to their message; even when the message was received and understood, there are no guarantees that it will bring some change to the receiver.

Some epistemological obstacles to the study of the imaginary in the area derive from this ontological influence, among which the fact that communication necessarily passes through language and, reversibly, that everything is language and therefore everything communicates, this is what Durand (2010, p. 233) denounces as hypostasis of communication.

The emptiness of the hypostasis of communication is well illustrated in the film *Mon Oncle* [*My Uncle*], by Jacques Tati, which was awarded the Grand Prix of the Festival of Cannes in 1958. Certainly not by chance, the time in which the story occurs, the same in which

it was shot, coincides with the valorisation of functionalism in society as a whole and also in communication studies, when the definition of realities is done not only through their functions but also through the solidarity between these functions “*Tout communique* [Everything communicates], Tati says (MON..., 2005, cap. 15). Nonetheless, perhaps this communicative hypostasis results in a human emptiness. The house in which “everything communicates” is full of automated devices, like the door which opens alone for the person who comes near to it, the kitchen equipments which emit luminous signals in all the rooms, so that they inform people, wherever they may be, that the process of cooking of the food requires immediate attention. The proud housewife shows the large rooms with few walls to the visit. “It looks rather empty, doesn’t it?” the visit says. “It is a modern house, everything communicates”, defends the housewife (MON..., 2005, cap. 15). But apparently communication does not work when the question is the son’s boredom, which is only interrupted when his uncle takes him to another part of the town, much more disorganised and less aseptic.

In the garden, an absolutely plain stone trail, but with drawn curves connects the front door with the portal. The visit arrives and stretches the arms to greet the hostess, who does the same thing. The two women walk towards each other, but the interdiction to walk out of the trail in order to shorten the way results in the fact that they remain with the stretched arms towards the emptiness while they move through the curves of the pavement (MON..., 2005, cap. 5). Such it is that, when everything communicates, nothing communicates.

The film shows that true communication does not in the cold structure of the house architectonically thought to communicate, but it does in the other part of the town to which the uncle takes the son in the saddle-bag of his bicycle (MON..., 2005, cap. 5). Communication occurs in the sharing of the experience, when you buy bread with sauce and sit in a wasteland together with other kids who, hidden behind a fence, play and try to make the pedestrians of the pavement to hit a pillar – and they use subterfuges with the objective to deviate the victims’ attention precisely at the time in which they should deviate from the obstacle. The

youngsters bet with small coins on a stone, the winner takes the money and runs away in order to buy bread with sauce at the pushcart. Communication does not occur through the structures which are programmed to this effect (spoken tongue, language, channels), but through experience sharing.

Symbol, communication in action

Indeed, the reduction of the theories to their minor common denominator has the great defect of not doing them justice, by ignoring the originality of their contributions to Communication study, but it is useful to show the difficulties of symbolisation to find a space in the core of the studies of this area, difficulty which does not derive from a rejection of the topic, but from the heuristic choices the research has done. The formula sender–message–receiver is inappropriate not only because of its linearity, but rather because of the suppositions it implies, from the self-evidence of the definition, the existence of the roles – even if they are interchangeable – of sender and receiver and it culminates in the big non – explicated background of language. Non-explicated because communication is supposed when there is a message and this is only possible on the basis of language which necessarily will have to convey meaning. In this panorama, symbolisation must be seen as a *quality* of language.

Primitively the word symbol designated a divided object the parts of which were conserved, each one, by a person. By inserting themselves, the two parts let their conveyors know that they had a mutual commitment. The symbol only existed as a conjunction of the two parts. Through an extension of the primitive use, the symbol began to be understood as acknowledgement symbol. The derivations which lead to the notion of symbol as a third part alien to the two things it links will not be described here. Anyway it is possible to perceive that, originally, symbolisation was not a figure or a function of language, but an act. Since it is not done on the basis of language, but on the basis of human actions – the prototypes of which are the gestures of the body towards the cosmic environment, according to Durand (1997) –, symbolisation must be

thought outside language. The symbols refer to this being an agent: “[...] on the contrary to the Kantian concepts, words and things do not gravitate around a formal and passive *cogito* – constant machine of forms *a priori* and of empty categories –, but around an existent human endowed with a full and complex specificity” (DURAND, 2010, p. 255). Language wants to intermediate a communication; the symbol communicates directly, the symbol is a “[...] universe in emanation” (BACHELARD, 1998, p. 13).

Nonetheless, we cannot ignore that, even if we think of symbolisation outside language, research does not prescind from language to express this thinking. And if language conveys this symbol, the search for meaning will have to go to the regions of its birth, to the essential actions: to the Verb. It is why Durand (1997) designed the regimes of the imaginary based upon the verb more than upon the adjectives and nouns, because it is the verb which contains the energetic symbolic of the action, the birth place of the imaginary.

This action is really a creation, that is to say, the Verb is in the creator’s mouth. In order not to get to the scandalous mysticism, Durand (2010, p. 261) proposes to substitute the words which can discredit the theory because they send back to God, due to his “image”, that of the *primordial Man*. Hence men are capable of mutual comprehension, of communication, not because of the “[...] imitations, associations, conventions, interferences and similarities [...]” (CROCE *apud* DURAND, 2010, p. 261) between spoken tongues and languages, but because they “[...] are, live and move [...]” (CROCE *apud* DURAND, 2010, p. 261) in this primordial man, in this universal sharing of founding gestures towards the cosmos.

Being an image factory, serving as vehicle to the imaginaries, Communication challenges its researchers to enter this swampy terrain (and therefore fertile). On the contrary to what a light reading can let us think, the imaginary is not a dimension of disorder and irrationality: it has well established rules of functioning, as it has been shown and demonstrated at least since 1937 by Bachelard (1999), with his notion of material imagination founded on the four elements of Greek cosmology.

ogy and by the School of Grenoble, which presents a fruitful way of research by indicating the correlation between corporal schemes, technological gestures, archetypal images and rationality. Nevertheless, the intellectual comprehension of these rules is not sufficient to advance, because when we believe that we understood them rationally, there will be something that escapes of this understanding due to the presence of an energetic symbolic which stimulates the movement in the trajectory of meaning. This does not show more than its two poles relatively static to the external observer. In order to know the symbolic image it is really necessary to be born with it, as Bachelard wants it (1988), to surrender to its transcendence.

The refusal or the disregard of the imaginal dimension of the symbol empties the Verb of its creative power and establishes the “[...] drama of the Lost Word” (CORBIN, 1983, p. 81), something which the linguistic tools will not be able to solve, because there is no necessary exchange between the symbolic act and a given language. The image which is defined as symbolic does not confound itself with the translatable images of cheerfulness, of memory, of the stereotype – although these and other images also gravitate in the icon sphere. In these cases, the concept precedes the image, that is to say, the image illustrates a notion, which was alleged before by the intellect. These images are moulded, relatively stable in the pole of social coercions.

In the case of the symbolic image, the contrary occurs, that is to say, it precedes the concept, it gives origin to it. It will not be too much to remember that “[...] the image can present itself as symbolic when, due to its structure, it is not totally sufficient in itself, when an exceeding in it invites it to make an agreement with an absent, lacking, transcendent dimension” (WUNENBURGER, 1995, p. 16,). A lacuna, which the imaginary fills with the homology of the images (DURAND, 2000), but the mapping of this homology, which is possible through the symbolic redundancy, not only is not sufficient in itself but it will not be efficacious and faithful either if the subject-researcher does not surrender to the affective dynamics of the experience – and it is only like this that the symbolic meaning will be communicable by means of language.

Of course this receptivity to the symbolic experience belongs to heuristics without excluding the tools the academic work requires in order to be able to deal with the documents Communication frequently examines. The verbal and iconic phenomena which materialise themselves in the communicational documents participate in the density of the symbolic image, but the imaginary will continue being inaccessible as long as these documents will only be considered as the result of the work of perception (memory) or intellect, and not either as the result of the productive imagination (KANT, 2005; BACHELARD, 1998). Since the study of the imaginary requires an immersion in the trajectory of meaning, it does not allow the Communication researcher to be satisfied with the inherited tools of Sociology, of Semiotics, of Anthropology, etc., since they only straightened the terrain in the pole of the intimations of the means.

The imaginary requires the symbolic perspective of the researcher, and in this case the technical and theoretical approaches are no more sufficient; he is asked to adopt the *initiatic* approach: the symbolic meaning is rather revealed than decoded. This is a requirement of rigour on the part of the researcher, and not the contrary. A requirement the major risk of which is that the researcher, in order to teach facts about his so improperly called research object to the world will be convoked not to Socrates' conceptual know yourself, but to Nietzsche's pragmatic become what you are.

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