BEHAVIOUR AND EDUCATION
POSTMODERN CONSIDERATIONS -

Anton A. ILICA
Universitatea "Aurel Vlaicu" Arad, România

Abstract:
The author reveals a few aspects of communicative behaviour in postmodernism, where values do not have enough constancy anymore and their selection is made without any criteria. The relationships between individuals (and communities) imply mental involvement and gestures, mimicry, tone are unconscious elements of individuals` expression. The lack of inhibitions and assuming certain "democratic" liberties lead to a waste of risk in hiding the individuals` true identity. Behaviours are the consequence of collective mentality and different cultural romances.

Keywords: behaviour, culture and civilization, mentality, postmodernism.

1. Postmodernism. We do not have the intension of debating the issue or history of postmodernism, only to the extent to which it is necessary to clear certain aspects of contemporary education. The approach between a concept and reality can determine serious wonderings, if the impact induces the idea of incongruence. Education develops a canonical tradition and educational systems are among the most rigorously structured, conservative and change retained. Postmodernism deconstructs, breaks the patterns, maintains uncertainty and relative values. An education without value-based guidelines, without models or vision has no logical support. What type of education prevails in a postmodern society, which is animated by diversity in spite all globalization tendencies?

Contemporary world has very few moments of stability. Not only the future is under the threat of "shock" (Toffler, 1973) but also the present (maybe even the projection of past). In "the global village", electronic communication networks unite voluntarily informational desires, determining a transfer of mentalities and behaviours. Communities used to preserve their traditions thanks to personality ethos. Currently, their identity has the cosmopolite opportunity (maybe even tendency) to veil its edges, to "escape" under the authority of identity nucleus. There is the chance – exploited or not – to crave for new mental configurations, based on voluntary acceptance of "the Other" by an appeal to ethic cohesion and a desire to deconstruct the hierarchies, until recently untouchable. „*Deconstruction,* states Derrida (1967), followed by

(1988), *involves displacement of traditional conceptual hierarchies*". In a world educated and educable for change and adaptation, de-construction can no longer be regarded as a fault but as the attempt to reshape tradition. The requirement for unpredictable constructions – determined by the "shock" of top knowledge resulted in public comfort technology – involves readjustment, destruction, reshaping. De-construction is required in order to construct something. Behavioural changes are determined not only by the perspectives of contemporary world but also by its essential dynamism.

Communities discard any inconvenience that might affect their adaptation to democratic liberties. *Identity ethos* and *cultural sacrifice* will not miss from such an inventory. Lack of scruples in "disaggregation of any authority" and relativity of self-values derive from such attitude, even though the community`s identity has been developed on concepts like these. The tendency to relativize one`s own values supported the idea of de-canonization, of breaking mental patterns, replacing "labels" until recently untouchable. When one "dared" to exclude Eminescu from vowed statements (*"national poet", "poet laureate", "the most important ..."*) the "de-constructors`" gesture was perceived as a blasphemy. In the "thinkers`" gesture there wasn't any intention of questioning the real values of Eminescu`s poetry but they tried to construct a new epistemic foundation for another type of text analysis. The destruction of "idol" has strong ontological justification in the tendency to reshape and revalue him.

L. Vattimo (1993), theoretician of postmodernism, supports the idea that absolute values should be dissolved to allow the display of individual values. "Everything is permitted" without authority, because facts become contextual. Art itself – as phenomenon of creation, a mimesis of divine gestures – becomes democratic by blending with public existence. It gets out on the streets, dissolves in the mass-media, labels matchboxes, blends in creations and cohabits generously in hypermedia. Art has become "a fundamental event" (Heidegger, 1980) by its de-gentleness, as well as its weakness for unpredictable blending with kitsch.

Consequently, lack of value authority leads to a ontological transformation of the objective and subjective world *"into a huge site of surviving"* (L. Vattimo, 1993). The struggle for survival is training for personality duality. On the one hand, the human being craves for gathering its desires around a "core", on the other hand it likes democratic savagery. It finds in the (isotopic) closeness between *margin* and *core* a source of happiness and existential meaning.

This is our postmodern world, a world that we build on and caress with democratic liberties. Some of its features are: de-canonization of values, dismissal of classical values authority, decompressing of ethics, buckling the perception of time and space, humanisation of information and technology,

oscillation between identity vocation and globalizing aspiration, aggressiveness of sensual performance, epistemological indeterminacy, humanizing education.

All of the above concepts can be framed in the apothegm „*what is not forbidden is permitted*”. The present generation is no longer interested in the past, it doesn`t peep to history, it looks at itself. This generation doesn`t have time for projections on the future because time doesn`t have three dimensions anymore; it is one-dimensional (te present matters!). Only „*here and now*” exists, mine, ours, a present that contains just pieces of time and reflections of anticipated time. Such flattened and reduced time is compensated by an extension of real and virtual time. No earthly distance is impossible; no space can hide its mysteries. Cosmic space is claimed, extra-terra has become optional space.

The insertion of art in daily life and the stimulation of sensual, epidermal voluptuousness is another postmodern challenge. Television shows with a mixture of free gestures, colourful scenery, naked breasts, VIPs with excessive make-up offer a new image supported by the consumers` tastes. In this mixture of sound and light, we can see actors, cabaret dancers, successful writers and poetry reciters, politicians, image seekers, cats` hairdressers, circus people and professional sportsmen. Seriousness seems abandoned, its place being taken by good moods and fun, the entire scene unfolding in the most insensitive *intellectual innocence*. „Commercial aspect” and its advertising polarize the interest for artistic performance, bringing about their impregnation with sensory experiences, stimulated by movement, colour, obscene gestures and compensatory aesthetics. Postmodern attitudes are also identified in virtual experiences. Buttoning from one channel to the other, "cultural surfing", serials, informational briefings join the show offered by websites; it is a huge and fascinating universe of an artificial but vivid, dynamic and attractive world. It is clearly a new type of civilization, with other guidelines than modernity; a world where one can live with imitations and adjuvants in the middle of a crowd exited by music, dynamism, and spectacular events.

•

Global communication has changed the vision, "raised the human`s eyes" to the Others, and this *openness towards new horizons signifies "the standing up" of the ancient ancestor*. Communication constructs a new world in each person, society and inhabited place. Communication is the bower of a being, stated a philosopher, and wise men constructed performing tools so that information about Others and their wise deeds would be known by Everyone and immediately.

2. Affective involvement in communication. *Communication is a process,* which involves interaction in a **context**. Networking between people is a social **transaction** ("*a human being it`s impossible not to communicate*",

Watzlawick (1972), and humans enter the communicative relationship with "contextual" elements like in an orchestra. Even though we refer to networking between individuals, *the same issues are valid for groups, organizations, institutions and/or even self-communication.* Aspects related to *social psychology,* interlocutors` peculiarities and guiding psychological factors should be reconsidered in order to determine an optimal communication. In interactive communication, the person X cannot discover the hidden intensions of person Y, as it cannot suspect its subsidiary intensions and motivations.

Reducing the process of communication to a mere information exchange means distorting its real value in the relationship between "speakers". It is believed (Abric, 2002 and others) that communication is influenced by certain factors, such as the *psychological* ones. The communicative process is motivated by individual needs and tensions, obviously of mental type; an individual has needs, needs cause tension, tension generates a behaviour required by reduction of dissatisfaction. There are both positive and negative desires (needs), which can torment and rebalance the interlocutors` mental state of mind. Communication cannot exclude individual specific affective aspects, which contains various tendencies and peculiarities.

On the other hand, each individual, group and institutions, owns a certain *type of culture*. We interact with the Other based on cultural identity or on the intension of emotional balance; the interlocutors` affective subtleties and hidden objectives are related to situational psychology. After all, each individual is the bearer and representative of a culture, and by extension – the individuals` communication is a form of networking between cultures and mentalities.

3. Cultural mentality and civilization. *a. Culture*. A definition in the dictionary of neologisms (1997) regards culture as „*an ensemble of material and spiritual values created by humanity, by the society*". The definition induces confusion due to the usage in the same concept of both „material values" and „spiritual values". A dictionary of philosophy (1988) increases the confusion by including in this concept the notions „material and spiritual products" and „*conscious transformation of natural and social environment*". Such imprecision led to the identification of almost 300 attempts to define the concept. The *Larousse* Dictionary (1996) defines **culture** as „*an individuals` social and intellectual formation*" (deriving from the notion of „cult"), and Lucian Blaga determines culture in relationship with artistic values. Regardless of the multiple meanings that determine such an easy concept up to the moment of its **definition**, we will consider cultural products only those which are the result of a spiritual creativity process. Culture is connected to art genesis and intellectuality, to creative virtues of sciences, to proliferation of texts about culture. An educated man possesses intelligence, wisdom and creative impulses,

being able to generate creations and to appreciate axiological products resulted from cultural gestures. We put into concept literary works, aesthetic, musical, plastic creations, product design and any other consequence of artistic aesthetics. Concretely, culture includes *Faustus* and *Miorița*, *The Hanging Gardens* and *Versailles*, *David* and *Laocoon*, *The Last Supper* and *Ox Cart*, *Romanian Rhapsody* and *Bolero*, *Endless Column* and *The Eiffel Tower*, *Ferarri* and *Pentium VI*, but also *Aircraft carrier, the Submarine* or *Cosmic Missile.* Culture, as concept has artistic, functional, institutional, scientific and technological definitions.

The man is a creator of culture, assigning meaning, content and configuration to his entire activity in an supreme and creative form. Generating culture, the man is ordained in divine deeds, perpetuating the myth of creation by Faustian and also Sisyphean repetition of his becoming. Man is *synthetic consequence of a community culture.*

b. **Civilization,** another concept difficult to define, has a lot of dictionary entries. It comes from the Latin word *„civis"* („*citizen*"), i.e. inhabitant of a city, of a settlement in the community (as opposed to the isolated, the hermit, the Grobian). To be tolerated by the community as a citizen requires compliance with the rules of coexistence which the individual had to assimilate in behaviour and conduct. These rules are related to hygiene, communication, mutual respect, tolerance, decency, but mostly attachment to social values like traditions, customs, and rules of good coexistence. Finally, civilization involves proper social relations gathered around good manners and politeness.

The concept has evolved, having other connotations, by keeping and adding semantic tones. Some refer to including in "civilization" means by which man changes and organizes the environment; others refer to insurance of comfort and life aesthetics. Therefore, a consequence of the mankind`s effort to improve its habitat in the "citadel" in what can be meant by "home" (house, village, city, region, country, continent) is synthetized in the concept of "civilization". Specifically, *civilization* involves elements linked to comfort, material and utility needs, such as housing, food, clothes, behaviour, communication technology, mobility, economic-administrative activities, legal, political and civic organization. They reach the dimension of a community`s lifestyle and help configuring a civilization. Civilization entities have been set and it is said that they are the source of conflicts („*Humanity is divided into subgroups-tribes, nations, wider cultural entities normally called civilizations*" (**The Clash of Civilizations**). Huntington (1993) considers that in a civilized world there are seven civilizations that can start a conflict at any time due to different norms and cohabitation styles. Without insisting on division (A. Toynbee, 1956, identifies 21 civilizations), or on clogs that hinder

communication between them, we will show that confusion is maintained in establishing a coherent relationship between "culture" and "civilization".

c. The effects of culture are expressed in ***acts of culture,*** converted into ***products of civilization.*** The level of culture configures the level of civilization. Therefore, civilization is understood as an echo of culture, a material representation of the spirit of cultural creation. Only a superior culture will be able to build/generate a higher civilization. Without technical and scientific culture it is impossible to imagine socialization of information and communication techniques. Household equipment, public television, personal computers, cars, etc. are the consequence of progress in culture. When culture is in jeopardy of becoming history, civilization saves its opportunities. Therefore, between culture and civilization there is a mutual relationship of inseparability. Leading a civilized life, the man places himself in the echo of culture, just like when creating he improves his existential comfort: "***Intercultural communities are cultural, ethnical, religious groups that live in the same space, have relationships of open interaction, exchange and mutual recognition showing respect for values, traditions and each other`s lifestyles.***" (Cozma, Seghedin, 2001).

4. Intercultural communicative style. Cultures and civilizations belong to an existential style. When the culture of a community is strongly influenced by religion, language, history, customs, values, symbols, behaviours – elements that assign uniqueness – civilization is unitary. The volume "*Ten thousand culture, one civilization*", says M.Malita would be a sketch of the geo-modernity in the 21st century. Cultures can coexist in one plenary civilization based on science, technology, administration, economy and lifestyle. When citizens (all of them) benefit from the advantages of a civilization that would satisfy their needs for a comfortable life, then they would withstand cultural diversity.

We can communicate and live in "interculturality" only to a certain standard of civilization. It is wrong to believe that we have the right (or request) to dance on a dance floor with a woman with dirty fingernails or to sit at the same table with someone with a shirt with torn elbows. Communication between people of different cultures tries to find ways of coexistence, of assuming civilized behaviour, of promoting equal dialogue. Culture encourages the individualism tendencies of communities, such as belonging to a race, nation, religion, geographic area, social or historical areal, etc. A civilized community (intercultural") becomes real and effective only if it removes blockages caused by the belonging to a community style, to a strongly individualized mentality. Coexisting means accepting the other" as s/he is, only when he is above a certain standard of civilization. Accepting the other involves

the triggering of emotional faculties that would exclude racial, social, national, ethnical, religious differences.

•

To achieve communication in intercultural environments one needs to trigger relationships that would diminish uncertainties towards the "other" belonging to coexisting cultures (*The Other* is in the same "space", but is "another" due to cultural differences). These uncertainties are related to his cultural identity: language, ethical group, nationality, religion, habitat, social and economic status, authority. *Knowledge* about the other, *interest* for interaction, *ability* of involvement and transfer *skills* are required to remove these uncertainties (T. Cozma, 2001).

An important aspect of intercultural relating is about identifying *"sense shared by both sides"*, namely negotiating understanding to diminish **uncertainty** (cognitive representation of the other) and **anxiety (**affective representation of the other**)**. The above mentioned plead for the necessity of *intercultural competence*, defines as *"the ability to negotiate cultural significations and to perform adequate and effective communication behaviours that recognize different identities of interlocutors in a specific environment"* or *"the ability to use knowledge, action methods, affective experiences, positive attitudes in solving cultural interaction situations"*.

Interaction requires certain abilities such as: tolerance for uncertainty, development of new relating categories, others besides the reference "mine", empathy, adapting communication, refrain from asserting prejudices, handling interaction. The balance of intercultural communication calls for the concept of *democracy,* through which the will of the majority does not impose authority and common good becomes supreme humanity value. Democracy generates variable geometry in cultural interactions, where each has the right to identity (respect for values, traditions, ways of living) without harming the Other.

•

People still have a lot of innocence and spontaneity having a (social) interest in not being completely honest. Reason calls for objectivity and honesty in social relations and the heart has its reasons to be suspicious of a thinking mind**.** The first impression about an interlocutor includes feelings – and not a reason-based judgement. When you meet a girl for the first time, the first impression could be extremely subjective and fake: „*She is too elegant to be honest*" or „*She has no charm*", „*She is too beautiful to be smart*" etc. These are innocent cheatings that mark the moment and influence the status of a relationship. Communication with the other has its own deceitfulness derived from the duality of the reason-affection, thought-feeling relationship. Reasonable thinking tends to ensure decent, real, sincere, honest communication and the gestures are of genuine honesty revealing a Faustian

contradiction. When you tell a woman that she is beautiful looking at her askance, you grin unconsciously. The truth can be read in nonverbal communication, in body language which certifies the truth of what is being said. J. J. Rousseau supports the above mentioned by stating that „*reason created man but feelings lead him*".

The synergologist is like a wizard because he reads the truth in the man`s soul as it is projected by his gestures. In his own way, any individual has synergological talent. Reading the gestures, he senses the real conflict between words and deeds and discovers that words almost always speak lies. He „sees" what people hide, asking the "mirror of reversed eyes" to identify the transparency of the soul and to reveal the interlocutor`s true feelings placed in communicative relationship. He infiltrates in the privacy, in the hidden parts of the soul through gestures, body language, instinctive and honest body movements.

Certain basic gestures are familiar to everyone. A glum man is san and angry while a happy man laughs. A "yes" involves vertical body movement while "no" a horizontal one. The smile is a gesture of acceptance and frowning one of rejection. Shrugging shoulders means "I don`t know", and shaking the forefinger is a warning, etc. Gestures have their significance in the context in which they occur and have their random quantity. We could read the people`s gestures, starting from the position of the body, of hands and legs and continuing with the movement of the eyebrows, eyes and facial muscles (soul is placed in the eyes; there is social, relational, passionate, metaphorical look, as well as their opposites). („I don`t see what you want to say"). In other words, the means people have at their disposal as members of the same community and with the same mentality are *vocal and body language.*

•

The conclusion of these considerations synthesizes the relationship between individuals in a postmodern society in which – as stated in the beginning- values are masked by a certain type of relating in an artificial context. People do not communicate, but their psychic relates, engaged in a competition of finding the real truth, innocently disguised in the complex personality of each individual. A postmodern man–like we are-adorns his existence according to the communicative events he is engaged in or is motivated to be a involved actor. *In fact, a communicative situation leaves the individual space of expression for Ego and a new Self-image.*

REFERENCES

[1] Abric, Jean-Claude, (2002), *Psihologia comunicării. Teorii şi metode*, Editura Polirom, Iaşi.

[2] Anghel, Petre, (2003), *Stiluri şi metode de comunicare*, Editura Aramis, Bucureşti.

[3] Cozma, Teodor (coord), (2001), *O nouă provocare pentru educaţie : interculturalitatea,* Editura Polirom, Iaşi.

[4] Dinu, Mihai, (2002), *Comunicarea*, Editura Ştiinţifică, Bucureşti.

[5] Frumuşani-Rovenţa, Daniela, (1999), *Semiotică, societate, cultură,* Institutul European, Bucureşti.

[6] Gavreliuc, Alin, (2002), *O călătorie alături de "celălalt". Studii de psihologie socială,* Editura Universităţii de Vest, Timişoara.

[7] Ilica, Anton, (2013), *Demers pedagogic contemporan*, Editura Învăţătorul modern, Chişinău.

[8] Ilica, Anton, (2010), *Comportament comunicativ şi cultura organizaţională*, Editura Universităţii "Aurel Vlaicu", Arad.

[9] Ionescu, Miron, (2007), *Instrucţie şi educaţie*, Editura Garamond, Cluj-Napoca.

[10]   Kelemen, Gabriela (2011), *Pedagogie şcolară şi preşcolară*, Editura Universităţii Aurel Vlaicu, Arad.

[11]   Marinescu, Valentina, (2004), *Efectele comunicării, o perspectivă culturologică*, Editura Tritonic, Bucureşti.

[12]   Mcquail, Denis, (1999), *Comunicarea* (trad. de Daniela Rusu), Institutul European, Bucureşti.

[13]   Mucchielli, Alex, (2005), *Arta de a comunica*, Editura Polirom, Iaşi.

[14]   Niculescu, R. M. (2000), *Formarea formatorilor*, Editura All educaţional, Bucureşti.

[15]   Niculescu, R. M. (2010), *Curriculum între continuitate şi provocare*, Editura PsihoMedia, Sibiu.

[16]   Pease, Allan, (2002), *Limbajul trupului*, Editura Polimark, Bucureşti.

[17]   Pedler, Emmanuel, (2001), *Sociologia comunicării,* Editura Cartea Românească, Bucureşti.

[18]   Roman, Alina, (2007),

[19]   Stan, Emil, (2006), *Pedagogie postmodernă*, Editura Institutul european, Iaşi.

[20]   Siebert, Horst, (2001), *Pedagogie constructivistă*, Institutul European, Bucureşti.