

THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH OF COMMUNICATION*

-Book review-

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In recent years, the theoretical and practical aspects of communication have been analyzed in numerous works of psychology, sociology, psycho-sociology, linguistics, education sciences, cybernetics or information sciences. These issues reflect, on the one hand, the importance of communication in the formation of the individual's social personality and, on the other hand, the necessity of knowing the psychological mechanisms of communication in order to increase its efficiency in interpersonal, group or organizational relationships.

The study entitled “The Sociology of Communication” can also be included in this context. In the study, the author, Professor Matei Șimandan, approaches issues or real interest regarding the fathoming of clear themes in this field, as well as regarding the opportunities he offers to researchers and students who are interested in understanding the complexity of the communication process.

The paper I am referring to is structured around the following more significant themes: the concept of communication and the explicative theories which thus emerged; the characteristics of verbal and nonverbal communication; the particularities of interpersonal communication; communication in groups and organizations; mass communication and the media culture; public communication and advertising communication.

From the preliminary pages, the author is preoccupied with the organization of the diversity of the perspectives which approach the concepts connected to communication, stressing the forms of verbal communication, the functions of communication, the characteristics of nonverbal communication, the meanings attributed to paralanguage and to the identification of certain barriers in the process of communication.

I should also like to highlight the fact that the issues discussed do not stop at their mere presentation, but are treated in close connection to the daily life situations involved by interpersonal communication, to the factors which favour or limit the types of communication, to the role of self-image, the relationships instituted between attitude and behaviour in the process of communication, as well as to the cognitive, affective and behavioural effects of interpersonal communication.

This type of argumentation may also be noticed in the section consecrated to the communication in groups or organizations. Thus, after presenting the main types of social groups, the author focuses upon the evolution stages of the social groups (their formation, structure, standardization, performance and deconstruction), the different types of communication which take place in work groups, the ways in which social networks are constituted and function, as well as the role of the group leader within these networks (p.82).

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What holds a particular interest in this context is the relationship between the organizational culture, which refers to the array of ideas, knowledge, rules, values and means of interaction between people”, and the communicational culture, which includes “the array of data and information which circulate on formal and informal channels of communication, inside the organization and between the organization and the outside, as well as the means of transmitting them.”⁶⁰(p.82).

The last three chapters of the study are consecrated to mass communication, the approach perspectives and its functions, public communication and the role of propaganda, persuasion and manipulation, and to advertising communication, its elements, the types of advertisements and the ethical aspects involved by this type of communication.

A good connoisseur of the educational discourse, the author of the study entitled “The Sociology of Communication” does not disregard the classification of the meanings attributed to the main concepts which intervene in the different forms of communication. For instance, I would mention terms such as: empathy, attitude, motivation, social conformation, consensus, discrimination, social identity, interaction, the management of impression, mentality, interpretation, prejudice, conflict, social representation, stereotypes, social stigmata or social status.

Starting from the importance of these terms, I consider that the author of the book could have used them more explicitly in the discussion of the practical situations of communication, to reveal their significance within different contexts of communication, thus developing their characterization from the end of the study.

At the same time, I consider that the paper would have been in benefit if the author had proposed a few communication scenarios meant to stimulate the knowing of the psycho-sociology of communication, the factors which limit interpersonal communication, as well as the means of surmounting the blockages which emerge in the process of communication.

I would conclude my reflections by highlighting the rich documentation of the study, the clarity and precision of the discourse, the use of synthetic graphs and tables, as well as the rigor of Matei Șimandan’s enterprise. All these aspects turn the reading of the book into an exercise that brings thorough information, which helps the reader understand the psychosocial perspective on communication, as well as the need of perfecting our individual ability to communicate.

⁶⁰ Matei Șimandan, , *Sociologia comunicării*, Arad, Editura Universității “Aurel Vlaicu” din Arad, ISBN: 978 – 973 – 752 – 595 – 6, 2011, p.82