Communication as work of diversity (perspective and methodology)

Comunicação como trabalho da diversidade (perspectiva e metodologia)

JOSÉ LUIZ BRAGA[a]

Universidade Federal de Goiás. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação. Goiânia – GO, Brazil

ABSTRACT

Starting from the procedural variation of communication found in the world of life and valuing the resulting diversification of research and theories, this article proposes a perspective of knowledge in a line of evolutionary epistemology, with a scope that overcomes dispersion without detriment to the variety of problems, objects of observation and research objectives. The perspective assumes the human species' capacity for diversification as a communicational challenge and proposes a line of connection between this comprehensive challenge and the plurality of interactional urgencies occurring in the social environment. Furthermore, the article develops the relevant research methodology and provides for empirical research to test the perspective.

Keywords: Evolutionary epistemology, communicational challenge, dimensions of variation, communication processors

[a] Visiting Professor at the Graduate Program in Communication at the Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG). PhD in Communication from the Institut Français de Presse. Postdoc in Communication from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). Emeritus Professor at the Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos). Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3742-1119. Email: bragawarren@gmail.com

RESUMO

Partindo da variação processual da comunicação constatada no mundo da vida e valorizando a decorrente diversificação de pesquisas e teorias, este artigo propõe uma perspectiva de conhecimento em uma linha de epistemologia evolutiva, com uma abrangência que supera a dispersão sem prejuízo da variedade de problemas, de objetos de observação e de objetivos de investigação. A perspectiva assume a capacidade de diversificação da espécie humana como um desafio comunicacional e propõe uma linha de conexão entre esse desafio abrangente e a pluralidade de urgências interacionais que ocorrem no ambiente social. Ademais, o artigo desenvolve a metodologia de pesquisa pertinente e prevê a realização de pesquisas empíricas para testar a perspectiva.

Palavras-chave: Epistemologia evolutiva, desafio comunicacional, dimensões de variação, processadores da comunicação

T O THE EXTENT that the various Human and Social Sciences (HSC), since the 1990s, have stopped proposing general theories about communication – which should be seen, more precisely, as precursor theories –, our field of studies has been developing in its own space an expanded collection of research and theoretical reflections, in a variety of angles, on multiple objects of interest. A simple observation of the annals of Compós and Intercom, as well as of specialized entities in the area, demonstrates this diversified production.

Communication issues are also expressed in all activities and environments of society and are related to the ways in which communication takes place, to the technological presence of communication means, to reception processes, interactional circuits, specialized professions, problems occurring in all social fields and, even, to the most common actions of human gesture: dialogue, rumor, commensality, sign language, bar table conversation.

The diversity of processes observed in society, research and theories that develop knowledge about communication – relevant and necessary as it is – has led to a double problem: dispersion, which limits the search for consistency in the field of knowledge; lack of consistency in the field, which makes it difficult to deepen knowledge[1].

Dispersion, which in the 20th century was justified as a result of an interdisciplinary theoretical generation, is now assumed as an internal dispersion of the area itself, in a multiplicity of "specialties of attention" on the variety of issues and observables that ask for corresponding theoretical and methodological specifications, as well as the use of theories without distinction of origin or focus specification.

The double problem pointed out is an obstacle to the recognition of communication as a discipline of knowledge among HSC. In facing this limitation, the area has been developing metatheoretical scrutiny to systematize the theoretical collection available; cartographic descriptions to identify some composition between the knowledge produced by the different disciplines and their perspectives or, at least, to "territorialize" the diversity; and ontological concepts to capture the substantial aspects of the phenomenon.

All these processes are relevant – except when, in trying to reduce dispersion, they lead to restrictions on diversity. The great variety of research and reflections is required by the very diversity of questions and observables. The processes that human society constantly experiments, invents, readjusts, remakes and transforms make communication a proliferating phenomenon to the point that each moment is different from the previous ones. We must recognize that the diversity of communicational processes in social reality *is a constitutive aspect of our object of knowledge*.

Under these conditions, the following epistemological question arises, which constitutes the axis of the research forwarded here: how to produce consistent communicational knowledge while maintaining the necessary variety of research on the procedural diversity of the world of life and reducing the dispersion between sectoral discoveries? This article presents a proposal in this direction.

We will not seek *to define* "the communicational phenomenon" as if it were marked by a specific nature. It is not a matter of conceptualizing what communication is, but rather of proposing a possible *research perspective as a comprehensive epistemological instrument, capable of tracking communicational processes wherever they occur and in the form they present.*

A communicational perspective, as a scrutinizing look for the search for knowledge, must embrace the diversity of communicational issues of society itself, serving heuristically to ask questions and stimulate discoveries, and not to explain the communicational processes in a unifying way, but to understand the very variety of developed logics and activated dynamics that interpose in the specificity of the different social urgencies.

Having assumed the potential infinity of communicational gestures, strategies, objectives and logic tentatively put in place by society, the ineffectiveness of seeking this perspective in the very set of communicational processes becomes evident. To respond to the double criterion of valuing diversity and the search for consistency, I propose to shift attention – from gestures and communication processes – *to the problems of the social environment as a function of which processes are triggered or developed.*

It is within the scope of problems – and not of processes – that we must build a perspective[2]. That perspective, under construction, will not be derived directly from the object "communication occurrences in society", *but rather from what can be perceived as the problem that the processes seek to respond to.* It is about offering a communicational angle to observe social occurrences, and then, to apprehend the local logic of the processes aimed to face the specific urgencies that can be referred to the comprehensive challenge.

I emphasize that proposing a comprehensive perspective with a properly communicational approach does not correspond to developing a general theory of communication[3]. Proposing a perspective is an epistemological rather than a theoretical gesture. It should be a heuristic approach in search of knowledge and consistency strategies, and not an explanation or conceptualization of the phenomenon and its processes. Such a perspective, even comprehensive, can coexist with other perspectives, both sectoral and comprehensive. Noting that each HSC includes different perspectives in its theoretical-epistemological body,

[2] I took a first step in prefiguring this epistemological question in the article "Do que não conhecemos os problemas, não saberemos as respostas" (We do not know the problems, we will not know the answers) (Braga, 2021) – stimulated by questions posed by Luiz Signates (2018).

[3] What constitutes each of the human and social sciences is its specific angle of observation of society. *Perspective* is what determines which objects become relevant and the way in which they should be observed, not an object-and-method definition. Nothing prevents a discipline from having different perspectives.

we argue that a search for comprehensiveness over variations of an object of knowledge cannot imply a pretense of totality of apprehension.

DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY

Having gone from the diversity of theories and research to the diversity of communicational processes in society, and from the processes to the questions they answer, we still need some preliminary moves to develop the perspective to be forwarded – among these, a reflection on the human differences.

One of the aspects that have attracted the attention of researchers, generating theorizations about communication, is the issue of otherness and the relationship with the diversity of social participants. When Honneth (2003) evokes the issue of recognition and when Lévinas (2007) addresses the barriers of otherness, difference is shown as a problem and, implicitly, communication as a work on this difference. The social specificities of coping with diversity focus attention on the dynamics inherent to the problematized difference and on the punctual logic of building objectives and the search for healing strategies. We will not stray too far from this nucleus, which offers significant clues. It is necessary, however, to avoid treating difference exclusively as a problem and communication as a cure.

Certainly, social goals justify such specified approaches, but they should not occupy the entire epistemological spectrum. The concentration of attention on differences – when these are already socially constituted, verified, or assumed – catches the communication issue at an established stage, making us lose sight of previous and more comprehensive processes. We must, therefore, look at it from a broader and more abstract angle, obtaining a perspective that can both perceive differences to be resolved and obtain an understanding of the generating processes and accuracy on the transformation strategies and actions.

For this, instead of focusing attention on communication processes only as a work of overcoming differences, we are going to pay attention to a third level of diversity – alongside the theoretical and social procedural levels –, reflecting on human diversity itself not as a problem in itself, but as a striking feature of the species.

Lucrécia Ferrara (2021) rightly criticizes "communication aimed at apprehending regularities that are reproduced" and asks whether it would not be necessary "to consider the possibility of developing, in the communication territory, an epistemology of differences" (Ferrara, 2021, p. 7). This study pays attention to that provocation. Human diversity is not made up of established differences, regularized as if they were immutable. We have skills for diversification[4] – of gestures, opinions, processes, perception, strategies, invention, experience and, through all these elements, cultural generation.

[4] Ciro Marcondes Filho (2011, p. 176) points this out when he considers communication as what "can cause transformations in me, change my situation, allow me to transform myself".

This diversification is structural and offers us experimentation, inference, and strategic generation skills. First, as a potential for adjustment to changing environments and then, by the very composition of cultural environments in which diversity is somehow directed towards joint actions.

What is communicationally relevant is not the difference itself, it is the work of diversity, through the relational modes it develops. Diversity work goes beyond praxiological processes on already perceived problems. It implies, to a large extent, proactive processes in search of balances and civilizational advancement.

The so-called "social" animals, with collective behavior, such as bees and ants, have an instinctive apparatus that adequately accommodates different attributions in the collective, according to effective standards for their perpetuation. In the human species, *the need for socially generating the articulating patterns between differences* becomes fundamental. We have some basic instruments to develop practices in this direction – by joint experimentation –, which allows motivated variations and tentative compositions.

Animals also demonstrate variable action skills when they relate, mainly through instinctive processes, to specific niches of natural affordances (Gibson, 1977). But a human peculiarity is the intensive presence of a form of diversity that is produced in the very development of the specimen's life.

What nature does, in our biological constitution, is to make room for an expanded part of our capacities for action not to be strictly dependent on genetic characteristics, attributing this relevant part to direct relations with the social environment, in which we must learn or invent the relevant processes to walk in a world that is continually changing.

This implies a work of diversity – corresponding to communication processes – that is not limited to practices of articulation between differences. It also involves the production of transformations in individuals, as well as between groups and, for the same individual, between moments of his existence. Composition is not necessarily an elimination of differences, but rather a mutable adjustment between them. The two dynamics are not opposed; they feed each other back by generating diversification and linking differences.

Thus, social participants are not simply diverse *per se*. More importantly, they diversify by learning[5], by life circumstances and by the experiments they develop in the presence of different urgencies to be faced. We need a longer time than other animals in "training for the world", but this favors a quick adaptation to changing circumstances without this tuning depending on a very long-term generational biological diversification.

The variations of the human being are not only presented as in the Darwinian perspective – random mutations selected in the sequence of generations by organic

[5] Remembering that, contrary to a widespread notion, learning is not a simple acquisition of established knowledge and stabilized practices. Even in early childhood, learning corresponds to the creative ability to reorganize ideas in the face of each piece of information received – from others or from the world –, inferring its meaning in relation to things and the other ones.

[6] In this regard, see Paul
Thagard's critique (1980).
On the various ways of
considering the relationship
between variation and
selectivity, see Paulo Abrantes
(2004). On a heuristic derived
from natural selection, in view
of evolutionary epistemology,
pertinent to communicational
knowledge, see Braga (in press).

adaptation to the environment[6]. More relevantly, they appear as a diversification of possible procedures within the same time frame. The selections made in the social environment, therefore, cease to occur only between variations of the organism itself and start to occur as selections *between variable strategies of social decisions*.

Communication is not simply an adjustment resource between different participants whose diversity can make joint actions difficult; communication is also, and above all, a factor of transformation and flexibility in the face of diverse urgencies.

The differentiated environmental conditions are not only those of nature, but also, to an important degree, of the social environment itself, which is diversified in the individual activities of the participants, in established practices and cultural environments. Society, as a whole, can benefit from differentiation, either through integrated work, tentative strategies or mutual support between different skills. Thus, we have the possibility of articulations in different social and natural ecologies, which makes us less dependent on a specific environment and more viable in multiple circumstances.

[7] Adaptability here does not
just refer to the organism's
biological and passive aptitude
for a given environment.
It is no longer exclusively
a question of the natural
environment, but also of
the social environment –
which implies a mutual
and active action between
the participants and the
environment, with occasional
modifications on both of them.

Adaptability, in such conditions, is no longer restricted to a passive harmony with the environment. It should be perceived as adaptive potential[7], with increased dynamics in relation to other animal species and representing greater creative flexibility (Ferrand, 2008).

To say that we are different by *interactional variation* corresponds to recognizing a mutual transformation between the individual and their insertion cultures. It is what we can characterize as a *constantly ongoing diversification process*.

[8] I emphasize that the "adaptive
advantage" addressed here
does not concern an internal
competition between specimens
in search of predominance of
the "fittest", as intended by a
"social Darwinism", which must
be repudiated. The possible
advantage pointed out is
diversity itself. I also note that
Darwin was not a "social
Darwinist" (Costa Júnior, 2018).

The risk of misunderstanding and maladjustment between social participants is always present, as well as violence and oppression. The adaptive advantage[8] is only realized to the extent that it is composed not of rigidly concatenated differences, but rather of a joint adaptability to changing circumstances, which calls for an *ongoing, experimental differentiation* during the life of the specimens. The counterpart of the adaptive advantage of diversity is the need for procedural standards and generalized practices – the adjustment between gestures and between ideas is not done without effort. It also depends on whether diversities can somehow be reformulated, questioned, and adjusted in complementarity, connecting to a *joint generation of diversified processes*.

Therefore, we need standards, systems, and cultures to generate some stability and continuity, knowing, however, that any continuity, if it loses contact with the situation's requirements, becomes a risk generator. For this very reason, continuity cannot be maintained as automatism. Without significant readjustments in the face of the needs of a changing situation, it becomes a source of tension,

which results in new problems. We have to diversify as individuals, as collectives and as social organizations. Thus, the communicational problem is not simply the need to generate joint actions, as if diversification were a difficulty and standards and systems were the solution. Responding to the communicational challenge is to develop viable compositions between transformations (by diversification) and continuity (as culture).

Communication is the generative and procedural dynamic of the work of diversity, developing patterns and, at the same time, allowing the frequent revision of such compositions. This structuring condition of the human species – which we summarize in the formula diversification/changeable compositions – is what we will assume as the basis for the hypothesis of the communicational challenge, which we will detail in the next section.

THE COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE

We have seen that the communication issue is not one of the problems for which comprehensive solutions are sought that leave them behind. Diversity is not just an issue; it is also a structural characteristic, a competence integrated into our conditions of survival and perpetuation, an "adaptive" quality.

This structural characteristic corresponds to what we can metaphorically call a "programmed incompleteness" in biological processes, with a relative reduction of instinctual automatisms and an expansion of communicationally generated variations in the social space, and, therefore, *not occurring in the structure of the organism*, although related to the exercise of its competences. The diversifying characteristic of the species results in an increase in adaptive flexibility. Instead of waiting that, by natural selection, a line of organisms more adapted to the environment survive and proliferate, we depend on a larger part of social generation – and no longer mainly biological – of creative-adaptive responses.

Under these conditions, the challenge facing human society is to exercise the species' own skills to obtain viable compositions, continuously trying to prevent our differentiated specificities from resulting in disastrous tensions. Concomitantly, we have the challenge of exercising diversity, the capacities of diversification and social invention to face the new urgencies that must be interactionally faced, as well as the challenge of overcoming wrong compositions or in the process of disintegration or conflict.

This creative and diversifying aspect does not operate in isolation: its tentative effectiveness is only realized in the set of actions for the survival of the processes attempted in the varied conditions of the world and for the good use and activation of the niches offered or generated. The procedures are only completed

D

by processes of joint operation – active articulations of the possible diversity in a given culture and historical moment – generating, in turn, culture and history.

The social problem of the species is the very need to constantly find answers that prove to be satisfactory, since the organism's automatisms – which, evidently, do not disappear – cease to occupy the center of the scene. With the expansion of the proportion of adaptivity/creativity not imprinted in the genetic program, the possibilities of dispersion, misunderstanding and oppression also increase.

The set of human characteristics referred to in the previous item – which we gathered in the integrated notion of "diversification/compositions" – thus produces the communicational challenge of the species. The word "communicational" is justified as a central qualifier of the challenge, because diversity and its infinite compositions can only be realized as an adaptive-creative advantage insofar as the skills of diversification and skills for putting in common (articulate, compose) gestures, behaviors and diversified strategies are mutually exercised by the social participants. This also implies resisting the stiffening of established articulations.

This problem is faced directly by human societies in the practical arena of everyday life or in the historical dimension of existence, in the varied concrete and specific forms that today we can recognize as "communicational processes". It is the fact of corresponding to facing the challenges of the work of diversity that allows categorizing such processes as "communicational". In other words, communication is not defined by the conceptual nature of the phenomenon, but by the problems – specified as such – that are faced.

If the communicational challenge is generic and comprehensive, its manifestation in social reality is shown in the form of potentially infinite specific problems. We need to make a clear distinction between the challenge resulting from human characteristics – which I propose as *a comprehensive communication issue* – and specific problems of social reality, to which the generation and activation of processes – specific and plural – of communication are aimed.

For clarity of distinction, I use the expression "urgencies" to refer to local, concrete and specific communication problems of any activity between participants that involves the development of some way of articulation between positions, objectives and action strategies, which will compose the direction to be given to its development. Not infrequently, urgency requires experimentation in search of tentative strategies; but even in the availability of already established and stabilized procedures, these require adjustments to the uniqueness of the situation (Braga, 2010).

The urgencies related to the work of diversity occur in specific ways in all the variety of situations, cultures and social environments, established or not, in the most diverse areas, requesting from its participants positions related to the need to put together the complex and disconnected set of elements in the situation faced.

Interactional urgencies do not just ask for correlated solution strategies – the selection of tried strategies and their insertion in immediate contexts generate possibilities that modify the context itself. Depending on their transforming potential, they can have less or more repercussions in immediate or broader contexts, leading to correlated cultural changes.

We know that the challenge is not always well faced. Quite the contrary: there are communication processes that work with diversity in fallacious ways (as in fake news), that transform it into oppressed differences (as in racism), or even that build excluding dualities (as in political polarization). History shows the strong incidence of error in the exercise of human competences, as well as the resulting risks for civilization. Without an adequate exercise of the two orders of communication skills, the species can even be driven to extinction. The anxiety for universal values and truths and for absolute or mathematical criteria is an indicator of how the challenge weighs us down. However, it is not possible to escape this need for facing the challenge inherent to the constitution of the species.

The scientific issue – both in terms of embracing comprehension and explanation of specific processes and praxeological contributions to society – corresponds to the search of rigorous knowledge about this problem, thus participating in the communicational challenge faced directly by society. What I consider in this article as the communicational challenge hypothesis is not restricted to the descriptive level of human characteristics and the proposition of their general relevance for survival. It also includes the proposition that the challenge thus described is a pertinent basis for a *knowledge perspective on social reality* aimed at a comprehensive and diversified understanding of communication processes.

It is with this proposition that we develop our proposal on the epistemological issue presented in the introduction. The next section presents the hypothesis of the communicational challenge for society as a focal point from a knowledge perspective.

THE PERSPECTIVE

The social processes of communication, as the work of diversity, involve the participation of two types of competences: those of diversification and those of composition, as an infinitely complex game between these two human dynamics.

This perception situates communication issues within the scope of transformation processes and search for continuity, justifying a heuristic of evolutionary epistemology. The epistemological line has as its main reference Darwin's hypothesis on the origin and development of species, replacing a deterministic causality with a process of generating variations, only then selected. In another

article (Braga, in press), I present the possibility of its heuristic transference to the communicational perspective.

The issue here is to derive a perspective of knowledge from human diversity. Based on the communicational challenge, that perspective should allow investigating composition-generating processes by which strategy variations are produced and selection tactics triggered.

We assume that the set of human characteristics can be considered as *the most comprehensive environment* in which the urgencies and strategies of communication processes are developed. But it is not a matter of making everything depend on the characteristics of the species. For its exercise in research, the perspective must be a line of connection between the comprehensive communicational challenge and specific social urgencies that can be perceived as a problem within the scope of this challenge. Such processes manifest themselves seeking insertion in contexts of occurrence and, occasionally, focusing on the context itself.

The hypothesis of the communicational challenge makes it possible to scrutinize, for each urgency analyzed, *its own specificities* – of the situations of occurrence and of the investigative and theoretical questions triggered –, perceiving the elements that the specific object itself puts on the agenda, as well as what is sought to discover therein. The connecting line makes it possible to understand how the general dynamics embrace the specific responses found and how these responses exercise those dynamics.

The relations of supersumption and subsumption between the two levels thus develop in a double direction, demanding a recurrent reflection between, on the one hand, the comprehensive challenge characterized by diversity and, on the other hand, its highly varied occurrence in the specific urgencies that call for communicational processes to face them.

The finding of a relationship between the general characteristics of the species, with its types of competences – learning, diversification, composition, empathy, inferential competence, critical analysis, imitation abilities, self-awareness, etc. –, and the variation of tactics and strategies to respond to the communicational challenge make it clear that the communicational act *does not start in culturally established interactional processes (languages; consolidated strategies; or means of communication)*[9]. Given the comprehensive challenge, communication starts first, as a necessity, leading to the invention of gestures and processes through which languages are established, strategies are selected, and means are developed.

We can assume that the communication dynamics is at the origin of the specific processes generated (Braga, 2017). The processes are variations of action and thought, tentatively produced as a function of goals objectively related to the communicational challenge. Such variations are selected by the participants

[9] In the methodology section, we categorize these culturally established processes, more precisely, as communication processors, insofar as social participants develop and direct them as a strategy to activate and deepen communicational potentialities of diversity.

JOSÉ LUIZ BRAGA

within the reach of their understanding and action; and by the context, to the extent of their insertion possibility –, remembering that the goals themselves are socially, culturally and *communicationally* developed.

In the line of connection between the most specific urgencies and strategies and this level of greater scope, possible contexts, socially and culturally relevant, are interposed at different levels. For example, a specific interactional urgency may successively receive relevant incidences from a professional space, from a legal issue, from political circumstances, and from the cultural environment in which it occurs. Each of these levels shows itself as a selective structure for the variations subsumed therein and offers variations for the meaningful structures of a superior level, of supersumption. For the concept of "meaningful structure" we refer to the work of Lucien Goldmann (1970).

The adoption of an evolutionary epistemological line corresponds to giving special emphasis to the connection moved by variations and selectivity. Social processes are not activated by previous universal truths or by ultimate goals, but by experiments – which work in different ways – of searching, trying, learning, facing difficulties, creativity, and social invention, generating variations that are selected according to its viable relationship with the urgencies worked on and their contexts.

This makes it possible to take into account all the elements considered relevant to the specific objects of study, whether in social reality or in the theoretical approach chosen for its relationship with the problem addressed. Context levels can be perceived as stimulating variation and as providing criteria and selection processes.

That observation of intermediate levels and their mutual actions corresponds to the line of connection between the communicational challenge and the urgencies in which communication manifests itself as a relevant issue[10]. In research work, such a connection must be tailored to specific questions and objectives. Thus, it is worth reflecting on its approach in methodological work.

[10]Vera França (2002, p. 293) pointed out, at the beginning of the century, that "it does not seem opportune for us to be entangled by the discussion of the pertinent and the impertinent [since communication is in everything], but by the discussion of what is relevant".

AN APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGY

In the work of empirical research, the perspective calls for two movements of attention – *from the urgencies to the challenge*, in order to perceive how the specific urgencies correspond to the communicational challenge, enabling the development of consistency; *from the challenge to the urgencies*, in order to discover communication as the work of diversity within the scope of reality.

Once the urgency (or type of urgencies) to be investigated is selected, the researcher must observe ongoing aspects related to variations, selectivity,

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tentative transformations and sought continuity, insertion strategies in significant contexts, specific procedural logics of the situation, and incidences between processes and their previous contexts. Thereby the singularities of the communicational process in question are apprehended by the specific questioning angle of the research. As is often the case, in situations that require research, such a process will entail tensions, as well as lack of definitions among the participants.

The result of this observation can be related to the characteristics of the comprehensive challenge, leading to connection inferences. Such comprehensive level inferences, returning to the level of singular urgency, allow the apprehension of more details and more precise perceptions.

The reiteration of the two movements makes it possible to expand, at each alternation, the understanding of the comprehensive and the explanation of the specific. Goldmann (1964) proposes: "the clarification of a meaningful structure constitutes a process of *comprehension*; while its insertion into a wider structure is, in relation to the latter, a process of *explanation*". And then: "Explanation and comprehension are not, therefore, *two* different intellectual processes, but one and the same process related to two frames of reference" (Goldmann, 1964, pp. 353-354, our translation)[11].

In the methodological approach from our perspective, this alternation is organized around the potentialities of the connection. About the first movement – from urgencies to challenges – we highlight:

[11]In the original : "la mise en lumière d'une structure significative constitue un processus de *compréhension* alors que son insertion dans une structure plus vaste est, par rapport à elle, un processus *d'explication*." […] "Explication et compréhension ne sont donc pas *deux* processus intellectuels différents mais un seul et même processus rapporté à deux cadres de référence."

- referring different urgencies and strategies to the same comprehensive question makes it possible for them to talk to each other, stimulating angles of composition and mutual tension;
- observing tactical variations of objectives and strategies in concrete situations allows linking them to the species' generic communication skills;
- observing the specificities of urgencies and ongoing strategies favors a better understanding of the comprehensive logics and dynamics available.

From the challenge to urgencies:

- studying the comprehensive challenge in the specific circumstance allows us to perceive the communicational angle of the punctual issue, discovering there how the characteristics of diversity and composition were triggered as well as their communicational quality;
- observing how the comprehensive question is shown in the face of urgencies allows us to apprehend how the challenge materializes and takes place in social practice;

– having a scrutiny logic favors unraveling what is communicational in the specific interactional processes observed, as well as deciding what is their relevance for the research.

Paying attention to intermediate contexts – meaningful structures between punctual urgencies and the comprehensive challenge –, we realize that the endless diversification of processes *does not appear disorderly and random in the social environment and in research*. The procedural variations of communication are organized – not as a unified and stable territory, which could be mapped in a geographic pattern, but certainly in multiple *dimensions of variation*.

The connecting line between the challenge and social urgencies enables attention to all the specificities that characterize the urgencies and communication strategies observed and related to the sociocultural contexts, social fields and areas of knowledge in which they are inscribed and affect these *dimensions of variation*. They are discernible as sets *of processes in society* by which cultures and history are developed.

This perception reinforces the importance of diversified studies for producing communicational knowledge, an importance confirmed by the strategy of the area organizing work groups and lines of research that are evident as dimensions of variation in the development of knowledge. The dimensions of variation are shown, then, by the research problems and approaches that make up and characterize the set.

A second perception, promising for further studies, is the finding that some communication processes, developed at the service of communication objectives, given their tactical plasticity and their productive fortune in the social environment, are characterized as a basis for social experimentation and for activation in situations and urgencies, serving as *a structure that provides communicational dynamics*. More than just dimensions of variation, structures that show such continual generation capability should be categorized as *communication processors*. These function as flexible molds, or condensations of tactics, for the constant production of communication processes. Although the variations produced show a kinship with each other, due to their development within the macro logics of the same processor, they can develop in various directions and with very different objectives.

The concept of communicational processors proposed here is, therefore, a central operative element for the research work. What characterizes that notion, with more concreteness than a similarity of problems, is the presence in the culture of such "processing devices" in material form or as structured social rules and processes available for activation by social participants to continue to exercise appropriate interactional gestures and to develop their communication attempts.

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To a large extent, the communicational processes theorized by the HSC in the 20th century are of this order and were perceived as communicational both for demonstrating their potential in this direction and for being criticized as intervening in an established regularity. Among such processes, we mention: the cultural industry; languages as enabling or required for interaction; the information; the narrative; the rhetoric; the sign; the audiovisual; the technology; the media in general, with its vast productive wealth of communicational processes. We can also include communicational processors in lines of professional action – journalism, advertising, organizational communication, cinematographic creation, etc. Not by chance, disciplinary theories that were considered "general theories of communication" turned to one or the other of these processors.

However, a restrictive characteristic, reiterated in all these studies, is to consider communication only that which is done from the processor in question, due to its characteristics. The processor is the most perceived scope, disregarding the relevance of other processes – and for this very reason the theory was considered general. Processors appeared as *the starting point and guide* of what is considered Communication. When the origin of a processor is occasionally discussed, the communicational dynamics are not observed, but the logics of the disciplinary field in which the theory was developed. The processor is assumed as an instituting element and the communication process is studied as if it were dependent on determinations and paradigms of the discipline that investigates it.

Against that view, from a communicational perspective, processors must be perceived as spaces of generative variation *instituted by communicational processes* and, at the same time, developers of logics that enhance communicational compositions. In the perspective proposed here, and as we observed before, without denying the intervention of motives of all kinds studied by other disciplines, *we see communication as prior to such processors*, participating in their generation. From the development of a processor, communication remains a basic dynamic that, due to the communicational challenge, *redirects the processor by the very fact of exercising it*. By activating a certain processor, the social participants make their communication work within its logic, but the dynamics of diversification continues to be exercised in a readjustment process.

In this origin, characterized by the hypothesis of the communicational challenge, we find a possibility of articulating processes and gestures of human communication without any reduction of their diversity.

CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED PERSPECTIVE

The article proposed a perspective focused on the issue presented in the introduction, seeking to value the diversity of observables, research and theories worked on by researchers in the field, at the same time avoiding the dispersion found as a barrier to a greater development of the knowledge produced. We find the guiding axis of the perspective in comprehensive characteristics, which are present in the variety of occurrences and communicational processes and in the diversity of the problems that request them. The following elements were structured in the development of the perspective:

– The objective of maintaining the diversity of observables, research and theories and of reducing dispersion, enabling the search for consistency in the construction of knowledge;
– Perception of human diversity as an adaptive characteristic of the species for different contexts in the social environment;
– Verification of the communicational challenge arising from this differentiating characteristic; and the consequent generation of changeable compositions between differences and adjustable standards in the social environment, as the *work of diversity*;
– Apprehension of this dynamic as a process of transformation-and--continuity in facing the communicational challenge;
– Activation of a heuristic based on evolutionary epistemology, adjusted to the social process of communication in the discovery of its variations;
– Development of the perspective as a connection line between the comprehensive challenge and the endless communication urgencies;
– Reiterated going back and forth between the extreme points of that connection line for the scrutiny of meaningful intermediate levels as the appropriate research methodology;
– Characterization of intermediate levels as dimensions of variation and selection contexts;
– Perception of communicationally generated intermediate levels to process communication as "communication processors".

With such components, what the perspective seeks, tracking the comprehensive challenge that dynamizes social situations, is to discover the characteristics of interactional processes, depending on the problems chosen for research.

The most explicit structural feature in human communicational dynamics stems from the fact that its participants diversify more widely than other species. The dynamics is demarcated as a comprehensive process of transformations

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and search for continuity – which justifies an approach in terms of evolutionary epistemology. Under these conditions, languages, strategies and means are shown to be the work of diversity. Within the scope of the comprehensive challenge that triggers this dynamic, social urgencies multiply through the most diverse social issues.

The proposed perspective offers a line of connection between the urgencies in the social environment – with their correlated research problems – and the generation nucleus of the work of diversity dynamics. It is not, as I emphasize throughout the article, an explanatory theory, in which the diversity of urgencies is "reduced" to a unified pattern. On the contrary, the perspective appears as a heuristic to unravel the specificity of the different ways of facing the challenge in society and, therefore, of the infinite variations produced by the communicational dynamics.

The methodological approach to exercise this line of connection in research is based on Lucien Goldmann's propositions (1970) regarding meaningful structures. The approach is developed as a strategy for perceiving the relationships between a whole and its parts, which are mutually constituted. Given the verification of the different operational levels through which society produces mutable compositions between the ongoing diversifications, in its multiple activities and institutions, it is relevant to research the communicational work of diversity in the production of variations and in the selection processes that are manifested.

Dimensions of communicational variation are developed by urgencies of all kinds and related to all activities of social interest, whose participants trigger different strategies to obtain some composition of their differences. Among these dimensions of variation, the development of the perspective highlights a productive lineage of dimensions *directly turned to the communicational activity itself*, whose focus is to enable, facilitate and direct human interactions, whatever their objectives. I characterize these structures, centrally significant, as "communication processors" and I perceive, preliminarily, three types: languages; consolidated strategies; and means and mediations between the participants. These three possibilities, although distinguishable, are intertwined in varying doses in the social environment.

The perspective presented can encompass and give attention to all dimensions of variation in the work of diversity– occasionally in interface with the specializations constituted around a specific dimension. However, it is worth paying particular attention to communication processors. Although these are long recognized and researched in the area, they have been seen in an isolated and incomplete way. Their own generation already involves the work of diversity, showing that one cannot think of communication as something that only occurs

from a communicational processor, as this was *communicationally* developed as a selector of strategies and generator of variations.

In addition to the structure of the perspective, briefly summarized here, of its epistemological foundation, of the coherence sought between the component elements and of the specified methodological approach, it is necessary to verify both its empirical validity and the productivity of its heuristics. The research initiated by this article proposes to investigate, following the proposed perspective, dimensions of variation and communicational processors through the re-reading of research in the area and by carrying out empirical studies. The development of verifications by other researchers – in analytical and critical terms – would represent a significant contribution to the improvement of the proposal. **M**

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