Three Diachronic Paradigms of Communication

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Abstract

The study launches, develops and demonstrates the thesis that in the Communication Ontology there are three paradigms: the Linear-Transmission-Action Paradigm, P1, the Circular-Interactional Paradigm, P2, and the Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm, P3. The Linear-Transmission-Actional Paradigm, P1, is active and strong between 1940 and 1975, and dominant between 1948 and 1970 by its uniqueness, having incidental irradiations even to this day. The Circular-Interactional Paradigm, P2, was active and strong between 1960 and 2005, was dominant between 1970 and 2000, and has significant irradiations even to this day. Paradigm 3 (the Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm) had its revolutionary beginning in the 1970s, during a full interactionist period.

Keywords: Communication Ontology, paradigm, communication paradigms

1. Introduction

The paradigm does not only organize knowledge sets, it also involves teams of experts. There are three great difficulties; two of them are concerned with the present paradigms in general, while the third is specific to the communication paradigms. The paradigms issue is not a simple or comfortable one, as it does not involve scientific corpora only, it also relates to the common thought of a scientific community.

a) After a long pre-paradigmatic period, which stretched from Aristotle to 1948, communication has registered a seemingly recovering, particularly fast evolution. This has led to the overlapping of the paradigms and made it difficult to distinguish the number of paradigms and their defining characteristics.

b) The difficulty in "paradigm-izing" also results from the fact that sciences and scientific teams, at the same time as extending and developing, have lost the habit of elaborating commitment-manifestos. Before 1950, paradigms configuration was achieved to a large extent through certain explicit ontologies and only partly through implicit ontologies (Vlăduţescu, 2009; Shopovski, 2011). At the present time, things have turned around: we are compelled to fundament our options to a larger extent on implicit ontologies, as explicit ontologies are scarce.

c) Knowledge no longer unfolds into large spaces of ignorance, so as to be the highly emergent-bright figure against a dark background. Sciences have had an explosive development, while the niche of great discoveries is more and more reduced (Berger C. R., 2010; Balaban, 2008; Balaban D. C. & Abrudan M.-C., 2011).

All these have led to the communication paradigms being neither clearly defined, nor rigorously claimed. In communication, we deal with kind, willing, understanding paradigms. This specificity resulted in the paradigms being difficult to outline and define. There has been talk about one paradigm, about two paradigms or about four paradigms. We believe that 3 paradigms are recorded within the communication ontology. Joseph A. DeVito defined the paradigm as a "set of assumptions, methods and procedures, and hypotheses that generally guide research and theory" and talked about "paradigmatic relationships", "existing between elements of the same paradigm" (DeVito J. A., 1986. p. 219).

2. Communication Paradigms

Our position is that in the Communication Ontology there are three paradigms: the Linear-Transmission-Action Paradigm, P1, the Circular-Interactional Paradigm, P2, and the Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm, P3. Nevertheless, similarly to any subject matter, communication needs internal sturdiness and external esteem. These two are supported by the ontological axis, the vocabulary axis, and the object of study axis. Communication established town privileges only in the 1940s. Its history is short, while its paradigms are intricate. The three paradigms which pretended to be categorical, conceptual and methodological authorities are differentiated by predominance, not by segregation (Rosengren K. E., 1983; Dervin B., Grossberg L., O'Keefe B. J. & Wartella E., 1989; McQuail D., 2010).

Martin Heidegger (cited by E. Hufnagel, 1983, p. 58) showed that to understand the world (science, in general), one follows a three-step path for each field: simplistic understanding, "artistic" understanding, and, eventually, critical understanding. Philosophy would have reached its critical phase following a long evolution only with Immanuel Kant ("Critique of Pure Reason", "Critique of Practical Reason", "Critique of Judgment"). The communication science arrived to this step, in our opinion, 20 years after Lucien Sfez's "Critique of Communication" (L. Sfez, 1992) (se also Rus, 2002; Radu, 2005). These "critiques" have to be understood not as deconstructive approaches, but as judicious, positive analyses of the objects of study. The "critique" is like this, and it has to be understood as such: with the classical meaning "to judge, to discern", originating in the Greek word "krinein". The critical phase of communication is achieved in P3.

The influential period of the Linear-Transmission-Action Paradigm, P1, is 1940-1970. P1 dominated the space between 1940 and 1965. The ontological elements specific to it, such as action, sender-receiver or effect, are still in use at the present time in Paradigm 3 (Vlăduțescu, 2009; Vlăduțescu, 2012).

The Circular-Interactional Paradigm, P2, appears through several of its defining elements around 1960. It achieves a recognizable structure towards 1965. We can talk about an influential period of the Circular-Interactional Paradigm, P2, between 1965 and 2000. Its climax takes place between 1970 and 1995, that is, when it is the dominant paradigm. Among the ontological elements

of P2 that are still in use at the present time in Paradigm 3, there are: interaction, interactants, feedback, axioms.

The first signs, clues and indications of the third paradigm, the Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm, P3, are identified in the 1970s. This is an advanced and complex paradigm which establishes itself with difficulty, in a more proper and rigorous way. Although it is the dominant paradigm at the present time, P3 is still not thoroughly strengthened. It allows for an ample and detailed development. We can talk about an influential period of the Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm, P3, beginning from 1990, and of an establishment as dominant with the year 2000.

On the other hand, paradigmatic dynamics shows that most of the time communication has been guided by two paradigms (the Linear-Transmission-Action Paradigm, P1, and the Circular-Interactional Paradigm, P2). When the third paradigm appeared (the Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm, P3) the first paradigm went out of the spotlight, but it did not disappeared. The rise and establishment of the second paradigm was relatively easy, since the incipient paradigm (P1), although having enjoyed vast authority, did not take into account nor feared the competition of a different set of coherent approaches or the emergence of another paradigm (also Stoica, 2007; Traistaru & Cotoc, 2013; Mangra, Cotoc & Traistaru, 2013). This is why, in the Linear-Transmission-Action Paradigm, P1, there have been produced many, if hesitant, models. Even the coryphaei of the progressive faction paradigms had a difficult time moving away from the vocabulary core, the ontology, the thought, the epistemology, the axiology and the methodology of the old paradigm which had already become retrograde. We agree with many of Charles R. Berger's points of view: communication as "science"; communication as teleological act, planned on and guided by aims, objectives and purposes; communication as clear scientific space; message-centered approach; communication failure, etc. We consider him to be a part of the researchers group who established the Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm, P3, who at the present time is putting into motion the large and difficult mechanisms of this paradigm (Borchin, 2001; Fârte, 2004; Vlăduțescu, 2013). Together with W. B. Pearce and V. E. Cronen, Karen Tracy, Julia T. Wood, and in a similar way to all of us, he illustrates the kindness and lack of rigor of the communication paradigms. We shall exemplify.

A) W. B. Pearce and V. E. Cronen's case should be evoked. They are among the first to exemplify the meanings principle in communication: communication begins with meanings. Together with Dean C. Barnlund, J. G. Delia, C. R. Berger, S. H. Chafee, J. O. Greene, B. R. Burleson, they form part of the avant-garde of Paradigm 3. The meanings principle, a fundamental cogitation of the third level, is established within the context of a ontology of the second level: with the standard concepts "interaction" and "actors". They show that, in communication, human beings "interact" (a level 2 term) in a similar way to actors in a play, with the difference that real life appears as "an indirected play" (Pearce W. B., Cronen V. E., 1980, p. 120) (also Marinescu, 2011; Radu, 2012).

B) Following 1990, K. Tracy already talked about "communicative actions" (Tracy K., 1991, p. 1).

C) In the mid-1990s, under the influence of the third paradigm, the Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm, P3, professor C. R. Berger, published in 1997 "Planning strategic interaction: Attaining goals through communicative action". His writing is especially relevant from two perspectives: a) it is meaningful for the Action Goals Theory, and b) it was crowned for its value by International Communication Association, in 2001. Thus, it is an important book for the paradigm it generically is a part of. Here, items from the ontological cores of the previous paradigms are used, such as "interaction" or "communicative action". "Action" is one of the fundamental concepts of the incipient paradigm, the Linear-Transmission-Action Paradigm, P1. "Interaction" lies at the energetic core of the Circular-Interactional Paradigm, P2. The following facts are mentioned: "interactants generate communicative action that appears to be based on goals and plans" (Berger C. R., 1997, p. 14), and "interactants are definitively complex" (Berger C. R., 1997, p. 46) (see also Bryant J., & Miron D., 2007; Dobrescu P., Bârgăoanu A., & Corbu N., 2007).

D) P2 elements are identified in the implicit communicational ontology of Professor Julia T. Wood, an important representative of P3. Before all, specific to the Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm, P3, are the constructive principle of meanings and the transaction emergence principle. J. T. Wood believed that "meanings are the heart of communication" and spoke in favor of a transactional model of communication. In The Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm, P3, the communicational process is a transactional process. "Interaction" is an ontological concept of P2, the Circular-Interactional Paradigm. When she constructively defined communication, J. T. Wood referred to the way "people interact": "communication is a systemic process in which people interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings" (Wood J. T., 2009. p. 12). Furthermore, we, as "communication scientists" or "communication theorists", are actually left with previous paradigms valuable concepts in the vocabulary.

In a way, as Brant R. Burleson (1992) said not too long ago, communication does not take itself seriously yet. As such, neither do the paradigms wholly take themselves seriously. The paradigm does so because (1) in communication, the move from one paradigm to another is soft, and (2) the paradigms themselves are kind to one another. In communication, changing a paradigm is not violent, explosive, or achieved through a "revolution" (see also Craig R. T., 2008; Craig R. T., 2009; Craig R. T., 2013).

3. Conclusion

Thus, within the three paradigms, we will encounter: for the Linear-Transmission-Action Paradigm, P1: "communicative action" (Habermas J., 1992, p. 134); for the Circular-Interactional Paradigm, P2: "communicative interaction" (Schramm W., 1971); for the Variable Geometry-Constructive-Transactional Paradigm, P3: "communicative transaction" and "communicative transactions" (Miller G. R., 1976, p. 10 and p. 186).

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