

The differences among medialogies of communication

As diferenças das midialogias da comunicação

■ LUCRÉCIA D'ALESSIO FERRARA^a

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, Graduate Program in Communication and Semiotics.

São Paulo – SP, Brazil

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the differences between media and medialogy to reach the matrices that are writing a new epistemology of communication. The study of medialogy contemplates investigative views based on the characteristics of Western civilizations developed amid communicative practices of administrative utilitarian use until taking on another investigative aspect within the contemporary and under the influence of digital media. This media is rooted in the observation of political dimensions of communication that reach greater complexity and demand in their investigative paths, presenting another epistemological aspect, which, through dialogue, overcomes the linearity of communication as a scientific area that is more persuasive than social.

Keywords: Communication, information, epistemology, technical means, medialogy

^aFull Professor of the Graduate Program in Communication and Semiotics at Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo. Head of Espaço Comunicação Cultura research group. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4727-9817>. E-mail: ldferara@hotmail.com

RESUMO

Este trabalho propõe o estudo das diferenças entre meios técnicos e midialogias para alcançar as matrizes que estão escrevendo outra epistemologia da comunicação. O estudo das midialogias contempla olhares investigativos decorrentes das características das civilizações ocidentais que se desenvolvem entre práticas comunicativas de uso utilitário administrativo até assumir, no contemporâneo e sob a influência dos meios digitais, outra vertente investigativa. Esta midialogia apresenta raízes que observam dimensões políticas da comunicação que atingem maior complexidade e exigência nos seus percursos investigativos e apresentam outra vertente epistemológica que, dialogante, supera a linearidade da comunicação como área científica mais persuasiva do que social.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação, informação, epistemologia, meios técnicos, midialogias

"Sciences, techniques, societies". Whatever the label, the question is always to reactivate the Gordian knot by crossing the gap separating exact knowledge and the exercise of power, say nature and culture, as many times as necessary . . . Our means of transport is the notion of translation or network. More flexible than the notion of system, more historical than the notion of structure, more empirical than the notion of complexity, the network is Ariadne's thread connecting these confusing stories. (Latour, 1994, p. 9)

PRODUCING DIFFERENCES

DIFFERENCES ARE SEIZED due to the reflexive ability to produce inferences which, named, constitute cultural signatures and become metaphors of mankind itself. Thinking is the same as finding a metaphor that communicates the way humanity builds its differences.

¹ People, mass, crowd, and public are different designations that refer to a collective 'large number'. Since the 17th century, Hobbes (1974) has designated people as subjects who cling to the sovereign as an immunizing power against hunger, danger, or war. In the same century, Espinoza (1973) uses the term 'crowd' to designate the collective that achieves strength and success in political action while articulated in cooperation. In *Psychology of Crowds*, Gustave Le Bon (1895/1999) labels 'mass' as the collective which, left to its own devices, constitutes a threat and a factor of social regression. In *L'Opinion et la Foule* (1901), Gabriel Tarde (1902/2005) refers to the collective or the large number as a public that, at the beginning of the technical mediation processes, can act as a new opinion emitter and a driving force to social flow.

When creating the concept of public and distinguishing it from that of mass and crowd¹, Gabriel Tarde (1902/2005) affirms that opinions are a consequence of the imitation of behaviors inherent to the beliefs and values that, while distributed and multiplied, constitute a characteristic of the world on the eve of modernity. The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th gave way to the experience of the nature of printed and auditory technical means that allowed the production and reproduction of information in an accelerated, quantitative and influential way to disseminate habits and values which began to constitute opinions, enabling the flow of information and communications, and bringing forth the public. Therefore, the technical means, the messages they generate, and the contextual perceptual leap to capture the environmental information they convey contribute to the sedimentation of an audience. The relationship between these elements creates bonds resulting from that perception, producing meaning and justifying the arise of a community of shares and communications that bring together two reflexive lines that overlap and confuse each other; the sociology of means and their archeology.

Symmetrically, and perhaps mimetically, scientific epistemes also constitute opinions that are produced, reproduced, multiplied, and end up confusing concepts and theories in their inferences. That repeated and imitated opinion certificate is responsible for an apparent causal relationship of a predictable, reiterative, and deterministic character within the scientific territory.

The concepts of information and communication are examples of this opinion, which, if constantly repeated, ends up confusing the two concepts and omitting their differences and respective inferential consequences. In this sense, information can be perceived as data to be conveyed through communication

so that both merge and give birth to a nationalizing concept. Information and communication seemingly become synonymous concepts, confusing the perception of technical means and environmental interactions. In other words, understanding the differences between the concepts so that their respective competencies are not confused and lead them to be perceived as synonyms, far from being radically opposed, is imperative. Overcoming the idea that information comes down to data to be transmitted through communication requires that we consider it as an organization of our way of existing in the world, the environments that comprise it and lead not to the conveying of a message to be consumed, but to an interactive and agent context of the event that gives human relationships a communicative and binding nature. Information and communication are therefore distinct, but how and why are they distinguished? Medialogy is intended to reflect on those differences.

THINKING DIFFERENCE AS MEDIALOGY

Differences and diversities put approximations and distances between medialogy and communicative relations under scrutiny. Means, information and communication or technique, as well as culture and society are confronted in this diversity. Against the code of verbal syntax but using the grammatical and semantic mismatch of the singular Latin *medium*, in its plural form *media*, a nearly official neologism was created within Portuguese spoken and written in Brazil. The Latin plural is confused with the free use of the neologism "media" to designate the performance of the use of the means to achieve an intentional and utilitarian effect. While through this use means become media, they do not refer to the technological characteristics of the means, but their cultural effect.

Medialogy refers not only to the media understood as communication but, above all, to communication as a science which, being an expectation sought after by communication as a scientific field, presents several answers, although fragile and unstable, as they are influenced by innumerable and increasing technological variables that lead to confusing communication and use of technical means. On the one hand, medialogy is characterized by the relationship between technical and communicative means understood not only in their possible links but also in their differences and contradictions; on the other, it contemplates in greater detail more epistemological intentions than phenomenological approximations of communicative occurrences.

Communication is a young science, which means it is in permanent development, as it is achieved as a consequence of those technical means and, above all, the evolution of scientific reflection developed by modernity and the

D

The differences among medialogies of communication

historical events that marked the 20th century and affect the western world up to the current days. In this dynamic, medialogy develops with surprising energy while constantly changing its paradigms, always being characterized as a possible but uncertain science, although its path is always adherent to culture.

Régis Debray (2000), the renowned medialogy scholar and one of the first authors to contribute to its emergence as a field of systematic studies, presents two illuminating statements:

At first glance, a discipline is defined by its *object* and we will be tempted to say: "medialogy is the study of means". This will be a severe misunderstanding. Because, as the historian of techniques André-Georges Haudricourt recently recalled: "In reality, what characterizes a science is its *point of view*, and not its object"². (p. 1)

It can be observed that the validation of a science from its point of view instead of its object immediately allows for the definition of communication, not by what is communicated and understood as its object, but how it is communicated, which leads to the realization that communication is based on its pragmatics and, as a consequence, on experiences that validate paradigms, theories, methodologies, and its epistemologies. However, what seems to constitute the medialogy is not its paradigms' point of view but, above all, the differences between them, which may lead us to understand it as a plurality imposed by those differences or, aversely, by theoretical and methodological investigative beliefs that, *a priori*, impose limits on the nature of the object. In this sense, more than studying communication, it is important to know what its practical utility is or how it is possible to refer to it through the simple application of consolidated theories and methodologies. Therefore, and as a result, medialogy would be guided by the set of different points of view hidden within the interests or in the application efficiency of theories and respective methodologies considered adequate to the explanation of the nature of communication. Following this line of reflection, Debray's (2000) second statement seems relevant:

Medialogy does not intend to convey a message. It is satisfied with the study of the procedures by which a message is issued, circulates, and 'finds meaning'. It does not promote beliefs. It only wants to help understand how *we believe* as an effect of some forms of organization... Unlike most of the 'scientific ideologies' that gained a following and acquired authority after the Industrial Revolution, it represents neither discovery nor panacea³. (pp. 181-182)

²In original: "A première vue, une discipline est définie par son *objet* et on sera alors tenté de dire: 'la médiaologie est l'étude des médias'. Ce serait une lourde méprise car, comme le rappelait naguère l'historien des techniques André-Georges Haudricourt: 'En réalité, ce qui caractérise une science, c'est le *point de vue* et non son *objet*'. This, and other translations by the author.

³In original: "Une médiaologie n'a pas pour finalité la délivrance d'un message. Elle se contente d'étudier les procédés par lesquels un message s'espède, circule et 'trouve preneur'. Elle n'a pas de croyance à promouvoir. Elle voudrait seulement aider à comprendre *comment* nous croyons, et par l'effet de quelles contraintes d'organisation... Au contraire de la plupart des 'idéologies scientifiques' qui depuis la Révolution Industrielle ont fait école et autorité, elle ne représente ni une découverte ni une panacée".

If not discovery or panacea, the media is based on the possibility of understanding the ever-plural bases that develop in the rhythm of time and the cadence of the historical events which, through their interference, become its cause and consequence, acting as managers of their points of view. In this sense, communications medialogies are a more or less provisional scientific production possibility, as it is open to revision according to changes to their epistemologies' point of view. Therefore, medialogy refers to the epistemological possibilities that lead its knowledge, always limited by the historical bases of its emergence, the pragmatic interests of those bases, or the cultural tendencies of those moments. It seems impossible to talk about communications medialogies compatible with the reflection developed by Kuhn (1975) to explain 'scientific revolutions' since the development of the medialogy analysis is led towards the historical confluences of its emergencies.

MEDALOGY'S SCIENTIFIC COMMITMENTS

The economic impact of the end of the 18th century until the first decades of the 20th century was fundamental to the propelling and acceleration of social and cultural consequences verified in the West and especially in Europe from the development of the Mechanical Industrial Revolution. Along with the economic configurations that led to the radical change in the production of wealth and the magnitude of two great world wars, mainly World War II (1939–1945), they led to the considerable transformation of the scientific and political landscape that characterized the theories of communication and its medialogies since the 1940s.

Although such historical conditions were decisive for the cultural environment in which the first manifestations were most evident for the development of a medialogy, it seems essential to consider that communication presented itself as a field of studies bound to the investigative characteristics of other epistemological fields of reflection. In other words, until the beginning of the 1990s, media was affected by epistemological characteristics from other fields of knowledge. It was limited by cognitive tendencies that, favoring a causal and linear logic, valued parameters of dichotomous and polarized reflection, due to the belief that the balance between man and nature, culture and politics should be supported by fixed variables that, privileging symmetries, would lead to determined, regular, and predictable outcomes.

It was evident that polarization would preserve the stability of a balance which, by being conquered economically and industrially, would be able to qualify values, behaviors, actions, and knowledge that should, above all, consider how it is

known. This way of knowing should be stable and determined epistemologically and methodologically. The search for this stability led to the determinism of the initial communications medialogies and allowed for the object of knowledge of communication to being confused, first, with the points of view of its agent and subject, and also with the object with cognitive objectives to allow the establishment of a stable and definitive science.

World War II's consequences led to the irrevocable perception that communication is not only marked by historical, political, and economic characteristics but, above all, that it is impossible to confuse the object of communication with cognitive interests that, while established beforehand, act as a knowledge restraint. Just as epistemologically it is not possible to confuse or mix scientific object with knowledge points of view, it is also not possible to identify communication with functions, technical means, strategies of scientific and technological performance or, still, epistemologies with methodologies established in a certain way.

Thus, the development of communications medialogies arises while marked by the characteristics of cognitive interest that shaped, on the one hand, structuralism and, on the other, functionalism in its social, utilitarian, organizational, and political-administrative expansions. In other words, it was understood that medialogy should be the guardian of the cognitive, economic, cultural, and political interests of communication, perceived less as a scientific field than an interest to be preserved, both technologically and practically. Communications medialogy emerges more as an instrument than a science and, therefore, allows for the freedom to part with the close link that would relate it to information and organization in environmental, cultural, and cognitive terms and, above all, with disruptive bonds which, if developed as medialogies, could make way to further scientific horizons for communications. What more evident relationships could be established between communication and its medialogies?

MEDIALOGIC POSSIBILITIES

Split between an Europe decimated by World War I, and North America's movements towards the mastering of the advantages obtained from the implement of the discoveries of electricity and mobile graphic types, the medialogy of the first half of the 20th century is characterized, on one side, by the financial profitability of a Fordist economy, and, on another, the evolution of technical means that present themselves as the definitive object of communication, with the potential to serve this economy with a considerable advantage. Although the political circumstances of the time do not allow for the disregard of the European

influence on the science developed in the first four decades of the twentieth century in the United States, it seems indisputable that, at that moment, the leadership was exercised by the second. Symbolic interactionism and sociological functionalism are the two basic medialogies that seem to meet at the time, as well as within its expansion environments.

The first was developed at the University of Chicago (1935) and is directly surrounded by the circumstance of the great cultural impact caused by the populational concentration in a city which had just suffered a sinister fire and was receiving a relevant migrant contingent, although unable to provide for their subsistence. Serving as the undisputed leader of symbolic interactionism and influenced by Darwin's evolutionism, George Mead understood that communication would be the appropriate means to overcome difficulties related to survival, precarious housing, and labor. Communication would act as an adapter and educational tool for minor litigious behaviors and better suited to the historical and empirical circumstances of evolution in the city. On the one hand, daily life as the living world and binding interaction constitute the milestones of a media focused on the advantages of communicating as a social action, while on the other, intersubjectivity arises as a semiotic characteristic of communication, becoming an interactive element with a view to achieving a common end pragmatically planned by interests that stand beyond communication — interactive means aimed at the sociology of living, adapted to urban action and the symbols of what could be perceived as efficient communication.

Columbia University is the most outstanding place regarding the medialogy known as functionalism, with two of the most representative of what outlines the basic guidelines labeled as 'American medialogy' in the social and cultural atmosphere of the United States, although it only applies to the northern hemisphere.

The Universities of Chicago and Columbia harbored the empiricism developed by Lasswell and Lazarsfeld, who, although with different biases, presented a utilitarian pragmatic of communication focused on objectives aimed at using it as a strategy for political and administrative action. Communication functionalism was understood as a means to achieve concrete and planned objectives. The object of the communication was its objectives.

Alongside this perspective, and at the same University, Talcott Parsons developed a less empiricist functionalism than that developed by Lasswell and Lazarsfeld, however, he was equally functionalist within the macroscope of his interests. This social functionalism which, applied to the good performance of the city, was related from its very beginning to an adequate conception

D

The differences among medialogies of communication

of what the city should be; that is, it should function and, for that, be stable and correspond to an ideal found in the big cities of the United States in its most definitive model.

In face of these two currents equally functionalist regardless of their different purposes within the North American cultural atmosphere, a critical theory proposed by Horkheimer and Adorno, who were exiled in America, emerges with a contradiction of the previous functionalist currents. A social criticism developed from what was perceived as an industry that repeated in culture economic processes like those used by the mechanical industry, that is mass production and assembly lines. Produced for the masses, communication became an alienated and, above all, anti-dialectic culture as it moved away from the traditional and nostalgic anthology of European culture.

This is the panorama that develops in the first essays of medialogic creation focused on a communication understood as an adequate instrument for the achievement of objectives whether concrete or abstract, micro or macro, utilitarian or critical. A medialogy that develops with no highlights of the nature of its object of study, which seems both distant and little objective.

The end of World War II and, above all, the early years of the 1950s and 1960s mark a different medialogic dimension that seems to search for the root of the object of communication. The interaction and criticism of communication are revisited, meeting cybernetics and structuralism on this front. Through the analysis of the medialogies developed from a contemporary perspective, it is possible to state that the first attempts to build a medialogy more focused on the definition of an object of study than the researcher's point of view arise on the 1950s. Two basic trends emerge, and through their contradictions, mark the decade as the definitive moment for the emergence of another way of perceiving communication.

*Biologist and anthropologist Gregory Bateson is the author of a wide and heterogeneous work which, supported by keen empirical research of the indigenous people of the Bali Islands, developed the concept of the double bind to study the ambivalence of the communicative processes that, if little explicit in their enunciative processes, may lead to incommunicability whenever the receiver is unable to locate or frame the statement in a context that clarifies the meaning of the communicative link. Therefore, simple transmissive and vehicular communication is overcome to propose the double connection

that requires the learning of another communication unable to communicate if distant from the production of knowledge. His main works are: *Una unidad sagrada: Pasos ulteriores hacia una ecología de la mente* (Gradiva, 2006); *Mind and nature: A necessary unity* (Hampton Press, 1979); *Naven* (Edusp, 2009); *Angels fear: Towards an epistemology of the sacred* (Macmillan, 1987) (with Catherine Bateson); and *Metadiálogos* (Gradiva, 1996).

If on one side, the cybernetics initially proposed by Wiener approaches the mathematical trends of information elaborated by Shannon, it finds, on the other and in its second edition, its most decisive echo in the interactive proposal of the double bind developed by Bateson⁴. Previous functionalist and sociological bases are replaced and overcome to adhere to a cognitive matrix in which communication and incommunicability intersect, building a media that goes beyond a utilitarian-pragmatic concept to reach the object of communication aimed at the knowledge of the interaction exercised within the informational context and affected by the scientific movement that organizes it. Both entropic and complex, the concept is attentive to the informational multiplication understood as the 'ecology of mind' and to the communication developed between all living species.

By understanding that the technical means are devices that allow connecting what is distant, separate or absent, it seems plausible to imagine that the essential purpose of the means is restricted to the transmission of a message. In this case, communication equals transmission and is a resource often at the service of the interests of a hegemonic conveyer. A reaction against this point of view and a search for another communicative bias in interactions explains the approximation between Bateson and McLuhan's medialogy and their respective interest in designing an ecology of minds or structuring the archeology of the technical means of the press and electricity proposed through known aphorisms. For a long time, Gutenberg's concepts of *double bind* and *galaxy* (McLuhan, 1972) have been seminal proposals for the realization of the importance of interactive bonds that organize the informational environment, and the preponderance of technical means seemingly focused on the conveyance of the message but, in reality, creators and organizers of the environment that gives rise to the radical relationship between interactive links and information organization. In this sense, medialogies that, as we have seen, turn to the use of the technique with a view to transmitting messages and interests in a utilitarian way, are most likely overcome.

The archaeological trait behind the radical medialogy proposed by McLuhan develops when electricity and the ability to replace the verbal code for the comprehensiveness and informative simultaneity of the vision are taken into consideration, overcoming the mechanics of the press. This technical transformation was responsible for the development of another epistemological dimension, inaugurating, in addition to the transmission of the message, the connection between meanings, feelings, and behaviors. The archeology of visual means arises, and the epistemology of a public that, in addition to portraying itself as an agency force for ideas, is dedicated to the duplication and imitation of values, times, and spaces in revolution.

Across the ocean, however, Europe was looking to find a way towards economic, social, and cultural recovery during the post-war period. There was a consensus that a critical science would only be possible when the communications approached the exact sciences, both theoretically and methodologically, allowing the apprehension of an object of study that, although phenomenological, was also transcendent to the vulnerability of history and its contextual movements. It was needed to reach a study of language and, through it, of communication as a definite scientific reflection while stable and invariable in its theoretical and methodological principles. There was a search for a medialogy of scientificity and security that should act as a functional paradigm of cognitive production aimed at the application of a thinking model; the structuralism that dominated

the European theoretical scene, not only in the 1960s, is on the agenda. From this perspective, structuralism is analogous to previous sociological functionalisms and as isolated from the dynamics of its object as the models it builds. As proposed by Bateson, the contradiction between ways of thinking and modes of structural and structuring action leads the thought of different cultural trends, as it seems that the two manifestations mark the mismatch and differences in the understanding of the object of communication. Mediatic attempts and ideological basis of communication disruptive in social culture are confronted.

Walking past socio-cultural structuralist anthropology, the works of Clifford Geertz (1997) present the solidity that gives the author a leading role in the subversion of anthropology. The development of medialogy leans towards an anthropological perspective developed mainly in Germany which is known as *media* and/or *mediation theory* and seeks to consolidate its roots in different cultural nuances. In this sense, we highlight a trend that, on the one hand, wants to be based on the investigation of communication archeology through the development of its technical means, and, on the other, turns to image archeology and generates an anthropology visual that writes, in the expansion of its sense, a medialogy of modernity in which visual technologies register a decisive trend in communication, setting it as a priority vector.

A theoretical basis closer to the definition of a medialogy that is more scientific than ideological is sought, although the essential relationship between technical means and communication, which cannot exist in the absence of the competition of the former, did not capture its attention. The means give rise to an environmental reality that informs history and organizes what is communicated or is yet to be communicated. Investigating the participation of the means in the communicative processes is a scientific and investigative attempt that requires the understanding of how communication builds culture, that is, knowing how the means and their different technologies interfere in media- and interactive processes without determining them, as they are of cultural nature. Programmed or not, technical means constitute vectors of the communicative processes, produce cultural environments, act in the paths of civilization, and participate in the communicative processes in their cultural, social, and political outcomes.

The decades following the end of World War II witnessed times of intense media research, and gradually approached the apprehension of the importance of technical means in the management and development of mediatization, leading to the perception of the temporal and spatial roots of culture as communication. More than ever, another strongly consequential and radical epistemological bias opens for communication, where communication and mediatization meet.

Perceived as a productive resource of goods intended for consumption, durable or not, up to the control of minds manipulated by interests, the pragmatic use of technical means grants us the apparent illusion of being automatically informed without the need to operate any cognitive process leading to knowing the entropic ways through which information is organized, multiplied, and transformed. The archeology of the media goes through a wide process along this path which goes beyond the anthropology of culture to understand the role of technical means and their sensitive expansions in the writing of a cultural time that, increasingly fast, leads to the shuffling of dates, events, territories, and traditions. In this medialogy, there is an attempt to value a continuous time that allows history to register not as an accumulation of more or less unexpected and/or inexplicable facts, but on the contrary, seeks for a long time that leads us back to the roots of the culture of the means to find within them the possible understanding of the present moment. Far from representing the archeology in search of a source of fragile definition and perception, the theory of means or mediations seeks in the past for other lights to shed upon the understanding of the present moment.

In German-speaking territories, the development of the television as a technical environment and of the mass media as a seemingly definitive foundation for the understanding of the public has given rise to another media landscape known as *media* or *mediation archeology*. Among its most radical authors are Friedrich Kittler, Gunther Anders, Vilém Flusser⁵, Siegfried Zielinski, and Hans Belting.

The most radical proposal of this archeology consists of knowing how and to what extent that revolution is capable of reconfiguring archaeological time, transforming it into the archeological dynamics (Zielinski, 2006, p. 279) of a time apart from history and a planetary space without geography. The fast path that, from the 1960s, will reach the second millennium and its radical transformations led by the economy, is fueled by technology, culture, and politics.

In archeology that goes beyond the means, we seek to find the basis for another medialogy, perhaps less focused on describing the object of communication and more interested in developing an inquiring point of view about communication's origins and intention. The archeology of means seeks for other means merging technique and sensitivity within the dialogue of the senses; a means of reaching the other and a way of being reached by the revolution of all senses. In the ambiguous limit between the senses, the visual seeks to lead through the image.

In this perspective, the means write another epistemology and tendencies that study the persuasive character, not exactly of almost always redundant messages, but from the technical means themselves, are developed and capable

⁵ Vilém Flusser: Czech philosopher who, banished by World War II, took refuge in Brazil living over 30 years in São Paulo, where he produced most of his work. He developed remarkable dialogues with intellectuals from São Paulo in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and participated in the development of major communication research centers.

of managing a media that is consolidated as quickly as its technical resources are accelerated. Medialogies of spectacle and visual performance of the technical means emerge and, once again, communication is at the service of an objective absent from its cognitive object. Either as show or performance, the means are instruments of exposure that expand visualities and promote the imitation of others' values, often free. Through this spectacle, communication becomes a celebrity that amazes by its powers of propagation and public construction. More than ever, communication stands as an opinion-building tool and understood as mediatic control while being controlled by the political spheres of power.

While reviewing this policy, Vilém Flusser (2002, p. 7) studies the transition from the three-dimensionality of space to achieve, in its evolution, the two-dimensionality which may technically transform volume into plan, and the perception of the design in a way of building a synchronous and simultaneous world. Led by image, this is another medialogy and distinct epistemology that represent a radical transformation in the 'way of knowing'. Knowledge is fueled by the constant question that barely hides the radical need to doubt for the understanding of the moment lived, intending to overcome the illusion that the present is an anonymous passerby of spaces and stories.

When produced and technically manipulated, the visuality of the image finds another dimension within the realm of the visible. Hans Belting is the author of a medialogic proposal that studies the changes in the passage from the three-dimensional figure to the two-dimensional image, although exuberant in form and color. This new face of the visible replaces the archeology of the figure with the analogy of the image, seeking to find the archaeological traces of the previous figuration of the world, within the relations between the technical environment, the image, and the sensitive body. Within the visual, there is a search for the oscillations of the knowledge through the senses and the steps that lead us to the present archaeological anthropology:

It took the emergence of new means to make us aware of certain old means properties that were hitherto unnoticed, and it was Marshall McLuhan who formulated this finding in detail in his article on the 'environment and counter-environment'⁶. (Belting, 2004, p. 68)

⁶ From the original: "Il aura fallu l'apparition des nouveaux médiums pour qu'on prenne enfin conscience de certaines propriétés des anciens médiums restées jusqu'à là inaperçues: c'est Marshall McLuhan qui a le plus justement formulé cette constatation dans son essai sur l'environnement et l'anti-environnement".

The archeology of the technical image is not limited to the development of the study of the relationship between technique, history, communication, and culture, but above all, presents the need to understand how communication, combined with technical means, builds cognitive bases that are renewed in time, as they create other environments and identify old means as counterenvironmental

(McLuhan, 2005, p. 129). Contemporary medialogic trends emerge not only based on the previous observation of the intimate relationship between communication and culture but present, with radical emphasis, the influence of politics on communication.

Undoubtedly, the indispensable proximity between philosophy and communication gives rise to medialogic trends that develop and propagate within the complex territory of modernity, as the deterministic and positivist epistemological limits are overcome. Far from linear causality, knowledge is increasingly uncertain but rich in information; communication, information, and knowledge are combined. If we can agree with Flusser (2014) that communication is the matrix of culture, we can also expand the reflection to apprehend how politics produce communication.

This assertion gives rise to two other statements: politics produce communication while perceiving it as the transmission of the image and writes a medialogic chapter that understands it, on the one hand, as a technique of transmitting an image molded according to models of what should be transmitted and taking into account mediatic interest of a political issuer, and on the other hand, there are the politics that, as a way of building the values shared by peoples or civilizations, build different patterns of behavior and citizen values. In the first case, there is the medialogy that studies politics *in* communication while in the second, there are trends that study politics inherent to communication, that is, a *communication policy* focused on the ethics of the way of communicating and of what is communicated. In both cases, however, there is a common basis: it is about recognizing the philosophical root that underlies communication and is not restricted to its techniques of information transmission or storage but is a way of life affected, on the one hand, by intersubjectivities, human and cognitive exchanges and, on the other, through inquiry, epistemology, and heuristics of chance.

The policy that makes communication a convincing tool for the propagation of ideologies finds its first and most radical enunciation when, in the exacerbation of the period of consequences after World War II and in the 1960s, Europe faces the disenchantment of a Marxist revolution unable to overcome the ambitious Fordist capitalism. The production of industrial wealth meets a fast pace and production diversification becomes a need focused on consumption and consumerism. More affirmative than questioning, the political medialogy of communication has developed with the expansion of digital technical means since the 1990s and contributes to the implantation of the economic-financial policy of globalization, its planetary expansion, the emergence of a neoliberal economy and a form of labor which allows for

the development of a way of working aimed at the production of ideas — the material work gives way to immaterial work — by replacing the previous material, productive models.

Although part in this economic and cultural context, social media trends aimed at the study of communication policy are strongly supported by the philosophy that allows for the reflection towards a reality perceived as a system that, in an entropic way, leans towards the complexity and merging of ideas, scientific theories, and epistemologies. Considering this new context asks for the apprehension of another environment where the objectives and objects of investigation are interconnected.

The present is dialogic and, more than ever, the alliance between communication and philosophy is an urgent contribution to the development of a plural, a-disciplinary and, above all, non-positivist epistemology. This complex informational process environment allows for the emergence of epistemologies that replace theoretical-affirmative certainty with doubt based on questions that demand answers that are more committed to the context from which they emerge and are more consequential, from a critical point of view. The investigation focused on the application of consolidated theories is overtaken by the question; a question that, when asked, produces an epistemology transversal to all certainties and sensitive to the change of paradigms. Therefore, there is a medialogy which, by re-qualifying the role of communication, reviews its political and ethical commitments, giving rise to the production of a medialogy of a more interactive than transmissive communication. Takes place the production of an epistemology that does not aim to establish paradigms but is attentive to the incessant development of the communicative processes themselves, and which demand constant revisions. In this sense, a political epistemology arises, fueled by its self-reviews' criticism. One cannot speak of a singular dimension epistemology because, in its constant and demanding self-criticism, everything is on the boil in order not to be reduced to the certainties of the past. An epistemology that affirms nothing seems to emerge from this context, as everything gives reason for the questioning and revision of its established paradigms.

Although this immersion into the present context is fundamental to achieve the traits of an ever-changing medialogy, its genealogy is focused on roots that point to the bases of a way of thinking that is more sensitive to the consequences of the means than to the consumerist celebration of the technique. A medialogy that, while open to the complexity of mediatizations, develops strategies that provoke and challenge technology, the politics of communication, and the culture of power.

Transversal to historical certainty, yet sensitive to the consequences of mediations, this mediality leads us to a review of the previous archeology of technical means to search through new categories of analysis for the possible genealogy of communication that underlies the diachronic analysis of trends and unexpectedly renews itself. Vehemently proposed by Agamben (2014), these categories⁷ become the basis for the rethinking of the present in the light of active contemporary signatures:

this ‘naked life’ (also ‘sacred,’ if *sacer* designates, above all, a life that can be taken without the committing of a homicide) which, in the Western legal-political machine, works as a threshold of articulation between *zoè* and *bios*, natural life and politically qualified life.

It will not be possible to conceive another political and life dimension before the naked life device is successfully disabled⁸. (pp. 333-334)

Present mediality calls for the admission that the state of exception becomes a daily norm validated by the technical means that understand communication as an instrument of power. The social and cultural criticism suggested by this mediality requires another technical force, as, whenever questioned and provoked, it turns power into a potency of action for the construction of a radical democracy⁹. The dialogue changes the relationships between men and unveils the possibility of mediation through the technique, and despite it.

THINKING DIFFERENCE AS HEURISTIC MEDIALITY

Besides the study of the means, and perhaps contrary to what they technically develop, the present mediality studies the interactions between mediation and culture. The study of the consequences of the digital information environment is privileged in this work, which leads us to distinguish the information that results from the technological environment that produces them and the communicative interactions that do not simply result from them but are distinguishable by enabling a cultural reality that differentiates them from the technical means. When not determined by technical means, communication appropriates them, turning them into a cultural atmosphere that finds, in and through technique, the primordial vector of the world lived and its difference as a more complex and active informational and contextual characteristic. This article studied the possible differences in values that can be established when the determination of the transmissive means is overcome to consider the unpredictable cultural relationships that result from

⁷ Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben is the author of numerous and wide-ranging works in which fundamental categories are developed to the understanding of the contemporary moment, especially in the West. Among its categories of analysis are the state of exception, naked life, sovereign power, historical signatures, power of action and potency of action, device, desecration, inoperability, among others. The concept of potency of action was fundamental for the development of this study.

⁸ In original: “questa nuda vita (o vita ‘sacra’ se *sacer* designa innanzitutto una vita che può essere uccisa senza commettere omicidio che, nella macchina giuridico-politica dell’occidente, funge da soglia di articolazione fra *zoè* e *bios*, vita naturale e vita politicamente qualificata. E non sarà possibile pensare un’altra dimensione della politica e della vita se prima non saremo riusciti a disattivare il dispositivo della eccezione della nuda vita”.

⁹ In *Hegemonía y estrategia socialista*, sociologists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2010) propose the concept of radical democracy as a means to overcome the dogmatic affirmation of a social essence and make it possible to understand in the ambiguity that admits social division and antagonism as a condition for the achievement of a democratic revolution.



the complex multiplication between means, information, and unforeseen but active interactions, which characterize the contemporary world.

Although archaeological and anthropological studies of the means have highlighted the active dialogue between technique and time which, since Gutenberg, has marked the way of building not only history as an event, but above all as an occurrence, though that dialogue, medialogy enables the tracing of other epistemological and methodological aspects of knowledge production.

From an epistemological point of view, it is observed that, when the means are merged to the informational atmosphere that arises from them, they may become agents of a systemic ecology that, by overcoming the simple causality of a linear and syllogistic nature, allows for the discovery of informational complex realities, which calls for the more questioning than propositional heuristic of shrewd lucidity.

The questioning is aimed at learning to uncover, within the joints of an open system, other inferences, and alternatives for paths and actions. This interactive epistemology feeds on the close relationship between the environment, the researcher, their questions, and the empirical domain that, despite descriptions and explanations, presents itself as a cognitive challenge and demands perceptive attention and flexibility. For a mediatic epistemology, everything can be radical as a means to overcome established theoretical and conceptual parameters; a medialogic and ecologic epistemology that acts upon the perception of differences and is established between information and sensitivities of the actors/researchers who process them:

¹⁰In original: "Si on entend par 'science' au sens fort une théorie nomologique déductive, qui établit des lois dont nous pouvons déduire les conséquences, il va de soi que la médiaologie ne guigne pas de ce côté-là. Tout au plus peut-elle regarder vers les *constructions interprétatives*, ni prophétiques ni scientifiques, plausibles mais indécidables, qui cherchent à systématiser, aussi rigoureusement que possible, un ensemble encore disjoint de faits et d'évolutions empiriquement constatables..."

Cette mise en ordre heureuse des habitudes mais permet um oeil neuf, par le simple fait d'établir des liens là où il n'y en avait pas".

If in a strong sense by 'science' we mean a deductive nomological theory that establishes laws from which consequences may be deduced, it is immediately clear that medialogy does not covet this position. It may be intent to observe the non-prophetic, scientific, or plausible, but undecidable, *interpretive constructions* which seek to systematize a still disconnected set of facts and empirically verifiable developments as rigorously as possible... This correction goes against the habits but allows for a new point of view for the simple fact that it *establishes connections where there were none*¹⁰. (Debray, 2000, pp. 186-187)

The quote reiterates the previous observation and recognizes a heuristic epistemology in the systemic affiliation of the means that requires constant attention to the production of theoretical and conceptual reviews that explore the different medialogies studied and overcome them as they discover or produce new epistemologies within them.

Through this heuristic, there is the proposal of double interaction as a result of the observation of the performance of the means together with the environmental informational characteristics. On the one hand, it requires the definition of epistemological objects that, although able to cross the archaeological history of the means to reach the anthropology that results from it, must build the exercise of scientific performance with empirical objectivity; on the other, it advocates for methodological criteria which, while not previously established, manifest as more strategic procedures than methodologies.

This second aspect leads us to consider that both archeology and anthropology can rely on signs split into dynamic indices and highlight the phenomenological performance of the means, or traits that illuminate the qualitative origin of that emergency and point not only to the symbolic character of technical innovations but, above all, to the cultural transformations promoted by technologies. Such empirical methodologies structure the medialogy's epistemological heuristic, as well as the information that architects the drawings of the medialogical differences between mediatizations. □

REFERENCES

- Agamben, G. (2014). *Opera e inoperosità*. In *Homo sacer: Vol. 4. L'uso dei corpi* (pp. 311-314). Vicenza, Italy: Neri Pozza.
- Belting, H. (2004). *Pour une anthropologie des images*. Paris, France: Gallimard.
- Debray, R. (2000). *Introduction à la médiologie*. Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Espinosa, B. (1973). *Ética*. São Paulo, SP: Abril Cultural.
- Flusser, V. (2002). *Filosofia da caixa preta: Ensaios para uma filosofia da fotografia*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Relume Dumará.
- Flusser, V. (2014). *Comunicologia: Reflexões sobre o futuro*. São Paulo, SP: Martins Fontes.
- Geertz, C. (1997). *O saber local: Novos ensaios em antropologia interpretativa*. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.
- Hobbes, T. (1974). *Leviatã: Ou matéria, forma e poder de um Estado eclesiástico e civil*. São Paulo, SP: Abril Cultural.
- Kuhn, T. (1975). *A estrutura das revoluções científicas*. São Paulo, SP: Perspectiva.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2010). *Hegemonía y estrategia socialista: Hacia una radicalización de la democracia*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Latour, B. (1994). *Jamais fomos modernos*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Editora 34.



- Le Bon, G. (1999). *Psicologia das multidões*. Lisbon, Portugal: Publicações Europa-América. (Original work published 1895)
- McLuhan, M. (1972). *A galáxia de Gutenberg: A formação do homem tipográfico*. São Paulo, SP: Edusp.
- McLuhan, M. (2005). *McLuhan por McLuhan: Entrevistas e conferências inéditas do profeta da globalização*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Ediouro.
- Tarde, G. (2005). *A opinião e as massas*. São Paulo, SP: Martins Fontes. (Original work published 1902)
- Zielinski, S. (2006). *Arqueologia da mídia: Em busca do tempo remoto das técnicas do ver e do ouvir*. São Paulo, SP: Annablume.

Article received on July 15, 2019 and approved on March 20, 2020.