COMMUNICATION, ETHICS AND ANTHROPOETHICS

LUIZ MARTINS DA SILVA
UNB, Brazil

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to dream of – in the sense of establishing – the utopian perspective of a scenario that remains utopian but which nonetheless provides the first indications that we may be entering a new paradigm, that of communication-ethics, that is to say, the ethical dimension of communication, which in this case is not restricted to technological advancements but concerns communication with ethics and as ethics, to conclude that without ethics, there is no communication and by extension, no genuine mankind nor genuine humanity. Communication and ethics therefore appear inseparable; one cannot exist without the other. The audacity of this ethical visionary lies in managing to perceive more than just technological marvels, but also to appreciate the paradigm of anthropoethics entering the realm of the concrete, that is to say, ethics for mankind and for humanity, as conceived of by Apel, Habermas and Morin.

Key-words: communication, ethics, anthropoethics, globalization, action and universalization.

INTRODUCTION

According to data provided by the Anísio Teixeira National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (INEP) of the Ministry of Education, Brazil has approximately one thousand courses in social communication offered by higher education establishments. In each course, there are subjects relating to the concept of communication and ethics, and more specifically, to ethics as applied in communication. But ultimately, what is meant by **ethics, communication, ethics in communication** and **the ethics of communication**? The hypothesis which is at least proposed here, if not tested, is that without ethics, it is not always possible to speak of the existence of communication by engaging in dialogue. And by extension, without ethics, it will not be possible to arrive at a really communicative mode of dialogue, nor a sort of ethics that would be applicable globally – anthropoethics.

This paper will thus discuss these concepts, **ethics** and **communication**, the proximity and distance between them, as well as

the absolute conciliation between them, which shall be termed **perfect communication**, or **communication-ethics**.

Generally, the concept of communication is associated with strategy, or with an instrumental level of communication, which is marked by the moral asymmetry between the interlocutors, given that there is a lack of transparency in strategic contexts, as well as a predominance of perlocutionary intentions and, where possible, derived actions, that is, the supremacy of one actor over another or over all actors. In these cases, the degree of ethical awareness is confined to the so-called rules of the game, should they be present. Even when present, they are not always made explicit nor subject to the control of referees, when the latter are involved.

For example, in soccer, no official errors are made if the referee and his assistants do not see the controversial incident in question, even if the supporters of the team which has suffered as a result protest as witnesses to what happened. If the referee does not see the incident which breaches the rules, his decision is nonetheless final. Should the referee have bad intentions or if he accepts a bribe, the public's confidence in the referee shall prevail, even if match-fixing has taken place. Several soccer heroes have boasted about scoring goals using their hands, maneuvering to obtain penalties or behaving in a way which has allowed them to gain unfair advantages (known in Brazil as "Gerson's law"). These are situations which demonstrate the distinction between rules and ethics, or when the lack of ethics contravenes the rules, without undermining them.

Genuine communication, therefore, is not compatible with games, shrewdness, cheating, confrontations, struggle, coercion, war, or with strategies of manipulation and seduction. Communication is not compatible with opaqueness, hidden intentions, inducement or domination. In sum, it is incompatible with strategic success, when one prevails over another. In a context of communication, there are neither losers nor winners, unless the rules – well-known and understood – so determine in advance. *Success in communication* is represented by success with another, not success over another (strategic success). Of course, Habermas's concepts of *communication action* and *strategic action* are being appropriated, but in addition, his philosophical mind is being applied when he presupposes the possibility of conciliation between the *systemic world* and the *live world*, and consequently, between technique and ethics, between actions and norms, between conscience and justice. This conciliation has been termed (genuine)

communication, a means of overcoming the traditional polarization of technology and humanism, so as to offer a scenario of possibility, a utopia of technology working in the interests of humanism. And it is to this conciliation that our aforementioned audacity is being applied, by arguing that there are sufficient indications to conclude that the first signs of a global society of communication are emerging. A case in point is that of the Copenhagen summit regarding the reduction of carbon emissions until 2050, a genuine demonstration of discursive ethics.

Strategy and communication

The strategist equips himself in the best possible way with sets of data and establishes the most logical links between them relative to the strategy employed, that is to say, he develops a structured way of attaining his goal, to be successful, to obtain advantages over his rivals. The perfect level of **information** of the strategist will therefore not correspond to a perfect level of **interlocution**, since in the latter situation he will only mention what he deems favorable to him and will conceal those facts which are contrary to his interests. This involves, therefore, a **teleological** level of action, when the action is structured not in order to share results but in the interests of the relative results among competitors.

In an instrumental-functional-teleological context, a particular and basic level of communication will prevail that is centered on one's self, and consequently, has ego as its centerpiece, – **egocenter**. The action will be slightly less egocentric if it is centered on the corporate ego, that is to say, on us, but it will still act in the interests of the group or the corporation. In such cases, the individual situates his interest (that of his individual body or that of his individual conception of world) within the interest of a plural body – corporation – (an identity resulting from corporate interests) or of a society (pertaining to the integration of society members), provoking another center of action, the **sociocenter**.

Shifting attention from the social to the universal, actions will be more and more decentralized and will be for the benefit of all, encompassing all the constitutive parties of a universal, unified body. All are one and each one is part of a whole. In this context, every human being will see the others symmetrically and the expectation is that actions will be oriented towards an **anthropocenter**, the center which favors human beings as an end in itself (principle of humanity). The possibility to reduce centralizing even more would be present, an almost sanctified level of identification, in which all parties share the same destiny. This teleology

in which the universal is not restricted to the realm of human beings shall be termed **holocenter**, denoting the convergence of all parties towards one single center, a center towards which all converge.

Useful for the thesis supported in this paper (that without ethics, communication cannot exist) are the models stemming from linguistics (Austin) , developed following the direction of speech acts; the perlocutionary, aimed at the agonic facet of enunciation, therefore, in a context of survival conditioned by dispute; and the illocutionary, a context in which interlocutors seek to build together a shared meaning - Gadamer's *fusion of horizons* or Habermas's *social interaction by means of linguistic communication*, in his construction of the idea of communicative action.

Enunciation, information and communication

As regards the "incremental model" (which progresses in stages) that is being invoked hypothetically in the domain of communication, it is difficult to distinguish between simple **enunciation** (expression) of meanings or contents intended to be externalized and which once externalized become **enunciations** working towards reaching more complex levels of locution and interlocution. At a second level, interlocutors digest the information via their respective interests, in which it is also possible to draw a distinction between expression and argumentation. While expression, on the first threshold, seeks only to materialize a content that is non-controversial, on the second divergences may emerge regarding what is expressed. On the third threshold, exclusive to communication, interlocutors would have consensus as their ultimate objective, both in terms of shared meaning as well as in terms of the best joint action plan to implement.

In past cases , it was also possible to divide communication into the following three levels: *imperfect communication; perfect communication; and more than perfect communication*. However, the aspects under examination were communication in a media context and the journey from the latter to the level of the *praxis* (in the sense of action which transforms reality). In the first stage, information circulates as a mere, isolated event and without being selected or hierarchically organized by media apparatuses which offer diffusion and drama. In this second stage, communication occurs in a "perfect" manner if the transmission and codification translated by all parties are efficient (by preserving as far as possible the original meaning). However, *more than perfect communication* would be the form capable of being socialized in order

to determine a collective purpose, a *telos* of a utopian nature, a fusion of horizons seeking an ethical horizon.

Globalization and universalization

In accordance with the hypothesis proposed here that communication cannot exist without ethics, *more than perfect communication* would be capable of surpassing the merely instrumental-functional-teleological level and favor decentralized sharing of meaning and action. For this to occur, qualitative transformations would take place, as well as a shift from basic levels of information and intention to jointly coordinated and assumed levels of meaning and action, and therefore to ethical communication or communication in its purest form. In other words, this hypothesis is in line with the view of authors who distinguish between the informational and communicational spheres. Furthermore, this communicational sphere is not restricted to a simple, natural partition of the cultural meaning of things, as the possibility of interlocutors also being inter-subjective as far as world transformation is concerned (*praxis*) is being considered too. But this world transformation would affect all parties rather than excluding some and would even demand the creation of a new culture, a sort of *metaculture*, resulting from a novel approach and not from the enhanced application of an already established *ethos*.

Until now, arguments which include universally references to the result of transformations have been rare. In general, arguments have sought the universalization of preached values, but moreover a hierarchical organization privileging the successful, an attitude to revolutions which is still based on the victory of certain protagonists in a conflict over the others. These are religious, ideological or nationalistic beliefs, generally universalistic in their rhetoric, but particularistic and patrimonialistic as regards the usufruct of the spoils (taken by force). These conquests involving success over others are not rare and they also frequently exclude some, promoting themselves via a corollary of universalistic claims while simultaneously excluding others. In the past, even genocide was justified using arguments which established discursive totalities (main ideological camps).

One factor which has limited and even exhausted human potential for universalizing rights and conquests has been the nation-state paradigm as well as the difficulty involved in transcending the latter. The nation-state, particularly following the diffusion of universalistic values from the French Revolution, represented a universalizing force in the conception of a *universal man* but paradoxically also divided human beings into

French, English, Germans, and so on.

The three ethics of the world

Have the symbolic and material possibilities of a universal *res publica* been exhausted?

Applying the trilogy conceived of by Karl Apel , the world is half-way there, having already experienced the less complex ethics of *microethics*(of the clan, village); humans have advanced considerably in the paradigm of *mesoethics* (of nation-states); and the first signs of universal and global ethics may be appearing, in line with the paradigm developed by Edgar Morin, who proclaimed the possibility of anthropoethics. That is to say, a type of ethics for mankind and for global citizenship which in turn is composed of three elements: individual, society and species. In fact, these categories do not appear to exclude, because in various parts of the world one can still find civilizations that are entirely circumscribed in the context of tribal nations, while others are marked by the regimes and autocracies of rather closed nation-states. Nonetheless, it is not only relatively cosmopolitan nation-states which exist in a rather global sense, but also communitarian, integrated states with a common currency, parliament, borders and multinational institutions. The particular case of the European Union is being referred to, but similar situations have been envisaged, such as that of Latin America (Mercosur and Unasur) and perhaps that of Asian countries.

By analogy, one can also infer that regarding information, many countries have already surpassed local and national contexts and are fully integrated in an information society, which does not mean that consequently they are already in a state of anthropoethics. Unfortunately, the fact that many countries are leaders in terms of the highest indexes of human development does not mean that this level of development induces the democratization of relations with the international community. Unfortunately, although they no longer exist explicitly, xenophobic policies such as "America for Americans", border control and visa regimes which operate both in the United States as well as in Europe, are so radical that they have the effect of making borders appear even more impenetrable.

It is possible, however, that the bolstering of national and supranational borders is due to the threats represented by the so-called "pathologies of modernity" (especially terrorism) rather than the simple rejection of the foreigner. Not all foreigners seek to infiltrate foreign lands. The important thing, however, is for human prerogatives to

become universal so that human rights and obligations do not exclude non-nationals, even those who are passing through.

It is necessary to understand that those same factors which prevent progression towards universal anthropoethics can also be viewed in a positive light, since new technologies facilitate interconnectivity and the globalization of communication, particularly in the domain of journalism. News has never been diffused simultaneously around the world to such an extent, and this news not only encompasses tragedies (tsunamis, global warming, pandemics...) but above all achievements which stun the whole world: aid; human and social advocacy; compassion towards people in times of need and the internationalism of the third sector, for example Doctors without Borders (*Médecins sans frontières*). And if politics and religion continue to be factors of difference, rejection and exclusion, the same technological conditions offer entirely novel contexts in the field of intersubjectivity and consequently of political and inter-religious dialogue.

It is tempting to infer that **globalization** is an intermediate step towards **universalization**. Economics and technology are two eloquent fields when one wants to demonstrate how globalized the world is. The mere fact of mentioning the possible insolvency of a large corporation from Dubai is capable of provoking the fall of the world's stock exchange indexes, in the same way that daily oscillations of the different economic indicators of the American economy can be viewed as traffic lights (green, yellow, red) in the international exchange of merchandise and currencies. In turn, the field of technology also functions as an indicator of updates that must take place, each *Time* closer and closer together, as though the speed of technological advances were so rapid as to be disorienting. Updates have begun to be offered online to networked users of computers.

However, despite the free circulation of goods and financial capital and even though there are no barriers to communication via international networks, the transposition of geographical borders invariably depends on consular, judicial and sometimes financial authorization and certification. That is to say, typical barriers erected by nation-states continue to limit the circulation of persons between countries. It is imperative to recognize, however, that in some senses the paradigm of universal and planetary macroethics (Apel) has already been adopted and that planetary citizenship and anthropoethics, as conceived of by Edgar Morin, have already been envisaged. Just as one can be constantly intrigued by a given world occurrence and invited

to observe as a spectator, one can also be invited to interact as far as identity and subjectivity are concerned, and not merely as a consumer or buyer. Therefore, not only is a new communicative paradigm on the brink of being introduced, but it has already been set in motion, since it lies in front of a virtual gate which is already open. But advances occur in this way: they are at first symbolic and rhetorical-discursive before becoming concrete.

The world has become smaller, but it is far from being one. Globalization is a fact. The universalization of human beings and of their rights, prerogatives and obligations is perhaps already a virtual fact but it is more than a mere declaration because when parties encounter one another, confront or cooperate with each other, it can be admitted that a paradigm of intersubjectivity has been entered into and, therefore, one of argument. Not only at the level of agonistic argument but, above all, concerning the possibility of enjoying discourses which are not systematically dominated and therefore communicative.

The conclusion is brief and simple. There is no communication without ethics because communication is an ethical presupposition and ethics are a presupposition of communication. And without ethics, there is not even humanity but really only a planet that hosts disputes of a large, predatory species. It is only in an ethical-communicative situation (or one of communication-ethics, given that each element is a mirror image of the other) that one can be morally symmetrical. If asymmetries were to prevail, humanity would regress to the teleological-strategic-perlocutionary stage and consequently would search for success centered on the ego (egocenter) or the corporate we (corpocenter). The human condition, however, has never been so well-understood. There could well be a world in which the other will not be the barbarian, perhaps because the world itself which we have divided into languages and states has become small at the same *Time* (in terms of connectivity), as well as vulnerable. In the worst-case scenario, mankind could literally all be in the same boat, in the same *oikos*.

Conclusion

The exponentiation of mercantile, technological and informational processes which has been termed "globalization" has considerable implications for the future. And, as always, the future offers a Manichean view: the interpretation of the future as the apocalypse, a scatological future, therefore, or a utopian future, literally *u-topos*, meaning that it is without its place (*topos*) in the present. Of course, the potential for

progress- including moral progress - is evanescent. The stage which has been reached is clearly noticeable, and can be read in two contrasting ways. The end is close. Or the future is close. Technologically, it could be that all expectations have been surpassed. A half-century ago, neither futurologists nor prophets were capable of imagining the sort of real-*Time* communication scenarios encountered today. It could be said that the products of this technological spiral have reached a level of perfection beyond the wildest dreams of previous generations. Arthur Clark was capable of dreaming about satellites. And McLuhan was capable of envisaging a global village, but neither was capable of contemplating the emergence of the Internet, which literally represents the world at the touch of a key. New prophecies and prophets are upon us, such as Apel and Morin, who promote as part of the dream the vision of an authentic humanity, marked by a moral coming of age, and therefore, communicative. Communication is the sharing of production and responsibilities, or in Apel's words, the primacy of the *macroethics of the joint responsibility of humanity and for humanity*. And the true sense of a socio-genesis, a concept developed by Habermas from the psychogenesis of Piaget, but envisaging the possibility of societies learning, endogenously and with one another (anthropogenesis). From the perspective of the author, the dream to be dreamt – and whose first signs are appearing, is the dream of one society, a society that is more than global, universal in terms of the equitable sharing of the marvels which human beings are capable of producing.

|NOTES

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Luiz Martins da Silva

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Luiz Martins da Silva is a journalist, poet and Professor in the Faculty of Communication Studies at the University of Brasília (UnB), where he is involved in teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, research and extension programs. He teaches, among other courses, the Ethics of Communication