

REVIEWS AND NOTES

**Ciprian Pripoae-Șerbănescu, *Subconștient, comunicare, sens*
(*Subconscious, communication, meaning*),
TopForm, Bucharest, 2018, 95 p.**

Review by Ionuț HOREANU*

The volume *Subconscious, communication, meaning*, published in 2018, by TopForm Publishing House, within the Psychology collection, represents a real contribution in the field of intelligence studies. The author Ciprian Pripoae-Șerbănescu successfully summarizes the concerns in the field of psychology, critical thinking and intelligence, with an emphasis on the persuasive role of communication. After all, the paper can be a starting point for future research, especially due to the interdisciplinary perspective.

The paper can be read following the structure of the three chapters: *Individual, public communication and social adaptation; The limits of rationality and the role of early experiences in information processing* and *The mind process of information*, and highlights the specific dimensions of a fairly efficient and logically cohesive study. Each chapter has several integrated subchapters, which contribute to the paper being unequivocally included in the category of works to research at least as a bibliographic reference.

Starting with the introduction, the reader is faced with a first challenge that he can foresee, either due to his curiosity or due to the ability to search for a thread according to the interest given by the

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opening of such a work. Thus, the first challenge that could arise would be if the author came to reveal the fine mechanisms, just thought out, for understanding the process of propaganda, influence, manipulation, etc. behind the phenomena. This curiosity of the reader can also emerge from the title of the paper. However, it cannot in any way be considered a work of disseminating information or a work for the general public, because the variety of concepts and the esoteric nature of the work, in the sense of a work for a small group, showing the capacity of the author, but also the burden of a task which can cause disappointment for the reader, which is not the case.

However, the most natural thing would be for the paper to be read as a significant study for the treatment or understanding of researched issues by other authors or as an action to clarify concerns, specific to the archaeology of research topics or concepts.

The author also emphasizes that he tries to define a line of understanding the communication, again, admitting a genealogy of the processes that dismantle the communication process, from “archaic or subsequent interactional experiences” or later, or the boundaries between real and unreal, between rational and unconscious residues.

In the first chapter *Individual, public communication and social adaptation*, the author tries to highlight two dimensions of communication, in two distinct subchapters. On the one hand, there is the binomial of communication – psychology as a way of emphasizing the psychological perspective for communication theories. On the other hand, the nuances that emerge from the communication process as a means of adapting the individual to society are analysed. In any case, the central stake of this part of the paper is to develop an itinerary for understanding, in particular, one’s own person in social organization, i.e. how subconscious psychic processes can contribute to the capacity for communication and social interaction.

The problem of communication and social adaptation shows that power and control are held by “those who control the spaces of passage” (p. 19). Furthermore, the author aims to find the means to reveal the connection between the individual’s identity, language and society. It brings up topics with meaning for self-understanding, showing the principles that define identity: continuity, uniqueness, the need to feel in control, the feeling of personal value, the need for meaning and the need for belonging (p. 23). Persuasion, respectively the influence can be increased through three psychic processes: internalization, identification and compliance, respecting the condition that the message is credible, attractive and strong (p. 24). It would have been interesting if these principles were also associated with forms of influencing the identity of the individual. However, it may be a later bet for the author or other researchers.

Also, due to these issues and objectives it is difficult for the reader not to be captivated until the last page of the last chapter, and some chapters can also be read as separate studies. Although the book is not easy to read, due to the abundance of concepts and various information synthesized in very small spaces (undeniable merit of the author), the curiosity of the topics does not leave you until you reach the end.

The work gains an important role and, from the appearance of a sterile subject, it acquires value through content. The need to give meaning to the inner psychic reality has an overwhelming role on behaviour, not the principle of reality. Moreover, some up-to-date information and recent cases (the Facebook – Cambridge Analytica scandal) are used to bring to light elements of the role and implications of the media on life.

You can judge the study that does not reach 100 pages, but the entry in the topic shows that it is more than that and removes the prejudices that may arise due to the small number of pages. We have

some important topics with multidisciplinary stakes. In fact, the main criticisms can be summarized here: a more than parsimonious synthesis of some themes. In this sense, we pay attention to the capacity of synthesis and integration of some recent topics, such as the paraconsistent logic.

Socially adapted communication leads to the mental plane as a topic debated in the second chapter “The limits of rationality and the role of early experiences in information processing”, which shows the path of the socially and culturally adapted individual to the recognition of ontological status, depending on reality. The author bases his analysis on the limits of formal logic in order to dismantle the unknowns’ specific to the analysis of thought and communication. From the established connection between thought and language, the author seeks to understand the way to “preserve the constancy and coherence of the individual’s identity” (p. 29); gives meaning to logic without bending over the meaning that can be formed or distorted; it makes sense only on a theoretical level, but articulated. Logic, for the author, has its relevance in the economy of the text in that it is intended to protect internal mental coherence. From this perspective he shows the limits of classical logic for the researched subject. Non-conscious assumptions are outside this formal logic. And here it touches on another aspect, that the availability or capacity of the receiver attempts the limits of logic in the case of persuasion. An example is the syllogistic cases of the entimema type, when the conclusion appears paraconsciously.

The paper has only a theoretical side, the practical one being found in a few examples. Sometimes examples are given. However, from the theoretical stakes drawn by Ciprian Pripoae-Șerbănescu, it is possible to reach exercises and applications in the sphere of communication reality, with an emphasis on persuasive implications. In this direction, one can consider the role of symbols for critical thinking,

respectively the limits of critical thinking shaped by the inability to self-analysis and reflection.

The author reaches a difficult realm of knowledge, of the subconscious as a reflection of the conscious. He makes an important bridge between the conscious and the subconscious, touching the issues of metacognition. But by the fact that reading raises dilemmas, the author saves the reader's time till the end. Metacognition and critical thinking can be two meaningful topics. It would have been interesting to debate the process of meta-knowledge regarding the emergence of creative thinking. In other words, let's see how creative thinking can be formed and influenced.

It is not far from a phenomenology of knowledge, emphasizing the difference between being conscious and doing something conscious. Here comes logic, but not to explain, but to show the right direction of reality.

The author proposes, in the second part of the paper, a propaedeutics in the field of communication with an insufficiently defined terminology by researchers, with significant emphasis on a meta-communication, but guides the research in an introductory framework through interdisciplinary explanations. The appeal to myth highlights the role of a logic of affections, explained by the myth of Baucis and Philemon. The significance of the myth lies in the fact that from a narrow gaze one can reach a wider one, due to the acceptance of the future's possible anticipation. In this context, it shows that, in the end, the analyst's ability also lies in the perspective of reporting to information, receiving it with the third ear, with attention suspended or freely floating (p. 54).

Destructing one's own prejudices can be a possible path through floating attention. The formation of certain perspectives of understanding certain situations or information in the mind of an analyst

can be caused by several variables and determined by particularities that he cannot exclude. The capacity to be objective has to do with the compromise caused by certain beliefs and the information that the source wants to put in the message.

Therefore, we are dealing in this part of the paper with an analysis that does not exclude the dimension of knowledge and self-knowledge, terms so dried of meaning, but very little exposed. The role of floating attention is thus to make possible the “empathic perception”, in the sense of increasing the ability to give meaning to messages and to create associations. Suspended attention acquires the role of a tool of knowledge. The logic of emotions can be exploited by putting the individual in situations of ambiguity and sprinkling with necessary messages to direct attention to a certain meaning or sense, if it is necessary, a process of persuasion.

It remains a “still” for the author, which may appear by the fact that the reader, who writes these lines, tried to save as much as possible the work – given the interest of the reader – or even the work deserves to be integrated and cited at least in reference studies in communication and rhetoric.

The paper is also part of the third chapter as a good starting point for the repression of the image to self-knowledge. It is important to note the distinction and, at the same time, the remark particularly important for the subject’s economy that thinking as a means of analysing reality cannot be strictly subject to the laws of logic. The author starts from such limits when he aims to show how the mind processes information, where the laws of a global nature demonstrate “the whole psyche” (p.59). Nor can he pursue his study in other paradigms, as a significant section focuses on the analysis of unconscious mechanisms of distorted thinking, influenced by the logic of affect and different from logical errors. If not a classification, at least a reconsideration of research on discursive

strategies, narratives in crisis situations, etc. may be the starting point for this study.

A series of deviations from reason that can be included in the pathological sphere can be ways for goals achieved, in accordance with the personality, in confusing situations. Combining cognitive distortions with logical errors can be the way to achieve goals. Distorted forms of thinking are the way to the perfection of the intended purpose, through the use of thinking errors. Errors can be intertwined with distortions (p. 64).

Through argumentative errors the mind can be oriented towards cognitive distortions. We show, by these, that we are not dealing only with a specialized work, but with the search for meaning for each one. The book can be a starting point for a rigorous analysis of the spectrum of any field as announced in the title.

With what errors, sophistry can be operated according to beliefs is a matter discussed in a separate section of the last chapter. Understanding the process of influencing opens up new perspectives on whether communication and the role of beliefs and belief networks will be integrated (p. 68). The author talks about the fact that the belief system may be impenetrable by logical arguments, but further consideration of logical errors would have been welcome. If the answer to such a question were the expected one, the significance of another perspective could also intervene: does operationalization with logical errors and distortions of thought break the architecture of beliefs? Mistakes must resonate with the expectations and beliefs of the "other." Sophism will have the task of intervening in the formation of the realities of the "other", without shaking them. The world is ordered even by the beliefs of the individual, which become the wall for the value of resilience.

The combination of the weapons of logic and those of effective logic find their most effective role in prejudices and stereotypes. Above these logics, used efficiently, in persuasive communication can lie the paraconsistent logic, where the incoherence can be as a false argument. Thus, the question can be asked: how can classical logic intervene in the sophistic of which paraconsistent logic could be used, when the value of truth is subject to contextual variables.

We consider that in this way, very important dimensions of the logic put in an unitary analysis can lead to the highlighting of the mechanisms encountered in the case of presuppositions. Paraconsistent logic can have the gift of provoking intentions, later “detecting beliefs” (p. 84). However, classical logic remains the role of modelling paraconsistent logic, precisely through the limits it can set for the rationality of communication.

Sometimes questions that may remain challenging to the reader can leave a lasting impression. However, they do not detract from the value of the study, as the objectives were pursued without shortcomings. For this reason, open challenges may remain: how do we show that classical logic can overlap and support even this type of logic of the unconscious for the path of propaganda, respectively of the will modelling. Again, another challenge may be: how sophistic logic can work with belief or belief systems.

At least for the fact that the study provokes questions and leaves room for open discussions on topics of particular relevance to the fields of communication, psychology and philosophy, we believe that the paper can be included among those with academic claims.