

THE SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

The sociological determination of the communication as a social action implies an application of the Weber's theory of the social action on one hand, and on the other hand it implies an interpretation of the contemporary sociological thought which explored the communication. Hence, our paper perceives the most important elements of communication as a social action which moves the social reality and the most significant elements of its determination within the symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethno methodology, dramaturgical theory, social constructivism and the theory of the communicative action. All these theories offered a new perspective of theorizing the communication as an amalgam which from the individuals creates an organized society which is in continual negotiation regarding the subjective understanding of the sense which the social actors attach to their acting.

Key words: communication, microsociology

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The communication as a transmission of information between two social actors at least, is one of the most present social appearances. That is why it represents a serious exploration challenge for many social sciences, most of all for the communicology, sociology and psychology. Each of these sciences explores the communication in its own manner. That suggests delimitation of the subject, especially the area of study of the communication as well as an application of a specific method appropriate to the subject of the separate science. So the communicology primarily focuses on the elements which constitute the communication, emphasizing the concept of the communication as a social skill, the sociology focuses on the social aspects and implications of the communication which defines it as a social action, while the psychology is concentrated on the mental processes which are a constituent part of the communication, paying special attention to the behavior of the individuals.

Even one can say that almost every exploration in the sociology implicitly deals with study of the communication; the increase of the interest for explicit exploration of the communication began at the beginning of the 20th century. The sociological interest for exploration of the communication went in parallel with the reduction of the influence of the macrosociology at the account of the microsociology, which was followed with the increase of the meaning of the qualitative methodology, on the account of the quantitative methodology. The swivel around which the debate between the microsociology and the macrosociology sociology was moving was the Weber's theory of the social action. According to Weber the social action is an orientation, direction towards the other social actors (Weber 1978). The social action is the active, dynamical part of the social reality (when we act we are speaking of action, when we respond to other peoples' actions, we react), of which the direction towards the others gives them a social dimension (when we drive a car or when we pray, in a certain way we are acting, but that action is not social since it is not directed towards the others). The social action is a conscious intentional social activity, it is an action for something, directed towards a certain objective, to the other social actors. At the same time, the social action has its own importance and consequences for the actor undertaking it. Within the range of sociology,

especially within the range of microsociology, many have also seen communication as a social action. According to them the communication is a special type of action which is directed towards mutual understanding with the other social actors through an exchange of symbols. The social action unlike the communication does not include the exchange of gestures and the mutual understanding. The communication is not possible without social action, that is, without orientation towards the other person. That is why the communication is a special type of social action. The implication of this determination of the communication is that every social action does not necessarily have to be communication or include communication, even though the lack of communication importantly reduces the sense of the social action. The understanding of the social action is based on the importance which the individuals assign it. Accordingly the understanding is based on the importance. While the importance is typical for the social action, the understanding of the acting is specificity typical for the communication. The communication between the social actors is performed by an exchange of symbols. The symbols are important gestures that signify certain objects, things, events, relations. The important gestures evolve from the gestures which are such type of social acts that we use in order to give signals (stimuli) to the others. Many people relate the signifying function of the symbols with the representation of the objects, but within the range of the social sciences this idea has went through a serious critics.

Though in the sociology there is an acceptance that the communication is a social action, the sociologists cannot agree regarding the issue what type of social action the communication is. Namely, even Weber himself made a difference between four types of social action. At the same time each of the theoretical directions, especially in the microsociology had its own interpretation of the social action, emphasizing different aspects of its social consequences as a key challenge of the sociological imagination (Weber 1978). So for Mead the communication is a type of social interaction in which at least two individuals exchange important gestures, whereupon constitutional (beginning part) of the social interaction is the social action (Mead 1934). Schultz define that the

communication is a social action which expresses the individual experience of the individuals (Schultz 1967). For Garfinkel the communication represents a practical action with which the social constitution is established (Garfinkel 1967). Goffman define the communication is an instrumental action with which the social performance is formed (Goffman 1959). Further, for Berger and Luckmann the communication is a social action directed toward the formation of a social reality (Berger and Luckmann (1991), while Habermas was speaking of communication action directed towards understanding of the individuals and accomplishment of an agreement (Habermas 1983).

Each of these interpretations of the communication as a social action in its way is indicating the characteristics of communication as a social occurrence. So Mead and the symbolic interactionists emphasize the role of the symbols and especially the speech as a system of symbols for the communication between the social actors. Emphasizing the importance of the communication as a social action, the social interactionists insist on the speech as an active part of the communication, unlike the language as a passive one. For Schultz and the phenomenologist the communication is a key element in the understanding of the conscious experience of the individuals. The phenomenologist have developed many concepts which enlighten the role of the language in the formation of the experience. Especially distinguished are the concepts of the intersubjectivity as sharing of the subjective experiences of the social actors and the reservoir of knowledge as a type of unconscious intersubjective experience of the social actors. For Garfinkel and the ethno methodologists the communication as a practical (social) action was of key importance for understanding the establishment of the social constitution. Namely, according to the ethno methodologists the social constitution is a matter of a momentary agreement between the individuals which are communicating. Accordingly through the communication the social actors from moment to moment form the social constitution. In order to explore this process of formation of the social constitution the ethno methodologists were making lots of experiments which helped them disrupt it, supervising the way in which the social constitution is being reestablished through the communication. Hence, within the range of the

ethno methodology, firstly thanks to the contribution of Havey Sacks, the conversation analysis was developed. Goffmann again insisted on exploration of face to face communication as a basis of any other type of communication. He considered communication mostly as an instrumental action (one of the types of rational social action proposed by Weber). He indicated the importance of the roles which the social actors have, for the expense of their personality. So as a metaphor for the communication between the individuals he chose the dramaturgy and the theory which he developed is known as dramaturgical theory. According to the dramaturgical theory, the social actors playing their roles make a team, which is playing a certain performance in front of the eyes of the audience. These theory pays great attention to the exploration of the management with the impressions of the audience considering that the social actors in front of the audience (the actors which have the role of an audience or the entire society) incline to represent themselves with as better personality as possible. At this point Goffmann points the incompatibility of the behavior of the individuals on the front and on the back scene as well as the techniques which the social actors use in order to protect the performance from discovering the secrets through the loyalty of the social actors and the occasional change of the audience. The theory of the social constructionism of Berger and Luckman synthesizes the acknowledgements of the symbolic interactionism, the phenomenology and ethnomethodology in the attempt to show how the social actors constitute the social reality. Probably the most serious argument for the social constitution of the reality (the objectizing of the subjective experience) was exactly the communication as sharing and socializing the subjective experiences of the social actors which in that manner become part of the collective unconscious, that is, part of the reservoir of knowledge. Habermas on the other hand tried to explore the communication in the historic context of the rationalization, making a difference between the instrumental action of which inter alia Goffmann insisted as well, and which Weber also took as a basis of modernization and the communication action, which even though it has rational characteristics, it is deprived of the manipulative space which the instrumental action opens. The communicative action is directed only towards an exchange of

symbols. The objective of the communicative action is mutual understanding of the talkers, unlike the instrumental action for which the exchange of symbols is only an instrument for accomplishing other objectives which the social actors set up. According to Habermas the communicative action is the basis of the instrumental action or in other words it is a buckled communicative action. Thereupon Habermas uses the exchange of the symbols as a basis for the critics of the contemporary society which dominantly relies on instrumental action.

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СОЦИОЛОШКО РАЗБИРАЊЕ НА КОМУНИКАЦИЈАТА

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АПСТРАКТ

Социолошкото определување на комуникацијата како социјална акција подразбира од една страна примена на веберовата теорија на социјалната акција и од друга страна интерпретација на современата социолошка мисла која ја истражуваше комуникацијата. Оттука нашиот труд ги согледува најзначајните елементи на комуникацијата како социјална акција која ја движи општествената стварност и најзначајните елементи на нејзиното определување во рамките на симболичкиот интеракционизам, феноменологијата, етнометодологијата, драматуршката теорија, социјалниот конструкционизам и теоријата на комуникациската акција. Сите овие теории понудија една нова перспектива на теоретизирање на комуникацијата како амалгам кој од индивидуите прави организирано општество кое е во постојано преговарање околу субјективното разбирање на смислата која социјалните актери им ја придаваат на своето дејствување.

Клучни зборови: комуникација, микросоциологија