

SODRÉ, M. (2013). UM NOVO SISTEMA DE INTELIGIBILIDADE. REVISTA DE EPISTEMOLOGIAS DA COMUNICAÇÃO, 1(1), 66-73.

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Muniz Sodré is a Brazilian journalist, sociologist and translator. He is graduated in Law at the Federal University of Bahia in 1964, mastered in Sociology of Information and Communication at the *Université de Paris IV* (Paris-Sorbonne) in 1967 and got his PhD degree in Literature Science at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in 1978. He is currently a title professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, where he has been lecturing for over three decades. He was a member of the board of directors of the Brazilian National Library Foundation, for five years, until 2012. Previously, he has also directed the *TV Educativa* and published about 30 books in the areas of Communication and Culture. Sodré also writes fiction novels.¹

In times of globalization and technological primacy, Muniz Sodré aims at contributing to the debate on the place of the human being in the world, reaching out for several scientific areas, which once they are concatenated will enable, in the author's perspective, the designing of the structure of what he calls a "new intelligibility system".

The twentieth century author states that the scientific field of communication was marked by the American sociologic paradigm. However, with the gradual passage of industrial production economy to economy or financial service, the paradigm began to focus on individuals, addressing social groups. Sodré affirms that at that moment, the consolidation of "overwhelming presence of the 'technical object'" (Sodré, 2013, p.66) was clearly seen and watched. The author relies on other references of the Frankfurt School (including Adorno, Habermas and Marcuse) and also on postmodernism (including thinkers such as Lyotard and Lipovetsky). Together, all these authors were, each in their own way, critical to the progressive conversion of crop productivity shaft, a phenomenon which was also known as the "Cultural Industry" in the first half of the last century. This happened at a time when both Adorno and Marcuse introduced the hypothesis of the "apocalypse of *paideia*"² in their speech (p. 66).

According to Sodré, what is being discussed nowadays is the idea that technological power is the "will to power" (p. 66), not as a practice of domination, but as a "force that enables the expansion of life" (p. 66). Hence the author's insistence on the word "technology" - the one that best describes "the rationality that emerges from the very instrumental universe of machines" (p.67). The turning of technology into the essence

¹ Information retrieved from <http://www.revistaovies.com/entrevistas/2012/03/muniz-sodre-o-capital-nao-gosta-de-gente-o-capital-gosta-de-capital/>

² Ancient Greek educational process, which goal was to raise fully capable and useful citizens in the *polis*, both physically and intellectually. This concept was very discussed by Plato.

and the speech tool, may “lead to the reformulation of the humanist idea of biological anthropocentrism” (p. 67). This means that, to Sodré, technology has an explicit power in the material goods in human life, therefore, the “existential trance of the transformations and passages, as it is understood by the tradition of thought” (p. 67), is noticeable.

Sodré also states that the flags that once kept the sense of social cohesion alive have lost their meaning, due to the crumbling of republican and humanitarian identity references. These are disrupted by the dependence on machines, while the political structure settles its grounds on technocracy and the most solid universality is found in the markets in an increasingly mediated society. This is the reason why Sodré considers that the space of communication is the place where the knowledge that rehabilitates the reason of human existence may emerge (p. 67).

In the author’s perspective, this means that “social thought requires a new intelligibility system for procedural diversity of communication as a specific science of the active mode of production of knowledge” (p. 67): the emergence of this social thought must go through the rereading of the *logos* in order to link social subjects, whichever terminology (or philosophical thought) is chosen: “(Destruktion in Heidegger, deconstruction in Derrida, archeology in Foucault, redescription in Rorty, etc.)” (p. 67). A reinterpretation that can “listen to the voices that constitute the new technology field inhabited by man” (p.67), not only in the light of philosophy or social sciences, but in a dialogue set of assumptions of thought that allows the emergence of a new intelligibility model. This means rereading and reinterpreting, in the “Nietzschean re-evaluation of values” (p. 67) sense, in order to find a “new educational or self-educational horizon able to rebalance the consciousness of the subject faced with the globalization’s semiotic violence” (p. 67). To illustrate this opening, this reinterpreting, to set the scientific thought free from crystallized assumptions, Muniz Sodré relies on Jacques Lacan, a psychoanalytic, and Rorty, a philosopher, both in rupture with the *status quo*.

In this sense, for Sodré

the scientific field of communication (...) can come to be defined (...) as a re-reading device of the traditional issues of society (...) without the (...) barriers between the old *disciplines*, but also between the scientific redescription and the creation of artistic nature, with all its imaginative resources, from which metaphors are not excluded (p. 68).

Sodré names the sociatarian order that emerges from the imposition of the media, which *reifies* and *objectifies* the individuals, *virtual bios*. The power of this *virtual bios* lies in coded relationships that are above the individual’s consciousness of the subject: Sodré says it is a model entirely connected to the products and to the markets: it is the spectacle, following Guy Debord’s terminology (1967, p. 15).

Sodré also declares that the redescriptional analysis of the spectacle or *virtual bios* “can be understood as an invitation to read again” (p. 69). In our own words: offering itself to a deconstructive rereading, according to the postmodernists deconstructive process, which can result in the emergence of a new intelligibility alternative system to the

current hegemonic thinking. To make this happen, Sodré considers that this redescription should not refrain itself from using the resources generated by the technological *bios*, in both critical and political commitment manners, in order to add value to the occurrences without any Aristotelian, epistemological or ideological prejudice, using inventive creativity and audiovisual means, filmics and/or informatics.

In this sense, Sodré follows Deleuze's analysis and regards Jean-Luc Godard's work as a good example of this intervention process that emerges from within the system itself. Another good example is related to the widespread use of the internet in the field of redescriptive speech: the previous bit of interactive stability between pairs of a closed academic community, came to a profusion of electronic publications, followed by no less critical comments in an unmatched scrutinizing audience, in which the overlap of new texts made theoretical texts obsolete, requiring scholar's careful attention and constant update of their work. The internet increases, which allows the redescriving power, and this strengthens the dialogue between academics in a public sense of collective sharing. An anonymous creative appropriation of speeches takes place, which, according to Sodré, breaks with the traditional image "mirrored between the statement and the alleged factual truth of the world" (p. 70). However, the redescription should be regarded only as an interpretation of reality, and as pleonastic as this may sound, we must add that, as recalled by Sodré, "reality as we see it is an interpretation by itself (in agreement with the Nietzschean view that 'there are no facts, only interpretations')" (p. 70), only waiting for a new inventive reinterpretation that is able to refute the previous one.

All of this depends on a new interpreter-redescriptor, and for the emergence of such a person, Michel Foucault gave his great contribute, as stated by Moniz Sodré. To substantiate this, we choose the following words by Foucault (1969): "I thought that (...) the essential was: to free the history of thought from its transcendental subjection (...), opening it to temporality which would not promise the return of any dawn" (p. 227), in an encouraging way to overcome the disciplinary barriers and methodological and doctrinal aspects.

Nevertheless, this interpreter-redescriptor needs a mediator, a function that, as reaffirmed by Sodré, finds its place in communication, an area of intersection between the social sciences and philosophy, foretelling that the science of Communication will work as a "new interpretative platform (...) of social communication connection" (p. 70), acting within the *virtual bios* and aiming to transcend it, pragmatically, in order to be "able to overcome the cognitive hegemonic paradigm" (p. 70).

The interpreter-redescriptor must act in a public space which has become an undesired place, a technically enlarged reflection of what exists towards the society that reproduces the permanent dazzling by technology, seen as an inevitability – which allows the foreseeing of many other inevitabilities - Sodré classifies it as "the vision that one has of the pure spectacle (...) able to emote without producing sensitive lucidity or feeling" (p. 71), taken from a reference to Debord (1967), whose words we quote:

The spectacle cannot be understood as an abuse of the world of vision or product of mass dissemination of images techniques. It is the expression

of a *weltanschauung* [worldview] materially translated. (...) The spectacle is part of society, society itself and its instrument of unification. (Debord, p. 14)

Hence the impossibility of isolating and question from the outside, as well as the agent behind this spectacle; and at this point we find the need for intervention, but from the *inside*: the public space, a common space of communication between citizens and society, aggregator element of the *polis*, on which philosopher José Gil (2004) also reflects and here is quoted: “this is an open space of expression and exchanges, essential for the circulation of freedom within the social area (...), all the wealth of public expression is done on the *outside*” (Gil, 2004, p. 25). However, this space was gradually dominated by media corporations, a process that the author of this article calls culturalization, determining the disappearance of its democratic plurality in favor of market forces, “converting *public life* in *life in public*” (p. 71). The fact is that despite free circulation and discussion of ideas are now widely extended to the exponential evolution of information technology, as Sodré refers, this enlargement only happened in their “material and functional dimensions, with no real historical correspondence to what once meant *political* and *culture* “ (p. 71).

In fact, as we read Hall (1997) words we can notice that he goes further when he says that “today, the media supports the global circuits of economic exchanges on which depends the whole world movement of information, knowledge, capital, investment, production of goods, raw materials trade and marketing products and ideas “(Hall, 1997, p. 2). Anyway, it’s a whole industry that moves to ensure the flow of information that holds the attention of the masses, an entertainment frenzy without intellectual concerns. Therefore, it is urgent to devise an “other interpretive platform communicational phenomenon” (Sodré, 2013, p. 71), since it is crucial to reach a political redemption “of the human condition, under the new settings of capital and technology” (Sodré, 2013, p. 71).

However, this new interpretive platform is only possible to conceive, as Sodré insists, during a redescription that exceeds “the dichotomy between *social science* (sic) and *humanities*” (p. 71), which will result in a multifaceted ontological redescription process mode of existence of man in the *virtual bios*, “no matter how this [*virtual bios*] try to legitimize themselves by pleasurable ideology of consumption and uninterrupted technological effectiveness” (p. 71). The redescription of liberal capitalism should look into the “Heidegger’s questioning of the current man disorientation” (p. 71), which will show us the reasons why man is obsessed with objects and their multiplication, “exposing the fetishistic pleasure of the economy” (p. 71).

The text presented by Sodré is thus more than a reflection on social change. It is a text that discusses its own concept - the intelligibility system -, presenting arguments in favor of theoretical and especially analytical strategies that allow a reading of social change, as well as, and above all, the definition of the subversion strategies when faced with the dominant hegemonies linked to the advance of technology, particularly when it comes to what the author classifies as the “globalization’s semiotic violence.”

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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