

## **Book reviews**



## A la recherche de l'éloquence perdue

Constantin Salavastru, *Cinq études sur la rhétorique cicéronienne*  
(L'Harmattan, Paris, 2013)

Alexandre DORNA

Le nouveau livre de Constantin Salavastru reprend le chemin de l'ancienne rhétorique, afin de rétablir les points de reconnaissance de l'art de l'éloquence dont M. T. Cicéron (Ier siècle avant JC) est reconnu comme la grande référence. D'autant que les auteurs de la nouvelle rhétorique contemporaine, Perelman et Mayer, sont largement inspirés par l'ancienne, et ont réactualisé la pertinence du classique. Mais c'est la dynamique sociale et politique actuelle qui montre l'importance de se référer aux classiques pour mieux comprendre la présence de cette approche dans le discours qui traverse les enjeux du moment. De plus la forte domination de la rhétorique de l'image, qui a déplacé apparemment la rhétorique du discours, montrer comment l'ancienne rhétorique reste la matrice première de la problématique communicationnelle de nos jours.

Ce livre, solide et cohérent, réussit à articuler dans cinq études la rhétorique cicéronienne et à décrire efficacement ses enjeux. Salavastru souligne les problèmes essentiels de la rhétorique classique et l'apport de Cicéron: c'est l'idée d'argument qui semble prioritaire à saisir dans l'un des écrits fondamentaux de Cicéron : *Les Topiques*. Aussi, le modèle, qui est encore utilisé de nos jours, de fabrication de l'orateur par excellence, subtilement montré dans son ouvrage célèbre, *De l'Orateur*. De plus, l'idée d'une mise en scène théâtrale dans la manière d'agencer la parole, sans oublier l'importance dans cette conception du discours d'une analyse de la gestuelle et du rôle explicatif ornemental joué par la notion d'harmonie dans toutes les constructions théoriques de Cicéron. Enfin, impossible de ne pas le mentionner : la relation traditionnelle entre la philosophie et l'art oratoire qui rappelle la culture humaniste de Cicéron et l'adaptation au contexte.

De manière méthodique sont discutées et articulées les grandes étapes de la construction du discours par la préparation et la présentation d'un discours à prononcer devant un public : D'abord, *l'invention*. Véritable art de sélectionner et d'identifier les arguments les plus productifs, et les plus forts par rapport à l'intention. Suivis de la *disposition* comme art d'ordonner et d'organiser efficacement les arguments préalablement identifiés. *L'élocution* rappelle l'art de donner de la beauté au discours conformément aux exigences de l'expressivité. La *mémoire*, qui doit introduire avec grâce et délicatesse les citations choisies pour la circonstance chez les classiques. Et, enfin, *l'action* qui doit accompagner avec des gestes efficaces la volonté du discours.

On doit reconnaître non seulement l'élégance théorique de l'œuvre cicéronienne, mais encore ses talents de praticien. Car l'orateur, indiscutable lui-même, lie la pratique politique et la réflexion sur la cité qui lui donne une grande aisance mentale pour comprendre et expliquer d'autres modes oratoires. D'où la puissance et l'originalité de l'art cicéronien. Unique dans son genre et universel dans sa portée.

Il y a ainsi une tentative chez Cicéron de brosser le portrait de l'orateur idéal. Certes, c'est un orateur qui n'existe pas, mais est l'idéal pour tous ceux qui aspirent et espèrent y arriver. Comment faire, quand les orateurs sont si différents ? L'auteur nous suggère que là on est en face d'une question de goût. Un problème esthétique. Cicéron ne manque pas de nous donner quelques indices qui persistent malgré le temps et la modification des contextes. Là, intervient l'éducation, la philosophie et la culture pour faire un bon orateur avec une compétence dialectique et un style, voire une expression utopique. Autrement dit : accorder une importance à la distance entre ce qui est et ce qui doit être. Aussi une place non moindre est donnée à la gestuelle, celle qui anticipe et accompagne l'action de l'orateur. Car les gestes sont *différenciés entre eux grâce à leur force de signification*. Mais ce sont les gestes (l'action en général) selon Cicéron qui assurent dans la plus grande mesure le succès de l'orateur

Rien d'étonnant qu'une place si grande soit offerte à Cicéron durant presque 20 siècles dans l'enseignement et l'histoire de l'éloquence. En filigrane tout au long du livre, une question revient : Que se passe-t-il aujourd'hui dans le domaine de la rhétorique ? En somme cette démarche a pour but d'identifier les origines et les principales tendances dans l'explication et le succès d'un discours. Et de faire le contrepoint de la rhétorique ancienne avec la rhétorique actuelle.

Ce retour aux sources fondamentales de l'œuvre de Cicéron, est un effort de systématisation à la fois de la rhétorique, de l'argumentation et du discours lui-même en général, afin d'assurer une compréhension de la pensée de Cicéron à partir de sa rhétorique, véritable matrice de la pensée. C'est le pari de C. Salavastru en nous racontant cette utile reconstitution de la pensée cicéronienne. Finalement, demandons-nous pourquoi l'art de la parole est un acte de civilisation dont les racines sont gréco-latines : parce qu'elle exprime la beauté, le bien et le vrai en toute l'harmonie de *l'ethos*. Voilà le pouvoir des mots qui se révèle dans l'éclat du bel ordre, non point avec la cadence métrique des poètes, mais la cadence de l'âme de l'orateur comme un tout.

## The Symbolic Construction of Philosophical Discourse

Angèle Kremer-Marietti, *Autruï, soi et tout le reste*  
(L'Harmattan, Paris, 2013)

Camelia GRADINARU

Angèle Kremer-Marietti is, without any doubt, a prolific author. In a writing career spanning more than fifty years, she published articles and books comprising a large variety of themes and philosophers, such as Auguste Comte, Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, Jaspers, Merleau-Ponty, Whitehead, Bachelard or Wittgenstein. This shows that Kremer-Marietti has always been driven to in-depth research and writing by an almost never-ending desire to understand every major philosophical contribution and, thus, to draw a better picture of the world we live in. This type of curiosity is the hallmark of genuine thinkers, and Kremer-Marietti's latest book is a consistent proof for that.

The title of the book offers the reader plenty of reasons to start his or her own philosophical meditation, and to open a wide interrogative space. There is a definite semantic and emotional tension between the three concepts used in the title: "the other", "the self" and "all the rest". First, let us not forget the multiple aspects that are present in the dialectic relationship between self and the other: I use the others in order to comprehend who I am, to find or construct my identity, I learn a lot of things about me from the feedback that others offer me, but I also use the category of the other in order to separate me and my group from another community. This back-and-forth game may create the premises for tolerance, but it can also be the source of hate or discrimination. The other is different, yet constitutive. The self may seem, at first glance, as a unity, but a closer investigation shows that we experience both the interior, psychological dimension of our being and our "bodily surface". Second, "all the rest" is a vague, but ironic expression about the multitude of things that mediate between you and me, between the self and the other. Sometimes, our lives make us learn that all the little things that surround us – the "rest" – fundamentally affect the relationships between us. Third, an examination of the fourteen essays that form the content of the book reveals the fact that "all the rest" is both a fascinating and a complex world, one that includes language, vulnerability, memory, time, human nature and, above all, symbols.

As the author tells us from the very beginning (p. 7), we have to interpret symbolicity as an originary source, a nurturing reality that makes possible the presence of the categories of thought. If we want to understand human actions, ideology, religion or our culture as a whole, then we shall have to return not only to a detailed analysis of the mind, but also to the level of symbols. Any form of activity or knowledge ultimately depends on an act of

symbolization, which opens a certain possibility. The act of symbolization is prior to most of our well-known attitudes, such as the identification of the knowledge forms, legitimization or authorization. Even the elaboration of metaphysical discourse is tied to a defined plethora of symbols (p. 15). For Kremer-Marietti, the life of symbols is the starting point for both common and transcendental thinking. Moreover, the power of symbols is equally present in philosophy, poetry, mathematics or theology: these domains and many others are based on symbolicity. But this base is seldom forgotten, and we remember only the (ideological) differences between us, finding ourselves too often on the brink of a disaster, namely “to destruct the Other, in spite of all the teachings about compassion and about universal values” (p. 7). The modern man is still an unaccomplished project, in spite of the effort done by a few generations of thinkers.

The essays included in the book may seem heterogeneous at first sight: Dilthey and the modern man, Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty, the problem of integral memory and the infinite duration, Darwin and language, social rhetoric and metaphor in Perelman, Burke and Lacan, or the eccentric piece on black energy and the destiny of the Universe. In fact, they are connected, but what we have here is rather a Wittgenstein-type of “family resemblance”. There hardly is one single subject, a theoretical nucleus that would keep everything together. Rather, the themes of symbolicity, tolerance, humanism and the fate of contemporary philosophy are illustrated by these works. On the other hand, what stays at the core of Kremer-Marietti’s approach is the will to maintain a lively dialogue among several fields, such as science, religion, literature, linguistics or social critique. Interdisciplinary by nature, this dialogue is meant to serve the high goals of humanism: “the human unity, beyond ideologies and beliefs, may be conceived as a bio-sociological totality that evolves in the middle of a totality of an environment with which it is in a constant state of exchange” (p. 15).

Dilthey’s reflections about modernity and about science and the philosophy of history are continued by a discussion concerning Bachelard’s and Merleau-Ponty’s interpretations of interiority and exteriority, and also the problem of the epistemological cut between science and poetry. Another challenging mix of thinkers is to be found in the fourth paper, where Deleuze is put near Whitehead, Foucault and Lacan. For Kremer-Marietti, an examination of their works reveals that there is an analogous standpoint related to the understanding of the relationship between materiality and sciences: “Whitehead and Deleuze see the flux of pure difference in the primordial materiality. But this flux doesn’t exclude [...] the necessity of recognizing the mediation of the sciences: it is not the case for Nietzsche, and neither for Whitehead or Deleuze” (p. 39). The analysis of the concept of event in Whitehead’s system also offers precious details. The philosophical approach of perception is the key to the next essay, which is focused on memory and duration. Contributions from Bergson and Merleau-Ponty are reunited in a nuanced theory, and the chapter ends with the conclusion that “because the memories represent the point of intersection

between spirit and matter, the revisited duration offers us the past in its integral form: it is sufficient that an image should play the role of the trigger and, without even producing a discourse, it's good enough that it brings me to the present of emotion, joy or sorrow" (p. 69).

The following two essays tackle the problem of vision. In "Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and the conversion of vision", the starting point is the fact that in the contemporary neuroscience the role of the brain in the formation of an actual image has proven to be extremely important. In Angèle Kremer-Marietti's terms, this comes down to the idea that vision is, ultimately, an intricate process involving "a form of intelligence" (p.71). This certainly has an influence upon the way we conceive the philosophical reflection and, as Wittgenstein put it a few decades ago, to philosophize means to change one's vision, to convert the schemata previously used in perception. The genealogical method developed by Nietzsche was meant to convert not only his own look upon the world, but also the vision of his readers: "beyond the original data of anthropology and ethnology of his time, from which he draw all the philosophical consequences, Nietzsche was able to make his own observations of the comparative data from the life of his contemporaries, and this is precisely the fact that made him see 'differently' touching the unspoken real, rather than the spoken truth, namely the necessary fiction for these human facts rather than their pretended certainty" (p. 74). The vision can be, as Nietzsche taught us, terrible and awful, it can even become the source of a sequence of tragic events, as history and myth so seldom have shown us. Sometimes, the high "altitude" of the observer would make him look like a fool in the eyes of the crowd: this is the moment when the tension reaches the maximum value, and the philosopher has to make *the* choice, whether to keep on seeing things in their nudity, or to find the appropriate compromise with the world. Thus, the act of vision also implies a degree of vulnerability, and perhaps we witness that when it comes to meeting and understanding the Other. The *universal human solidarity*, an expression coined by Auguste Comte, is nothing but a particular possibility for the human race (p. 85), and not a necessary element: as a person, I can look to my peer and see that he or she is exactly like me, an open being that experiences joy, sorrow or hate and who would ultimately experience death. But, in the same time, I can "read" on his or her face the traits of the enemy, and then I would seek the destruction of the Other. As Kremer-Marietti justly notices, "Lévinas makes us understand well what we read on every face: we do not read solely the message of the other and of his or her entire personal life, as he or she has lived it, but also the message of everyone around him or her and also the message of the world in which we are equally situated, of this world that speaks to us as we speak to it" (p. 87).

The avatars of symbolicity are further discussed in the context of language (with a provocative interpretation of Darwin's insight), of social rhetoric and metaphor (Perelman, Burke and Lacan), of *autopoiesis* (a concept created by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, which quickly became

canonical not only in biology, but also in the social sciences), in the context of the preservation of nature and, finally, in relationship with the theme of humanism. In conclusion, Angèle Kremer-Marietti offers us a useful collection of essays: quite different in scope, length, intention or philosophical depth, they nevertheless constitute a good illustration of a mature and experienced thinker. Angèle Kremer-Marietti didn't intend to give her readers a complete system or even an articulated view on symbolicity or humanism. Rather, the intention was to create a sort of resonance in the reader's mind, who could, then, start her own reflection. And this particular intention, we may state, has been accomplished.

## Jon Elster's Toolbox for Social Science

Jon Elster, *Comportamentul social. Fundamentele explicației în științele sociale*  
(Editura ALL, București, 2013)

Viorel ȚUȚUI

There is a common belief (some critics would call it a “dogma”) regarding the highly specialized nature of the contemporary contributions in the field of political and social philosophy. According to this view there is a price to pay for obtaining valid and certified results: we have to confine ourselves in restricted areas of research and to abandon any hope for more comprehensive theories which are often regarded as suspicious. However, there are some privileged examples of contemporary authors that seem to find a way around this presumably inescapable dilemma, and Jon Elster is undoubtedly a representative author in this category. He has a vast and far-reaching work, which includes significant contributions in various domains such as political philosophy and psychology, ethics, philosophy of social science, rational choice and public choice theory. He is also an important critic of Marxist and neoclassical economics.

By this review I would like to notify the first Romanian translation of Elster's recent book *Explaining Social Behavior. More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (2007). The translation was published in 2013 by ALL Publishing Press with the title *Comportamentul social. Fundamentele explicației în științele sociale*. Elster's book is a substantially revised and extended version of his very influential and already classical work *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (1989).

As Elster affirms in the *Preface*, although the book is not meant to be a treatise (it is an informal and a personal presentation of his view), it is nevertheless a comprehensive work that has a significant potential for illuminating social behavior (p. 11). The book is structured in 26 chapters reunited in five parts: *Explicație și mecanisme (Explanation and mechanisms)*, *Gândirea (The mind)*, *Acțiunea (Action)*, *Lecții desprinse din științele naturii (Lessons from the natural sciences)* și *Interacțiunea (Interaction)*. The main objective of the book is announced in the title: explaining social behavior. As he affirms in the *Introduction*, the first part is dedicated to presenting his conception regarding the explanation of social behaviour and the other four parts are meant to “construct a toolbox of concepts and mechanisms that apply to particular cases” (p. 15).

In his approach regarding the process of explanation he starts by differentiating between causal and intentional explanation of social behavior and

by arguing that, in his view, all explanation is causal: in order to explain a phenomenon, we have to mention a previous phenomenon that caused it. So he takes a significant distance from some of his earlier contributions on intentional explanation (such as rational choice explanation), although he does not exclude it altogether, and rejects all forms of functionalism.

In Elster's opinion, explanation has the following structure: 1. Choose the most promising theory; 2. Specify a hypothesis that applies the theory to the problem; 3. Imagine alternative explanations; 4. Refute these rival accounts; 5. Strengthen the hypothesis by showing that it has additional testable implications (p. 30). An interesting section of the first chapter is the one that distinguishes between explanation and seven other types of statements: citing true causal statements (without providing the causal mechanisms); correlations (without causal connections); statements about necessitation (which are accounts of what *had to* happen); storytelling (accounts about what *might* have happened); statistical explanations (which do not explain individual events); answers to "why" questions (again without providing the causal mechanisms); and predictions (we can sometimes explain without being able to predict or predict without being able to explain).

The key concept in his account concerning the process of explanation is the notion of "mechanism" (he also uses the expression "causal chain"), a concept that he finds more useful than the notion of "general law": we can explain a social fact or event only when we identify the type of mechanism that produced it. He defines mechanisms as "frequently occurring and easily recognizable causal patterns that are triggered under generally unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences" (p. 48).

The second part of the book is dedicated to the presentation of his view regarding the roles that some basic mental states play in the "belief-desire model" of action. In Elster's opinion, mental states such as beliefs, desires, preferences, emotions, and the like should be regarded as preconditions of social behavior. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that they are not "as stable and enduring entities as apples and planets". He offers many examples that demonstrate the elusive, unstable, or context-dependent nature of these mental states (p. 79).

This part begins with an analysis of the complex character of various kinds of motivations: from "visceral to rational", from interest to reason and passion, from *Id* to *Ego* and *Superego* (in Freudian terms), from consequentialist to non-consequentialist motivations, from voluntary to non-voluntary motivations, from self-interested to altruistic motivations, from motivations directed to immediate benefits to those directed to more remote consequences. Hence, there are many forms that motivations might take and many motivational conflicts that might occur in the "causal chain" which explains a particular social behavior. And these facts make the job of the social scientist more difficult. Elster offers a similar account of beliefs by analyzing their nature, causes and consequences. He emphasizes the fact that beliefs are cognitive attitudes which

must be differentiated from certainty and that they have an intricate relation with ignorance, assessments of probability, statistical inferences, motivations, wishful thinking, rationalization, and self-deception.

A chapter that I find especially interesting is the one dedicated to emotions because it is one of the few systematical approaches of this controversial subject that I know of which is not restricted to the pure psychological domain and has a special bearing on social and political philosophy. In his view, emotions are sources of happiness and unhappiness that have a significant impact on social behavior because they determine action tendencies and they have a considerable influence on other mental states (especially beliefs). Although he does not provide a definition, he does mention some features associated with most (but not all) of them: cognitive antecedents, psychological arousal, psychological expressions, action tendencies, intentional objects, and valence (p. 147). He classifies the 28 emotions explicitly mentioned in the chapter in several categories according to some clear criteria: evaluations regarding actions, behaviors or states of fact, which can be from present, past or future, which can be certain, probable or counterfactual. Some of the emotions (anger, guilt, contempt and shame) have a special relation with moral and social norms: when these norms are violated, witnesses are experiencing anger or contempt and norm violators experience guilt or shame (p. 152). Elster also underlines the complex nature of the relation between emotions, actions, and beliefs, the possibility of emotional transmutations, and their cultural relativity.

In the next part, Elster analyses action, understood as intentional behavior caused by desires and beliefs of the agent. Following the same argumentative pattern, he emphasizes the complexity of social action by asserting the importance of rational choice based on the desire-belief model. However, he argues that sometimes opportunities are more important than desires and situations are more important than personality traits in determining the course of an action. This is the reason why he believes that folk psychology and “crude essentialism” in the study of personality are mistaken: it is simply not true that people are essentially aggressive, impatient, extroverted, and so on. In his opinion, we should decompose the character into a “set of contingent response tendencies” and he affirms that “the explanation of behavior rests on the particular situation plus the person-specific relation between situations and behavioral propensity” (p.184-185).

Returning to the analysis of rational choice, he insists on the idea that a rational action should meet “three optimality requirements”: “the action must be optimal, given the beliefs; the beliefs must be as well supported as possible, given the evidence; and the evidence must result from an optimal investment in information gathering” (p. 187). But, real life agents are often incapable of satisfying the conditions of ideal rationality. Nevertheless, Elster argues that it is more important that people *want* to be rational and that the frequent lapses from rationality are not unavoidable: people are able to learn how to avoid making the same mistakes.

In the fourth part, Elster presents the lessons that social scientists could learn from natural sciences. In his opinion, the adequate relation between different scientific disciplines is reduction (as opposed to analogy) conceived as “a form of explaining phenomena at one level at the hierarchy of sciences in terms of lower-level phenomena” (p. 247). Even if he acknowledges that some forms of reductionism are simplistic (premature, crude, speculative), Elster affirms that social sciences can be reduced to psychology, psychology to biology, biology to chemistry and chemistry to physics. Hence, he presents valuable results that social sciences could acquire from physiology and neuroscience in the study of fear, trust, jumping to conclusions. However, in the chapters 16 and 17 he analyzes the theory of natural evolution and natural selection and argues that nothing similar exists in social world.

The fifth and final part of the book is dedicated to the complex nature of social interaction. In the eighteenth chapter he presents the problem of unintentional consequences of individual social behavior. In the following two chapters he offers an extensive analysis of game theory with its various social games: various cooperative and non-cooperative social games which illustrate different ways of transforming individual behavior in collective action. However, this valuable theory for a methodological individualist (such as Elster) has some limitations that he mentions in the final section of chapter 20: people sometimes fail to conform to the predictions of game theory (p. 322). Next he analyzes trust as an essential ingredient of social life and the reasons people have for trusting others and for wanting to be perceived as trustworthy.

A subject that I find very interesting is the theme of social norms presented in chapter 22. He defines a social norm as “an injunction to act or to abstain from acting” (p. 333). Their causal efficacy is based on the action tendencies associated with emotions (guilt and contempt) which are experienced when social norms are violated and the violation is observed by other people which impose some informal sanctions on the perpetrator (such as ostracizing). These features distinguish social norms from legal, moral, quasi-moral and conventional norms. Elster also draws attention to the fact that social norms are not always adopted because they are useful: one can find many trivial norms or norms that have a negative effect on our lives.

The next three chapters are dedicated to the processes of collective belief formation, of collective action and collective decisions. He mentions different ways in which conformism, pluralistic ignorance, rumors, fears, hopes and the phenomenon of “informational cascades” can affect the truthfulness of our beliefs. Regarding collective action, Elster emphasizes the fact that it is definable in terms of “rational outcome-oriented self-interested motivations”. But these motivations are not sufficient in order to guarantee that cooperation will occur: individuals could decide that they will be better off not cooperating. As Elster points out, the outcome depends on the distribution of the motivations in the population, on the technology of collective action and on organization and leadership (p. 372). In what regards the problem of collective decisions, he affirms that they are about

making a policy choice by means of aggregating individual preferences. The procedures of collective decision-making investigated are arguing, voting and bargaining. In his opinion their efficacy is based on the fact that they create an incentive to misrepresent some aspect of one's preferences. In the last chapter of the book he analyses the differences between organizations regarded as "collective actors defined by their capacity for centralized decision making", and institutions regarded as "ways of doing things that emerge or evolve gradually" (p. 396).

In the concluding section of the book he addresses the problem of the possibility of social sciences and of their special features (when they are compared with natural sciences). He mentions four criteria for what it is to count as a science (the model is taken from natural sciences): (1) there is general agreement among its practitioners; (2) there is a process of cumulative progress; (3) the main concepts and theories can be expressed in terms clear and explicit enough to be understood by anyone; and (4) the "classics" of the discipline are read mainly by historians of science. He argues that qualitative social sciences (historical writings and case studies) fail to satisfy the majority of these criteria: there are controversies between practitioners, it is hard to identify the presence of a cumulative process and classics are not obsolete yet. Quantitative social sciences (measurement, data analysis, and modeling) are not better off in satisfying these criteria. And, in Elster's view, if we take into consideration the indeterminate character of social action and our poor understanding of the mechanisms of preference formation, it is unlikely that the condition of social sciences will improve significantly in the future.

Although I acknowledge that Elster's extensive analysis is highly illuminating in identifying the complex nature of social behavior, in my opinion there are some observations and objections we could mention regarding Elster's argumentation. The first remark would be that the book is not as systematic as we would like it to be. Trying to emphasize the complex character of social behavior, Elster is less concerned with illuminating the way in which all the parts of the argumentation are connected. For the most part this means only that the task of the specialized reader is more difficult: he has to reconstruct the intrinsic argumentative coherence of the book. But there are also some serious problems which cannot be solved by the means of this kind of argumentative reconstruction. One of them is the fact that although he assumes methodological individualism, he does not explicitly address the classical objections that this theoretical conception has to face. For example, he does not explain in a coherent individualistic manner how the social norms have emerged (he admits that the problem is too difficult). Moreover, concerning the relation between social norms and emotions (guilt, contempt) he mentions that the causal efficacy of social norms is based on the action tendency determined by these emotions. But Elster also affirms that these social emotions are experienced only when social norms are violated in a social context (the violation is observed by another person). Hence, it seems that social norms have to precede our emotional experiences and they have to

be explained by another kind of mechanism. A similar problem occurs in relation with the process of preferences and belief formation or with the process of decision making. As Elster concedes, many times social, contextual and situational factors prevail over the individual and personal aspects. Consequently, we have to observe that there are many things that need further clarification in what regards the coherence of his methodological individualism.

Leaving these difficulties aside, Jon Elster's book represents an essential contribution to the philosophy of social science, and its Romanian translation provides a valuable toolbox for Romanian scholars who are interested in the scientific investigation of social reality.

## **A Theoretical Approach to the Advertising Discourse and its Pragmatic Influence on Consumers**

**Eduardo J. M. Camilo, *HOMO CONSUMPTOR. Dimensões teóricas de comunicação publicitária***  
(Livros LabCom, Covilhã, 2010)

Ioana-Maria COZMA

Eduardo J.M. Camilo writes a compelling and intricately elaborated book which handles the issues of advertising and its influence on consumers who are consequently given the very befitting name of “Homo Consumptor” in the actual title of this book. The author’s style is clear and concise, gradually constructing his assumptions and grounding them on solid foundations, as his discourse unfolds. Therefore, it could be said that *HOMO CONSUMPTOR. Dimensões teóricas de comunicação publicitária* is written in quite a didactic manner, facilitating the reader’s understanding.

Camilo is more interested in the advertising language and the advertising process of communication and this is why the most significant references that can be observed throughout the pages point to famous linguists and theorists of communication, such as Georges Péninou, Roman Jakobson, Umberto Eco, Tzvetan Todorov, Gérard Genette, John Searle and Roland Barthes. The author also has a visible and quite affectionate congeniality with Naomi Klein’s ideas from her book *No Logo*. For instance, the fade-away of products which makes room for the dawning of brands is a frequently remembered thought, as it connects the dots between the classic and the newer forms of advertising.

To begin with, Camilo discusses the advertising communication by making a significant distinction between the source and the sender of an advertised message: straightforwardly, the source is a certain company and the sender is an advertising agency. This is a key point due to the fact that the status of advertisers and marketers evolves and gains importance in conceiving a message which fits in the consumer’s culture.

Further in the book, the author talks about a model of advertising genres arguing that advertising is a linguistic phenomenon dominated by referential value. Applying Jakobson’s structuralist theories and revisiting his theory on the functions of language, Camilo concludes that each function is assigned to a specific type of advertising, all of which are thoroughly described. Nevertheless, some limits of this model are also mentioned. For example, the role of the receiver is bluntly diminished, being imagined as a passive receptacle of information, which is no longer the case in the most recent types of advertising characterized by interactivity: „advertising campaigns will only succeed if they

are accompanied by interpersonal communication habits, strongly argumentative and directed towards certain audiences (or opinion leaders), namely towards the individuals who hold dominion over the social, political, institutional etc. stages of the advertising's recipient" (p. 59). This is why the author strongly believes that a process theory of advertising genres should be constructed, basing itself on elements of intertextuality and transtextuality. Camilo explains that the advertised message is a symbolic reality which possesses a cultural and historic signification, „presenting a reactive specificity and guiding itself by replies, challenges and discursive reproductions allusive to products or consumption practices: the advertising message is composed by a tone which relates to a communicational (of an advertising nature) or microeconomic context" (p. 76). This model acknowledges the dialogical, interactive character of communication processes and the receiver's active role.

At this point, Camilo talks about the importance of motivational advertising where personal experiences are used to motivate the consumption and where a transtextual relationship guides the particularities of motivations and behaviours. On the other hand, the psychosocial approach to advertising relies on the sense of legitimacy in the public space and on the consumer's ideology. As such, advertising reflects ideological stereotypes by the instrumentality of transtextual relationships of messages. It can thereby be noticed how new values take hold of the advertising communication process, values that transcend the microeconomic environment, thus leading to an enhancement in advertisers' attributions and a decrease in the source's role.

While continuing to discuss the significance of the implicit, Camilo makes a distinction between the "receiver" and the "recipient" of advertising: the receiver views advertising as a form of entertainment while the recipient has a so-called "advertising competence" being able to understand all the speech acts and the rules used in a message, including the implicit dimensions. The recipients are highly skeptical to advertising, but the author considers that a fundamental attitude by which the message is understood and interpreted. Paradoxically, the lack of credibility is necessary for advertising to work, because one either loves it or hates it (p. 188). Knowing all that assists the creation of more effective advertisements and to help describe a suitable message, Camilo argues the pros and cons of repetition as well as the strengths and weaknesses of two types of advertising: the realist (based on enthymemes that want to create the impression of plausibility, obtaining pragmatic effects) and the obtuse (based on an ambiguous, symbolic discourse used to create a certain atmosphere). Obtuse advertising is where Naomi Klein's idea that brands have taken over products comes to show its true value, because it is no longer important what a product has to offer, but how a brand makes consumers feel.

„The valuing (...) of certain features worthy of a western consumer society, proud of the reconstruction of its world and arrogantly-ostensive of its properties" (p. 154) leads to a mediator status of advertising activities. The growth of consumption and the attempt to identify the recipient with the

consumer, lead to a change in context, from the microeconomic referential to the culture of targets. That is why the most effective persuasive techniques should be based on social legitimating and that is why advertising's mercantile information may very well disappear. A direct consequence is that companies depend on advertising as an agent of symbolic production. As not to deny his teaching background, Camilo finds it more than appropriate to describe here four types of message formats which come really handy in understanding the evolution of advertising from simple dissemination of information (product information format) to the incorporation of products in a social routine (the lifestyle format).

The emerging tendencies that Camilo notices in advertising regard not only the growing influence of advertising agencies, but also the fact that in a communication that regards trading, the actual mercantile side matters less and less. The job of branding is to produce original structures of legitimating creating a culture that can only be efficient if it relies on a constant flow of related messages. Therefore, brand images become reading proposals and means for decoding: „brand images are no longer universes with no meaning, determined by their one messages (texts) or by the relationships between them (intertexts). On the contrary, now they become semantic realities much more fluid and heterogeneous.” (p. 183).

Eduardo Camilo manages to create a complex image of the development of advertising, describing this phenomenon from several points of view: theoretic, pragmatic and strategic. Not only does he take into account various semiotic and communication perspectives, but he also manages to correlate them in a comprehensive synthesis that follows a number of very appropriate steps towards the conclusion. In fact, not only every chapter but also every idea in this book is a necessary stage in an elaborate demonstration, which makes *HOMO CONSUMPTOR. Dimensões teóricas de comunicação publicitária* a refreshing and illuminating read.