

Book reviews

Rhetoric and Philosophy – The Revitalization of an Old Dialogue

**James Crosswhite, *Deep Rhetoric. Philosophy, Reason, Violence,
Justice, Wisdom***

(The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2013)

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James Crosswhite is associate professor of English at the University of Oregon, where he founded the Program in Writing, Speaking, and Critical Reasoning. His work focuses on the theory and history of Rhetoric and especially on the Rhetoric seen in various dimensions and relations – with philosophy, with the processes of democratization, teaching of writing, or with the ideals of human development. He is also interested in literary theory and in non-fiction writing about nature. His first book – *The Rhetoric of Reason. Writing and the Attractions of Argument* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996) – tried to construct a theory of reason in response to the philosophical critique of the reason, especially for the purpose of re-thinking the teaching of writing in universities and colleges. The argumentative reasoning is strongly reaffirmed, and the philosophical roots come naturally into the picture. Even if the author is against the postmodern perspective, he defends the argumentative rationality by revisiting the postmodern criticism of the philosophical tradition. Thus, “my understanding of the need for a new approach to the theory of argumentation follows from the results of post-Heideggerian (or post-Nietzschean) philosophy. In contrast to those who believe that such thought is destructive of the very concepts of reason and argument, I intend to show that contemporary philosophy (or postphilosophy) enables a profound and attractive understanding of what happens when people argue and of what it means to be reasonable” (1996: 13-14). Of course, the main approach is rhetorical, but strongly supposes an interrelation between rhetoric and “metaphilosophy”.

Moreover, the rapprochement between philosophy and education is assumed by the rhetorical tradition, and the educational purposes of *The Rhetoric of Reason* brought it closer to the core ideals of rhetoric. The famous desire of Quintilian to construct the “good man speaking well” is also Crosswhite’s motivation for the study of educational concerns. Nevertheless, this preoccupation does not shade the appetite for theory, since rhetoric is “the only viable way to explain the possibility of reason itself” (1996: 15). The interdisciplinarity of his project may cause problems, because the rationality and argumentation specific for philosophy, rhetoric, communication, theory education or linguistics are different. In this respect, the utility of rhetoric in articulation of any knowledge is related with the problem of its autonomy. The discussion about the priority of rhetoric over any other discipline is a good foray

in its foundational statements. To escape from aporias, Crosswhite postulates that rhetoric has a social purpose. Thus, the “rhetorical universality” is shown as completely different from the “sum” of various conceptions of rationality.

Deep Rhetoric. Philosophy, Reason, Violence, Justice, Wisdom continues Crosswhite’s main ideas about rhetoric, but in this case the approach is different and the focus is on a more profound understanding of rhetoric and on its reconfiguration made on the basis of a nuanced comprehension of the field. It is easily noticeable that the history of rhetoric is sinuous, with remarkable moments of glory, but also with moments of decadence. Rhetoric was cherished, but also despised in cyclical phases. Nowadays we witness a revitalization of the interest in rhetoric research and a growth of studies in this field. Scholars from various areas analyzed the use of rhetoric and its relevance in advertising, politics, communication, new media, etc. The author offers in his “Introduction” several explanations for the decline of rhetoric, as well for its come back in contemporaneity. Against this background, rhetoric maintained from the beginning a tough quarrel with philosophy, and this “struggle” is a very substantial part of its evolution. In this context, how can we interpret Crosswhite’s perspective of “deep rhetoric” and his rendition of the relation between philosophy and rhetoric?

Crosswhite does not intend to put an end to the controversies concerning the latter; they are constitutive for both domains. He also does not aim to solve the conflict between them, but he wants to go behind the moment of symbolic separation, with the declared scope of reconstructing rhetoric in a deep philosophical foundation. Crosswhite emphasises the philosophical dimensions of rhetoric that will take the form of a deep rhetoric, a rhetorical theory, and a philosophical theory. In this manner, rhetoric seems to return to a kind of Socratic philosophy, deeply rooted in *logos* and prepared to respond to various human and social problems. This approach does not construct a new theory, but rather repositions the background that influences our interpretation of rhetoric. The modification of the context will bring the change of some key suppositions that will filter differently the understanding of this field.

Deep rhetoric constructs a new form of humanism in which “rhetorical capabilities are the capabilities by which we go on continually defining the human, especially by saying, in each new case, what human dignity is, and what the practices are that acknowledge it, and what the laws and institutions are that protect it” (p. 9). Deep rhetoric is not describing a new discipline, even if it tries to change the way of teaching rhetoric. For Crosswhite, deep rhetoric is “metadisciplinary” in its ambitious goal of understanding “not only all language and symbolic activity but also all communication” (p. 106). This project includes a few important tasks, such as the confrontation with ideology, the development of communicative practices that should be more dialogical than theoretical, the continuation of Perelman, Toulmin and Meyer’s contributions to the development of the rhetoric of reason. At the same time, it is mandatory, in Crosswhite’s view, to expand a “nonreductive rhetoric of philosophy”, because

“the project of a deep rhetoric is not the reduction of philosophy to rhetoric, but the discovery of the inseparable philosophical-rhetorical dimensions they share” (p. 41). Those features are also the distinctive aspects that ensure the demarcation between “big rhetoric” and “deep rhetoric”, even if they share some common points.

Understanding rhetoric as a philosophical enterprise does not mean that hybridization of the domains is a kind of solution for the internal problems of rhetoric. All the contrary, Crosswhite assumes that “rhetoric cannot be rhetoric and philosophy cannot be philosophy until their conceptual alienation from one another is overcome. The project of a deep rhetoric is an attempt to begin to develop this idea” (p. 107).

At the same time, deep rhetoric has a consistent practical significance. The interpretation of violence, reason, justice, and wisdom represents a valuable example of using deep rhetorical strategies. In this respect, Crosswhite succeeds, in the eight chapters of his book, to develop compelling symbolic conversations with some key figures of this field. For example, the Habermas – Gadamer debate is analyzed as symptomatic for the manner in which rhetoric returned *as* philosophy (chapter 2). In chapter 3, *Gorgias* was read through the lens of deep rhetoric, an ingenuous strategy that used the recent literature, through which the common idea of the attack on rhetoric is counterbalanced. The relationship between rhetoric and violence was examined in chapter four, its main interrogation being whether rhetoric is or is not another (sophisticated) form of violence and power. This investigation began with a deep rhetorical commentary on *Protagoras* and continues with the critic analysis of Walter Benjamin’s ideas on violence from “Critique of Violence”. Chapter five, “Through Heidegger: Transcendence and Logos”, represents an interesting exploration of Heidegger’s philosophy in a new modality. For the author, “Heidegger is a critical philosophical passage to a deep rhetoric” (p. 177). Nevertheless, Crosswhite affirms that deep rhetoric can go forward and chapter six, “Beyond Heidegger: False Trails and Re-readings”, tries “to correct Heidegger’s conception of reasoning. Heidegger also comes in for criticism for his overemphasis on the isolation of individual human existence, the idea that only silence can be authentic, and for the fact that others appear only in ghostly fashion in his writings. Deep rhetoric corrects Heidegger with a much more robust account of sociality” (p. 12). Chapter seven discusses the deep rhetorical dimensions of the New Rhetoric Project drawn by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. The concept of justice developed by Perelman was interconnected with the work to the new rhetoric; for Crosswhite, this is another example for the close link between rhetoric and philosophy and for the value of argumentation understood as a way of doing justice. If deep rhetoric is organically related to philosophy, and philosophy was in many traditions associated with wisdom, the inquiry of the rapprochement between rhetoric and wisdom seems to be a natural choice for Crosswhite. In this vein, the last chapter tries to clarify this connection through a sustained journey through Hebrew wisdom, Socratic wisdom or Burkean

wisdom and many others, using essential texts and reinterpreting them accordingly.

The amplitude and the depth of Crosswhite's project necessitated various theoretical analyses and illustrations; for these reasons, his book may seem rather a collection of different essays than a unitary treatise. However, these pieces are valuable and they communicate in a good manner, composing a challenging puzzle for a large category of researchers. Nevertheless, the way in which Crosswhite changed the background reconfigured the rhetoric, and this may strengthen its role in the academia and in our everyday life. James Crosswhite undertook a salutary project of rethinking rhetoric, seen as connected not only with philosophy, but with our humanity, too. His inquiry is nuanced and the elegance with which he revisited ancient or contemporary texts is exquisite. Crosswhite strongly highlights the importance of rhetoric and his argumentative power and passion for rhetoric make the reading of *Deep Rhetoric. Philosophy, Reason, Violence, Justice, Wisdom* a compelling and useful read.

Combining the Normative and the Empirical Dimensions of Deliberative Democracy

**Jürg Steiner. *The Foundations of Deliberative Democracy.
Empirical Research and Normative Implications.***
(Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012)

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The deliberative model of democracy is considered to be one of the most important developments in contemporary political philosophy. However, the controversies on this subject tend to focus either on the normative problem of providing the best justification for a deliberative model of democracy, or on the practical problem of designing the best deliberative procedure that will secure the implementation of deliberative democracy. There are few significant attempts to solve the difficult problem of this divide between the theory and the practice of democratic deliberation. In this review I will present one of the most important contributions dedicated to this difficult philosophical challenge that I know of: Jürg Steiner's recent book *The Foundations of Deliberative Democracy. Empirical Research and Normative Implications*.

The book is structured in 11 chapters: 1. *Citizen participation in deliberation*; 2. *Rationality and stories in deliberative justification*; 3. *Common good and self-interest in deliberative justification*; 4. *Respect in deliberation*; 5. *Public openness of deliberation*; 6. *Force of better argument in deliberation*; 7. *Truthfulness in deliberation*; 8. *Deliberation in the media and the Internet*; 9. *Favorable conditions for deliberation*; 10. *Favorable consequences of deliberation*; 11. *The praxis of deliberation*. These chapters are supplemented by an Appendix dedicated to the newest version of Discourse Quality Index (DQI), an instrument for assessing the quality of deliberative procedures developed by Steiner and his collaborators and presented in an earlier work, *Deliberative Politics in Action* (2005).

In his attempt to combine the normative and the empirical dimensions of the deliberative model of democracy, Steiner begins by admitting that democracy does not consist only of deliberation, but must also include competitive elections, strategic bargaining, aggregative votes, as well as street protests. The main thesis that he supports is that there must be a "right mix among all these elements", and that the role of deliberation in this mix is often not strong enough and must be strengthened (p. 1).

Given the fact that Steiner comes from the empirical side of the deliberative conception of democracy, he acknowledges the fact that he has to respond to the classical objection coming from the theorists of the normative side. According to this objection empirical data have no real influence on normative ideals and principles, and if these ideals do not correspond to the

empirical world, then the world is the one that must be changed. At the same time, he realizes that he will have to meet the requirements of the empirical side which demand that normative ideals are adjusted to the world as it is. These two sets of requirements place a significant tension on his view. And he tries to resolve this tension by adopting a specific perspective regarding the controversy between the two sides. The argumentation of each chapter is divided in three sections: in the first one, he presents the normative controversies regarding that specific subject, in the second one he analyzes the relevant empirical research for these controversies (including his own), and in the final section, he investigates possible normative implications, relating the empirical data to the philosophical controversies.

The first chapter of the book is dedicated to the problem of citizen's participation in deliberation: which is the appropriate level of participation that is necessary for a successful deliberation? Is it necessary that virtually all people that are affected by a decision are included (as Jürgen Habermas would recommend) or that a representative "mini-public" must be selected (as James Fishkin and many other prominent theorists are stating)? After presenting the main theoretical worries that both these conceptions have to face, Steiner mentions some empirical results concerning the level of participation in real-life deliberations: the fact that political talking is deeply embedded in many countries' norm system, that there is nevertheless a significant level of unwillingness to participate, that the researchers observed a significant degree of inequalities in participation (women, young people and poor people are less willing to speak). However, in his opinion, these problems can be solved by means of an effective education system (pp. 50-52).

The next chapter investigates the controversy between those who hold that deliberation must consist only in rational and logical argumentation and reasoning (Habermas again and other theorists from his tradition) and those who claim that there must be place for other forms of communication like rhetoric, personal testimony, storytelling, emotional talk, greetings, humor and so on (John Dryzek, Jane Mansbridge and many others). He also mentions the suspicions regarding the possible negative effects of pure argumentation (for instance, the fact that it can be discriminatory and manipulative) and of these other forms of communication when they become a key part of deliberation (they often play with the audience's emotions: they can generate confusions; some of them are not promoting deliberation and so on). But he also points out the positive effects of these special forms of communication, especially of storytelling, as they were observed in the course of empirical investigations: they give voice to the socially disadvantaged, they secure sympathetic hearing and a positive atmosphere, they help transform monological into dialogical talking, they bring to light common problems, values, attitudes, solutions and so on. All these data supported the conclusion that storytelling is compatible and helpful for the justificatory process specific to deliberation provided that it is connected

to the general theme of the debate and the discussion does not drift away from its purpose (pp.84-87).

In the third chapter, Steiner presents the debate between the representatives of the deliberative model which claim that citizens involved in the debate should promote common good (Jürgen Habermas, James Fishkin or Bruce Ackerman) and those who allow for self-interest reasons to be included (Jane Mansbridge). The main arguments supporting the latter position are: self-interest in deliberation reduces the possibility of exploitation and discrimination and it gives voice to the less powerful. The empirical research has proved that it is often quite difficult to distinguish the deliberative from the non-deliberative arguments based on self-interest. They have also confirmed that arguments formulated explicitly in term of common good are quite rare even in paradigmatic deliberative events such as parliamentary or committee meetings. Nevertheless, they also established that the percentage of explicitly formulated self-interest reason is also relatively small. Steiner explains these data in terms of the necessity to save time, but he admits that these kinds of discursive shortcuts can have a negative impact on the deliberative process. He also acknowledges that common good reasons are useful only when they are expressed in specific and not in very abstract and general terms (pp. 101-103).

Steiner's analysis continues with the role of respect in deliberative democracy. He mentions the agreement regarding the importance of respect in deliberation, but also emphasizes the controversy concerning the exact definition and of respect and the types of argument that must be treated with respect: are all argument worthy of respect or some of them are so offensive that do not merit any respect? While some authors such as Jürgen Habermas or Christian Rostbøll claim that all arguments should be treated with respect and only good and bad reasoning must differentiate between them, others such as Italo Testa, James Bohman, Henry Richardson and Steiner himself affirm that we must distinguish between the disrespect for offensive argument (which should be banned) and the respect for the persons making the arguments. Another controversy is weaved around the question whether religious and other substantial reasons should be admitted in a deliberative discourse. One conception notoriously defended by John Rawls states that such arguments may be introduced in public arena only if they are translated in the secular and public language. Others, such as Stephen Carter and Habermas (in his recent work) sustain that a constraint of this sort is opposed to the authentic content of religious beliefs. Steiner also reveals by means of empirical data that disrespectful conduct does occur in the debates, but also that sometimes the discussions can be overly respectful (they may transform into flattery and even hypocrisy) and that more adversarial discussion can have a positive effect on the quality of deliberation.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to the role of publicity in deliberative democracy. This time the controversy is between those theorists who sustain the idea that publicity is necessary and beneficial for deliberation (Habermas, Claudia Landwehr) and those who claim that publicity can have negative effects and that sometimes deliberation must be kept out of public arena (Simone Chambers,

Robert E. Goodin, John Dryzek). While the former view is supported by arguments regarding the importance of publicity for legitimacy or transparency, the second view is sustained by the idea that publicity can have effects such as demagoguery, misinformation, rhetoric, flattery or sticking to one's old position. Steiner argues that the empirical investigations reveal such negative effects of publicity proving that in some cases (for example when political parties develop their policy decisions behind closed doors) deliberation profits from confidentiality, but in other cases (for example when important decisions are made) publicity is essential for securing the legitimate and effective character of deliberation, especially at the level of ordinary citizens (pp. 135-137).

The next two chapters are dedicated to the force of the better argument and to the role of truthfulness in deliberation. While Jürgen Habermas, John Dryzek and Joshua Cohen claim that deliberation should be based on the force of the better argument which is capable of securing "rationally motivated consensus", other representatives of the deliberative model like Robert Goodin, James Bohman, Henry Richardson, Luigi Pellizzoni and Kasper Hansen maintain that reasonable disagreement is a normal feature of contemporary pluralistic societies. Moreover, some of them (such as Kasper Hansen and Christian Rostbøll) claim that the emphasis placed on consensus is quite hazardous from a democratic and deliberative point of view because it might elude important arguments, silence the voices that are in conflict with the emerging consensus and enforce the already existing patterns of domination (p.141). The empirical studies also showed that in real-life deliberation very few changes were observed in the initial position as a result of the argumentative process and when consensus is reached it is more often the result of compromise and bargaining.

Regarding the problem of truthfulness in deliberation, the debate is between those who hold that truthfulness is a key element in deliberation (Kant, Habermas, Ian O'Flynn, Jane Mansbridge and others) and those who affirm that the motivations and the intentions of the parties in the debate are far less significant than the fact that all possible arguments are presented in accessible terms (Dennis Thompson, Mark Warren). Others, like Rudy Andeweg and André Bächtiger insist on the factual aspect of truthfulness: while motives might be irrelevant, facts must be presented in a truthful manner (p. 157). Steiner adds that the empirical studies also reveal that truthfulness eludes direct empirical measurement. Nevertheless, the parties in the debate are usually very interested if others are truthful or not and their perception concerning the degree of truthfulness influences the quality of the deliberative process. Hence, Steiner concludes that truthfulness should be regarded as a "normative regulative element of deliberation" although strategic action and concealed intentions will always be present in real life deliberation.

Steiner's investigation continues with the analysis of the problem whether deliberation should be conducted through media and Internet and he underlines the agreement between virtually all the representatives of the deliberative model regarding the important role of media and Internet in the deliberation procedures.

The only concern they express is related to the fact that media reality deviates too much from the normative ideal. Empirical studies reveal the fact that even in quality newspapers the discourse is far from the ideal speech situation. Steiner also mentions the “infamous examples” of Silvio Berlusconi and Rupert Murdoch who managed to change the media culture of their countries in a negative way in order to promote their political and economical interests. Furthermore, the empirical research has also proved that the competitive pressure on the media makes them a forum that is not suitable for deliberation: they tend to present politics as an “entertainment game with winners and losers” and they seem fundamentally reluctant to any attempt to increase the quality of deliberation. These features motivated Steiner’s pessimistic conclusion that “the media are currently the most problematic link for the development of deliberative democracy” (p. 181). However, he still insists that efforts have to be made in order to improve this situation. Internet, on the other hand, offers more opportunities for “deliberative niches”: small scale debates which will involve those who are willing to participate.

The following two chapters present the controversies on the subjects of the favorable conditions and consequences of deliberation. The classical view of Habermas and his followers was that deliberation is a one-dimension phenomenon in which the presence of a deliberative virtue is associated with the presence of the others. However, more recent contributions have showed that deliberation should be conceived as a multidimensional and sequential process, and that in different sequences of the debate different deliberative virtues should prevail (the view is defended by Robert Goodin, Michael Nablo, Claudia Landwehr and many others). There are even some theorists like Kasper Hansen who claim that some deliberative dimensions will suffer when others are improved (for example equality vs. rational justification). But the theorists agree that a common *Lebenswelt*, the feeling of security, trust and mutual recognition have the tendency to favor deliberation. Empirical studies demonstrated that while literacy, education or a shared language are favorable conditions, religious fundamentalism, ideological conformity, segmental autonomy are unfavorable conditions for deliberation (p. 118). Nevertheless, the empirical data revealed that some of the favorable conditions do not cluster together and that the causality of a positive outcome is more complex and context-dependent. Moreover, they revealed that institutions have a significant influence on the quality of deliberation, but the cultural and psychological preconditions of deliberation are equally important. Hence, institutional design must be understood as a necessary, but not sufficient condition for quality deliberations. And in Steiner’s opinion, solutions must also be formulated by looking at the particular features of the specific deliberative situations (p. 217).

Concerning the subject of the favorable consequences of the debates, the representatives of the deliberative model affirm that deliberation has a positive effect on the formation and transformation of the political preferences, citizens are better informed, more tolerant, and less self-interested, it helps the process of

finding joint resolutions to social problems, it increases legitimacy, social justice, inclusion of minorities, civic awareness, equality, social harmony and so on. However, there are contemporary philosophers (Chantal Mouffe, Bernard Manin and others) who argue that deliberation has many negative consequences: it hurts the lower and marginalized social classes (because they lack the necessary cognitive skills), it presupposes a tendency to eliminate political passions and agonistic confrontations which are necessary from a democratic point of view, it increases social and ideological polarization, and it is too time-consuming. Nevertheless, the conclusions of the empirical investigations are very surprising: they have proved that in real-life deliberations neither the positive nor the negative consequences of deliberation manifested in a statistically significant manner. Both the positive and the negative outcomes were context-dependent and had minor lasting effects (pp. 236-240).

In the final chapter of his book Steiner presents his conclusions regarding the relevance of deliberation for political practice. He begins by addressing Richard Posner's criticism that characterizes deliberative democracy as "purely aspirational and unrealistic" because ordinary people lack both the interests and the aptitudes for deliberation. In reply, Steiner argues that all the empirical data demonstrate that human beings have a natural cognitive aptitude for deliberation and it can be developed by constant practice and by education. He adds that deliberation must be combined with representative and aggregative procedures, but the contribution of deliberation must be enhanced. Moreover, in his opinion, deliberation should include storytelling and self-interest reasons and it is compatible both with unanimity (consensus) rule and majority rule. The success of the model also depends upon the combination between grassroots deliberative procedures and deliberation within traditional democratic institutions, between the deliberation at the level of micro-publics and deliberation at a national or even at a global level.

In the last part of this review I will bring forth a set of objections to Steiner's approach. By attempting to combine the normative and the empirical dimensions of deliberative democracy, Steiner overlooks a significant number of controversies from the normative side and especially some important objections to the deliberative model of democracy. For example, he does not address the criticism of Guido Pincione and Fernando Teson who talk about the "rational ignorance" of ordinary citizens who choose to remain ignorant on complex political problems because they understand that they have to spend valuable resources in order to acquire the necessary information and skills while each vote is non-decisive on the outcome of the elections. He also seems to take for granted the idea that deliberation secures the legitimacy of a political decision, an idea which is highly questionable from the perspective of the adversaries of deliberative democracy. Moreover, he adheres to the idea that religious and other substantial reasons should be admitted in the debate only if they accept that their religiously based arguments are open to being challenged (p.124). However, in my opinion this kind of reasoning begs the question against religious people because it

forces them to accept that their religious reasons have no value in themselves. Finally, I believe that he disregards the fact that many of the empirical data he mentions is unfavorable to the deliberative model by emphasizing citizens' unwillingness to participate, the relative low level of rational justification, the fact that many deliberations did not seem to have statistically significant and long lasting effects, the fact that media are especially reluctant to authentic deliberation, and so on. Usually, when confronted with these problems, Steiner is simply expressing the hope that they will be resolved by means of education and development of a more deliberative political and civic culture.

However, putting these objections aside, Jürg Steiner's book remains one of the most important attempts to resolve the deep divide between the normative and the empirical tendencies within the deliberative conception of democracy.

Significations du langage corporel

Jean-Baptiste Marsille, *La communication non verbale.*

L'art de communiquer sans dire un mot

(Gualiano éditeur, Lextenso éditions, Paris, 2013)

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Diplômé en ressources humaines de la Sorbonne, auteur et blogueur, Jean-Baptiste Marsille est surtout connu grâce à ses contributions dans le domaine de la psychologie, du développement personnel et des mécanismes sociaux. Son ouvrage *La communication non verbale. L'art de communiquer sans dire un mot* comprend neuf chapitres dont la lecture contribuera à mieux saisir comment l'inconscient influence la communication et à apprendre comment la communication non verbale peut être adaptée à une situation donnée.

A la différence d'autres livres écrits dernièrement et portant sur le même sujet, cet ouvrage ne recourt qu'au début à la structure des dictionnaires afin de clarifier certains concepts utilisés dans les théories exposées.

Jean-Baptiste Marsille commence par soutenir l'idée de l'universalité de la communication non verbale, tout en rappelant les premières études importantes sur le non verbal (1972), études dues au psychologue américain Paul Ekman, dont la conclusion est que l'homme peut se faire comprendre grâce à des expressions faciales particulières, à savoir la tristesse, la joie, la colère, la peur, le dégoût, la surprise, le mépris (p. 16). Jean-Baptiste Marsille précise que plus tard, en 1990, Ekman ajoute à ces expressions des *émotions positives* telles l'amusement, la satisfaction, la gêne, l'excitation, la culpabilité, la fierté, le soulagement, le plaisir, la honte (p. 17). Contrairement à d'autres chercheurs dans le domaine, l'intention déclarée de l'auteur de ce livre n'est pas de passer en revue tous les événements ayant eu une importance notable pour l'histoire de la communication non verbale. Cependant, il parle encore de deux mouvements intéressés à ce phénomène: l'école de Chicago, qui a conclu que l'individu apprécie ses actions en fonction des interactions avec ce qui l'entoure, et l'école de Palo Alto, qui soutient le manque d'objectivité de la communication, l'existence du verbale et du corporel et la théorie de la double contrainte (la possibilité qu'une personne envoie en même temps deux messages contradictoires). Concernant cette théorie, Jean-Baptiste Marsille fait remarquer qu'elle n'est pas encore reconnue à sa juste valeur, même si elle contribue de manière importante, à côté des autres travaux mentionnés, à définir la communication non verbale.

Dans l'opinion de l'auteur, les barrières de la langue peuvent être franchies par la communication non verbale dont certaines composantes (positions corporelles, mimiques, gestes) sont universellement reconnues. De

plus, lorsqu'il s'agit d'exprimer le besoin alimentaire, le besoin de sommeil, le besoin de réaction face au climat, l'approbation/ la négation, l'incompréhension ou bien l'appartenance à un groupe, la communication non verbale s'avère être « un outil précieux » (p. 21).

Pour ce qui est des composantes de la communication non verbale, Jean-Baptiste Marsille a en vue le positionnement du corps, les mouvements du corps, le regard et les expressions faciales – dimensions auxquelles il se rapporte souvent dans le contenu du livre –, et est d'avis que

« La posture corporelle est l'un des traducteurs des errements psychologiques humains les plus puissants » (p. 29).

La position corporelle contribue, donc, à confirmer une position sociale, un statut professionnel et à signaler l'acceptation de l'interaction, mais aussi elle a une influence directe sur le rapport de force entre les interlocuteurs. En outre, il faut noter l'importance de la position corporelle relative au développement de l'image personnelle et aux jugements portés sur nous par les autres.

Concernant les mouvements du corps, l'auteur se déclare intéressé à leur décomposition pour en déterminer la nature et surtout l'impact sur les messages transmis. Apparemment, les facteurs porteurs de significations semblent être l'amplitude et le rythme d'exécution des mouvements. La manière d'une personne de se déplacer dans l'espace peut constituer un indice de son état psychologique et le fait de répéter des gestes « nerveux » et « inutiles » peut traduire dans certaines conditions ce que l'auteur appelle *l'incapacité sociale*. Il s'agit, plus précisément, des gestes tels le fait de mâcher son stylo, de jouer avec un objet pour meubler l'espace, de toucher certaines parties de son corps (p. 34). Par contre, il y a des gestes « plus assimilables à des comportements sociaux », gestes que l'on identifie particulièrement dans des lieux de socialisation (à savoir, le fait d'allumer cigarette sur cigarette ou de porter son verre à sa bouche assez fréquemment seulement pour s'hydrater).

Une personne à même d'évoluer en société, c'est, dans l'opinion de Jean-Baptiste Marsille, une personne qui contrôle ses mouvements à l'aide de l'introspection. Concernant les significations du rythme et de l'amplitude des gestes, respectivement, la capacité d'adaptation et le développement des compétences relationnelles, l'auteur souligne que:

« Des gestes rapides impliquent une trop grande importance accordée aux jugements extérieurs et une remise en cause personnelle de sa propre légitimité quand une amplitude limitée démontre une certaine timidité, une retenue de l'affirmation personnelle. Il apparaît alors qu'une personne, dotée d'une réelle capacité d'adaptation et encline à développer ses compétences relationnelles, puisse s'appuyer sur des mouvements affirmés, lents et relativement amples, de sorte qu'elle revendiquerait l'entièreté de son espace personnel, assumant ainsi un

positionnement libéré face aux enjeux inconscients de l'interaction » (pp. 35-36).

Le mouvement semble pouvoir exprimer l'intérêt face à un interlocuteur, favorisant ou bloquant l'interaction. Par contre, l'état statique peut transmettre certaines valeurs, certains messages et est assimilable au refus de l'échange, à l'absence de réponse, au désintérêt total. L'auteur conclut que le non verbal exprime les pensées inconscientes de l'Homme, comprenant une partie essentielle de la signification intrinsèque de la communication.

Contrairement au positionnement corporel et aux mouvements, le regard est porteur d'un message « plus concret », « plus direct » dans une interaction; il peut soit sensibiliser, soit déclencher une réaction hostile de l'interlocuteur, tout comme, d'ailleurs, les expressions faciales. Le contact visuel est à même de transmettre des sentiments divers et variés: perplexité, intérêt, joie, menace, peur, appréciation, etc. Pour ce qui est des sentiments exprimés par le visage, Jean-Baptiste Marsille mentionne parmi les plus évidents le doute, la satisfaction, le rejet de l'interaction, le dégoût, la colère, l'intérêt, étant d'avis que les expressions faciales les plus fréquemment reconnues et utilisées sont: le froncement des sourcils – signe de défiance, marquant la désapprobation, l'insatisfaction; le sourire – expression du plaisir et de la réjouissance ou bien du cynisme, du mal-être, du sarcasme; le plissement des yeux – indice des sentiments négatifs tels le doute, la colère, la frustration; les mouvements des lèvres (la bouche ouverte exprime la stupeur, une crispation trahit la colère, un mordillement des lèvres cache le stress et/ou une certaine gêne; p. 42).

Relatif à la voix, Jean-Baptiste Marsille apprécie que celle-ci peut s'inscrire dans *l'art de communiquer sans dire un mot*, son volume, les intonations, le débit de parole et le rythme de l'élocution ayant la même importance que les mots. La voix dévoile l'aisance relationnelle et reflète la qualité de la communication. Par exemple, une voix affirmée révèle une personnalité assumée et rend le discours plus légitime et plus crédible, tandis qu'une voix tremblante, associée à un volume trop léger, est le signe d'un refus d'affirmation personnelle (p. 44). L'auteur conclut que la voix constitue la composante la plus « paradoxale » de la communication non verbale, insistant sur l'idée que:

« En effet, elle [la voix] provoque la parole, se constitue de sons et a un impact sur la crédibilité du message prononcé, sans pour autant que ce dernier n'ait à être analysé. Il semble alors qu'une même phrase, prononcée par deux personnes adoptant un positionnement psychologique différent vis-à-vis de leur audience, ait un impact totalement différent » (p. 52).

Jean-Baptiste Marsille pense que la précision la plus importante sur la communication non verbale, c'est qu'elle représente la manifestation d'un état d'esprit issue des conditions particulières dans lesquelles l'Homme évolue.

L'auteur plaide pour la possibilité de maîtriser les signaux non verbaux que nous transmettons à l'aide de l'introspection, afin d'identifier les leviers psychologiques permettant de communiquer « de manière adaptée » (p. 54). Concernant la motivation du mouvement, l'auteur est d'avis qu'elle réside le plus souvent dans une réaction inconsciente face aux réalités quotidiennes auxquelles l'individu est confronté.

Tout comme d'autres auteurs qui se sont intéressés à l'étude de la communication non verbale, Jean-Baptiste Marsille dédie quelques pages à l'expression de la nervosité et de l'anxiété à travers le positionnement du corps, les mouvements corporels, le regard, les expressions faciales, la voix – expression qui trahit d'habitude le manque de confiance en soi et de l'estime personnelle. En s'appuyant sur des exemples concrets, l'auteur essaie à démontrer que l'évolution de la confiance en soi dépend de l'environnement et que des exercices pratiques peuvent contribuer à affiner la communication non verbale afin que cette confiance en soi soit plus facilement transmise. Il s'agit plus précisément d'intensifier son regard, de se tenir droit, de maîtriser ses mouvements, de travailler sa voix, sa respiration et ses expressions faciales. Même si, à notre égard, il n'y a pas de « recette » universellement valable en matière de comportement communicationnel, il faut reconnaître que de tels exercices peuvent s'avérer utiles pour améliorer sa communication non verbale.

Un autre aspect que l'auteur détaille dans son livre vise le fait qu'un statut, un rôle professionnel peut influencer de manière différente la communication non verbale des individus. Plus exactement, les gestes employés par des personnes occupant des fonctions diverses doivent être appris et inclus dans une réflexion personnelle avant d'être utilisés concrètement (par exemple, les gestes du capitaine d'un navire qui donne ses ordres aux matelots, les gestes d'un cavalier qui donne des directions à sa monture, etc.). Donc, pour que le rôle professionnel et le milieu social soient reconnus, il faut être à même de s'adapter à son environnement, prouver la compréhension des attentes des autres et les respecter. Autrement dit, il faut être doué d'une certaine intelligence sociale pour d'adapter sa communication non verbale aux situations données et aux interlocuteurs impliqués dans l'interaction.

Jean-Baptiste Marsille attire aussi l'attention sur les risques engendrés par l'utilisation « peu maîtrisée, voire irrationnelle » de la communication non verbale, situation qui remet en question la capacité de l'individu à démontrer son intelligence sociale et dont les conséquences peuvent être soit un sentiment de méfiance, soit une légitimité diminuée de la prise de parole. Selon l'auteur, il y a la possibilité de limiter des effets « pervers » (tels dégradation du lien social, perception d'une personnalité agressive et inadaptée, doutes quant à la sincérité ou la santé psychologiques de la personne en cause) si on les étudie en détail afin d'identifier leurs origines et leurs manifestations concrètes (p. 90). L'incompréhension et la méfiance peuvent intervenir si on a à faire à des erreurs au niveau du langage corporel du communicant dans chacun des compartiments du non verbal auxquels Jean-Baptiste Marsille a fait constamment référence dans

son livre, à savoir le positionnement corporel (le fait de se tenir à proximité d'une voie de sortie d'un immeuble ou bien d'apparaître debout, tête baissée, poings fermés et pieds écartés devant un interlocuteur), la gestuelle (par exemple, le fait de marcher trop vite derrière quelqu'un d'inconnu, de jouer avec les cheveux ou un stylo, de se toucher une partie du corps, de faire une bulle avec le chewing-gum, etc.), le regard et les expressions faciales (le fait de forcer le contact visuel avec des personnes inconnues, de fixer quelqu'un pendant trop longtemps, de tirer la langue, de faire des grimaces, d'ouvrir largement la bouche, etc.), la voix (le fait de parler vite quand on est stressé ou on perd le contrôle, les variations de la voix, etc.).

La méfiance et l'incompréhension relatives à un message transmis à travers des signaux non verbaux entraînent également la question de la légitimité de ce dernier, qui constitue la base de la crédibilité de la communication non verbale. La remise en cause de la légitimité d'un discours n'est pas seulement le résultat de l'incompatibilité avec les codes communicationnels du milieu environnant, mais aussi de l'inclination à mentir. A cet égard, l'auteur rappelle, de nouveau, les travaux de Paul Ekman sur les micros expressions (qui cachent « une tendance à exprimer une contrevérité »), parle des travaux d'Albert Vrij (selon lesquels le mensonge peut être mis en lumière par l'augmentation en fréquence des clignements des yeux) et accorde également une attention particulière à la description « la plus précise possible » des effets du mensonge sur les principaux paliers de la communication non verbale (pp. 97-102).

Enfin, Jean-Baptiste Marsille choisit de s'attarder sur la manière dont la communication non verbale peut servir à identifier certains comportements périlleux et même à les prévenir dans certaines situations, mais aussi sur les significations de l'absence de communication, plus précisément du silence (le silence comme marque du respect, marque de l'empathie, protection psychologique, remise en question de la confiance en soi, limite à l'expression de la colère, remise en cause de la légitimité d'un interlocuteur, articulation entre le verbal et le corporel).

La conclusion principale de l'auteur, conclusion à laquelle nous adhérons, c'est que la communication non verbale n'est pas encore estimée et étudiée à sa juste valeur. Le livre de Jean-Baptiste Marsille retient premièrement notre attention avec un titre attrayant, *La communication non verbale. L'art de communiquer sans dire un mot*, mais son contenu s'avère être, par la clarté de son style, tant une lecture accessible au grand public, qu'une approche salutaire pour les connaisseurs du domaine. Ce que nous trouvons intéressant du point de vue de cet ouvrage, c'est l'universalisation de la communication non verbale par une fréquence croissante des interlocuteurs choisissant de communiquer sans recourir à des mots dans une société dont les symptômes les plus évidents sont la technologisation de la communication et l'aliénation sociale.