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The Nonverbal: A More Comprehensive View

Abstract: The intention of the author is to offer an incentive for those who are still blocked in the equivalence “nonverbal communication is realized by the body language” by making them see the larger picture of the world where everything which is not verbal and conveys meaning is nonverbal in communication.

Keywords: communication, nonverbal, signs, meanings.

1. Introduction

Walking recently, again, among the ruins of the Histria fortress, I had a revelation: I was stepping on pottery shards, on small fragments of former pots, of former objects of current use or decoration, on remains still unstructured in stories about life of the fortress more than two thousand years ago. In the Histria museum, I had seen some such remains brought to the story telling, recalled to reconstruct the objects of which they had been a part of so long ago. From the huge puzzle whose pieces are scattered and mixed all over those places by the lake, well-trained and also full of imagination people have carefully reconstructed objects that tell the story of the lives of those who lived there long time ago. Keeping in the palm of my hand a ceramic shard, taken practically from under my own soles, I felt once again the urgency of contributing to the broadening the meaning of the term *nonverbal* in communication sciences.

I have long told myself that nonverbal is more than body language and that understanding the vast field of nonverbal communication can serve better in the effort of understanding human communication. Ordinary things or events, known to all of us for as long as we can remember, become, upon an attentive and informed look, elements of nonverbal communication.

Some are recorded in what is called "body language". They are not of interest in the present approach. Nonverbal is by no means a new topic in communication studies. However, the works on nonverbal deal, in their vast majority, with the body language: gestures, mimicry, postures, even distances. It's an important topic, no doubt.

Body language, as nonverbal in communication, can trigger meanings, by itself or as an accompaniment to the verbal. But is the nonverbal just that?

Undoubtedly, body language – with additions proposed by some authors, which means the framing by the means of para-verbal – remains the part most directly related to interpersonal interaction. It is also the most present, and the one that attracts attention to the highest degree. It is, moreover, an ephemeral, like the utterances it accompanies or replaces.

This part is not easier to understand or more secure in communication than the verbal, but it has been presented for too long as an equation-like relationship of the type "x=p" and "p=x" (where x is the sign – mime, gesture, posture –, and p is some meaning) as if there was just one way to present it, something similar in structure to dictionaries (such as: if you touch your nose or face in general with your hand, that means you're lying; or, if you don't maintain eye contact with your interlocutor, it means you have something to hide). Compendia of communication are full of such dictionary-like equivalences.

The reflection on the need to signal the fact that body language cannot cover everything that is nonverbal in communication took shape starting from events that I had recorded, but to which I was going to give a typical interpretation: although they do not belong to body language, they are signs whose decoding means fulfilling at least one instance of communication using nonverbal means "external" to the body. The true journey taken with the aim of discovering something new it's not about seeking for new landscapes, but bringing a new view over the same world, once said Marcel Proust. Giving it enough attention, we find Proust was right. Take for example the small things, the common of our existence: they signal us but we don't pay attention and don't understand their bearing in the daily nonverbal communication.

I will focus on what is not part of body language and I will endeavor to have a good look at it. I will go through some examples and reflect on the meanings that objects and their positioning, as well as various nonverbal actions/events/occurrences/behavior can bring to the mind of the observer. The examples chosen to be presented in this study are not simply nonverbal examples, but also examples of interpretation of

the nonverbal. What follows is just a number of my own experiences with the nonverbal and of my own interpretations. Can this kind of experiences be generalized? Hardly! This text will be like an invitation to the readers to pay attention harder to things around them and to try to be aware of the meanings those things make sparkle in their minds. The foundation of this new way of going through the world would be the idea that there is more than body language in nonverbal communication, as well as the idea that interpretation relies on one principle: meanings are in people, not in messages.

2. But ...

Sometime in the 1980s, Maia Plisetskaya – exceptional ballerina of the Mariinsky Theater in Leningrad at that time – declared in a televised interview that she did not believe there was anything that could not be expressed through dance. Plisetskaya was so big a ballerina and so bright that, without really understanding what she was saying, I believed her. In any case, her body could express an impressively wide range of emotions in the undulations, pirouettes, perfectly controlled jumps with which she would delight us. So, I believed what Maia Plisetskaya had said. It is true though that, in my perception, her ballet movements were accompanied by Ravel's Bolero or the music of Tchaikovsky or Prokofiev, so whatever the wonderful ballerina intended to convey was contained in a complex construction: the physical presence itself, the movements, the costume, the music and, often, the stage and scenery. I remember her dancing to Ravel's Bolero on a stage imagining a huge drum: it was as if the sound of the drums, and the steps – sometimes small, sometimes large – of the ballerina were emphasized by that drum-shaped stage. The choreographer, the screenwriter, the stage designer, the composer, the orchestra and her conductor ensure a ballerina's support in expression. She would do the rest, which is moving and conveying emotions and meanings to us. Maia Plisetskaya in Maurice Béjart's choreography was twice as good as herself under another baton and she could make her public feel much more and complex emotions than through other appearances. Already, it seems that we are no longer just talking about body language. Meaningful nonverbal elements appear that no longer belong to the body.

3. About the structure of the present argumentation

The lack of order in the presentation of the examples is assumed on purpose. Such material, rich and varied, could have been presented broken down in classes, either according to the sense that perceives the objects (sight, hearing, smell, taste or touch), or organized according to centers of interest (the house, the kitchen, the city, the rural area, sports, music, etc.). The intention is, however, to reproduce the puzzle-like presence of nonverbal elements through which communication is achieved to present a non-organized universe of things in a non-organized manner. They are everywhere and in disarray. Attentive to their presence and generously open to receiving any stimulus, one could discover a more complete picture of human communication. One could just come with a new look to the world, really pay attention to what they hear, what they smell, what they feel when touching things or what taste they perceive (like Proust and his madeleine!) and an unexpectedly wide and diverse world of nonverbal signs participating in communication can be revealed to their spirit. A painting, a poster, a statue – in a certain place! –, a monument, a behavior (with the traces it leaves), a tradition or a custom (in the expression of their manifestation), everything randomly uncovered by the senses, that would interest anthropologists, ethnologists or sociologists and many others are part of nonverbal: the nonverbal in communication.

I want the disorder to be suggestive, incentive, in the sense that the disorder sought to reproduce the randomness in capturing signs and deciphering them. This happens, in fact, to all of us, permanently, involuntarily most of the time. Keeping our senses awoken, we wander across the world and go through our lives and, not rarely, something catches our attention; we attribute it some significance, and we find a meaning of it. As in the case of the communicative inference triggered by utterances/discourses in verbal language, described by Dan Sperber (Sperber 1995), the inferences made by our mind starting from the nonverbal are involuntary, permanently present, instantaneous and made without any effort. The "danger" that comes with it is given precisely by these qualities and is manifested in the fact that our mind can allow itself to go in a completely different direction than the one hoped for by the creator of the message or it can make inferences even where "the other" does not rely on this, well, on the contrary, they bet on their absence.

I do not claim to offer an exhaustive presentation of the nonverbal, but I believe that, starting from this presentation, many readers will feel

the urge to find other types and classes of nonverbal and thus the larger and enriched picture will be completed in everyone's mind. What I want is to provoke the reader's awareness in the sense of ascertaining the multitude of forms that the nonverbal can have in communication, beyond the body language.

We can find examples in books, in films, in paintings or in advertising creations. We can also find examples in the way the territory is organized, in architecture or in the interior decoration of houses, as we can also find examples in other traces left by people's behavior. Once the list of these examples is built, the world will acquire, for the attentive and patient, new aspects and values.

4. Interpreting nonverbal signs

My interpretations do not claim to be taken as recipes. They are just examples. To be more specific, the interpretations that I give to the various messages transmitted nonverbally are not generally valid, they are not the only ones possible, and I myself am not sure that they are good. They are personal interpretations, as they should be, for the time being, which the reader of this paper should take only as examples of attempts to capture and discern the meaning of messages. There is nothing clearer in the nonverbal than in the verbal, there is nothing more certain or unique in deciphering the nonverbal, just as we know that happens in the case of verbal communication.

Reflections on interpreting nonverbal messages are to be found all along this text, so this was just an introduction to the subject.

The meaning of the nonverbal will be built in the instances of communication where the element bearing meaning appears. Keeping in mind the idea brought again to attention by the American professor Ivan Preston (meanings are in people, not in messages) we will admit the existence of several possible meanings for any object/movement/action/activity/behavior and we will also admit that, for some among our fellow humans, in certain situations of communication and in certain instances of communication, any meaningful object may have no meaning. A white horse and a black one can be carriers of a certain meaning in Plato and those who were formed intellectually by reading Plato, but they do not present differences in the eyes of a peasant who uses them for field work. We do not all interpret what falls under our senses in the same way. Let's have a laugh considering another example: the young Sheldon (from the series of the same name), impressed by the

huge queues in front of the bakeries in Moscow, which he had seen in a documentary, concludes that the best bread in the world is made in Moscow and this is why people come from everywhere to buy from there. From here to the conclusion that Texas should opt for communism is only one step, which the 10-year-old takes without hesitation.

5. History can impact people differently

An era, an event can mark an individual in a completely unexpected way and completely different from the general perception. The sequence below appears in Ludmila Ulitskaya's *Jacob's ladder*. A dialogue between two friends looks like this:

- You are exactly like Luzin!

Vitia was startled immediately, he valued Luzin a lot as a mathematician:

- What do you mean? What does this have to do with Luzin?

Then Slava told him in his own words the anecdote told by Professor Melnikov in class: after the war, the great Luzin told the students at the seminary that in 1917 the biggest event in his life took place – he started working on trigonometric series ...

- And what did Luzin say afterwards? Vitia was interested, because he also valued Melnikov very much.

The candor of his friend stunned Slava:

- Nothing! The year 1917 remained imprinted in people's minds for another event!

- Which one? Vitia was interested.

Slava waved his hand disarmingly:

- In 1917 the October Revolution took place, Vitia!

- Ah-ah, of course...

6. Reflections need foundation

In my reflections over the totality of the nonverbal, I keep coming back to Paul Watzlawick's axiom "One cannot not communicate" and I always think of Dan Sperber who states that all communication between humans is based on behaviors of all kinds and the traces these behaviors leave. We capture these traces and assign them meanings. This is how we come to find that almost everything that surrounds us can be a message carrier, and I am not only talking about what is created by man, but also about what is or can be exploited by man to express himself or to interpret others.

For example, one could build a very large house to convey to their peers the idea that:

- they have a financial situation far above average, or that
- they have planned their life together with all their family members, which means the need for a lot of living space.

And these are not the only possible interpretations. Think of the Taj Mahal, which was built as a declaration of love.

It happens, however, that one does not have any message intended for their fellows and, nevertheless, leaves traces of their behavior for the others to perceive¹. In the end, what matters will be the perceived sign and the way it is decoded, i.e. the fulfillment of the act of communication, in Watzlawick's words (or Dan Sperber's words, which remind us of the ability of the human brain to make inferences, permanently, involuntarily – so, uncontrolled! -, starting from the behavior of the others or from any traces of that behavior).

The result is not always the "correct" understanding of reality or of any communicative intent, but there are no mechanisms to avoid error. There is no such thing as non-behavior, and there is no certain, unique reaction to some behavior. To determine whether there is some error in communication one needs rules and standards. There are no such things. Anything seems to go. The results might be different with regard to one's expectations, but they are there, so communication has taken place.

In the same way as in the case of verbal messages, nonverbal messages have different effects on different receivers and in different contexts. Why is that? Here are some explanations and examples.

7. Explaining the mechanism

Our sensory organs are only similar from one person to another, not identical, and they function accordingly. Or, this means that each individual captures from the environment information only somehow

¹ Let's not forget the *sine qua non* condition for communication to exist, which is the existence of the otherness. As a relational concept, this makes everyone of us **be the other** for our fellow humans. In the present approach it isn't that much the awareness of the existence of the other, as is their position as interpreter of our behaviors. So, would the other extract any meaning from something we did, it is undisputably clear that, willingly or unwillingly, we had communicated something through our behavior. The decision lies with the other.

similar to that collected by his fellow humans. The concatenation of the collected information, their interaction with the personal cultural inter-text² of each of us, plus a whole series of context elements will lead to the interpretation, therefore the understanding of what is observed will be marked by idiosyncrasies. From “this means this” (for me) to “this means that” (for you), there is an ocean of different interpretations. If for Peirce the sign is something that stands for something else, **for somebody**, one should read this as an invitation to assuming all possibilities: for someone, this **may** mean this, for somebody else, this **may** mean that, while for a third person, this **may** mean nothing at all.

Let’s imagine some situations of communication: “I saw a strange kind of duck” is not the same as “I saw a platypus”, and this difference is given by encyclopedic constructs previously acquired by two different individuals. Or, “Smells like almonds” and “Smells like potassium cyanide” are meanings that were already in the minds of two different individuals, in a laboratory environment: one with general knowledge of nature (he happened to eat almonds) and the other with knowledge of chemistry (he knows that potassium cyanide smells like almonds). Let’s now think of a certain sound curtain present on the wireless: for some, it evokes the beginning of the broadcast of Radio Free Europe, while for others it may simply be a musical sequence. The first hearers are among those specific radio station’s faithful listeners, among those who felt connected to the free world even during the time of communist oppression; the others are among those who were afraid to listen to radio stations banned by the regime or are young people who no longer had nor have a reason to choose/avoid a certain radio station in order to be correctly informed.

And all this can be better understood by taking into account the differences in perception of people coming from different cultures with different mother tongues, thus having different mental descriptions of the world. People coming across nonverbal signs can pick up meanings, even if those meanings aren’t always the same.

² By the phrase “personal cultural inter-text” we will understand the totality of an individual's cognitive accumulations, together with the interconnections between them, as they were produced and how they are continuously recreated in the mind of that specific individual.

8. Theoretical milestones and more examples

Images, sounds, smells, but also tastes or tactile perceptions make up a universe of possible signs, within which we all evolve, whether we are aware of this or not, and from which we derive meanings, more or less suitable. Thinking about all this, one is tempted to find theories that could help to understand the complex phenomenon of nonverbal communication. A solution would be to take as reference a classification of signs made by Charles S. Peirce and try to understand how iconic signs work, how indexical signs work, and how symbolic signs work. Proust's madeleine is, of course, from the second category. A certain smell can also be included in the category of indexical signs. Traffic lights at crossroads are, of course, signs from the category of symbols (conventionally established signs), while icons on the desktop belong to the class of iconic signs (hence their name). This is also the mechanism of creating a personal symbolism, and examples can come from fiction literature too, as in the case of this Solovyov character from Vodolazkin's book *Soloviov and Larionov*:

"Village library [...] ..., Nadezhda Nikiforovna [...], Solovyov was fascinated by the movement of her thick fingers with dull nails. A cameo shone on the ring. Putting the books on the shelf, Nadezhda Nikiforovna touched the wood with the ring and the cameo made a dull, plastic sound. So different from the rattling of the coupled wagons, the sound took on a refined resonance in Solovyov's ears, one of the choicest. Later, he would call it the first timid knock of universal culture at the gates of his soul."

Reading this fragment, people could ask themselves what could symbolize the cameo ring sound in their own minds. How much the reader could identify them with Solovyov? Maybe what it takes to understand this character. Have we all lived such revelatory moments and were we aware of that? Not sure.

Following Foucauldian marks ("signatures", see below), we discover a world that would have escaped our perception. We understand it, but never in the same way. In Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* (Eng.: Words and things) (Foucault 1968) we also find the description of the mechanism by which the Universe speaks to us: "We call hermeneutics the set of knowledge and techniques that allow us to make the signs speak and discover their meaning". However, if we seek to discover the laws of signs, Michel Foucault warns us that a difficulty arises: "Everything

would be immediate and obvious if the hermeneutics of similarity and the semiology of signatures coincided perfectly". The chapter is *La prose du monde* (Eng. The world as prose).

A theoretical benchmark: Michel Foucault on similarities. Talking about the perceptible elements of the surrounding universe, one discovers the marks of Michel Foucault and what the philosopher considered to be the fundamental theory in the understanding of semiotics: the theories about similarities. Retaining only four of the multiple forms in which we know similarity (convenientia, aemulatio, analogy and sympathy), Foucault specifies:

"Convenientia, aemulatio, analogy and sympathy show us the ways of similarity and where they pass. It does not show us the likeness where it exists, neither how we see it, nor by what mark we recognize it. The hidden similarities must be signaled **on the surface of things** (my emphasis, D.S.S. *passim*). A **visible** mark of invisible analogies is needed. A resemblance is the most obvious and at the same time the best hidden of things. It is a similitude that can be seen or not seen and therefore it would remain a doubtful glimmer if there were not in it or on it **or next to it** an element of decision that would transform it into certainty. **There is no similarity without a signature.** The universe of the resembling can only be a marked world. Knowing the similarities is based on revealing and deciphering these signatures. The signature system reverses the relationship between the visible and the invisible. The likeness was the invisible form of that which, from the depths of the world, made things visible, but for this form to reach the light a visible figure is needed. That is why the face of the world is covered with blazons, characters, numbers, and obscure words. The immense calm mirror at the bottom in which things were mirrored and then sent each other their images, is actually full of the noise of words. Silent reflections are doubled by words that indicate them. And, by the grace of a last form of similitude which embraces all others, the world may be compared to a speaking person".

And then:

"Similarities demand a signature, for none could be noticed unless legibly marked. But what are these signs? How do we recognize them among all aspects of the world and among so many intertwining figures? What exactly tells us that we have a character that we would do well to dwell on because it indicates a secret and essential similarity? What form constitutes the sign in its singular sign value? It's the similarity.

The sign signifies insofar as it bears a resemblance to what it indicates. However, what he signals is not a homology, but another similarity, a neighboring similarity of a different type that serves to recognize the first similarity but which can be distinguished, in turn, by a third one. Any likeness gets a signature. The multitude of brands causes another circle to slide on the circle of similarities that would double the first if there were not a small gap that makes the sign of sympathy stand in analogy, that of analogy in emulation, that of emulation in convenience, that of convenience in sympathy. The signature and what it denotes are of exactly the same nature. The form that signs and the signed form are some similarities, but some similarities next to each other".

Of all the types of similarities that Foucault discusses, those which seem more suitable for describing the phenomenon of decoding signs would be: *convenientia*, *aemulatio* and analogy. Sympathy seems to be more about mind games than perceived similarities.

Foucault's text urges us to accept, therefore to discover, new meanings every time and to learn to accept that the meanings discovered by someone else, starting from the same marks, are valid, even if they are not similar to the ones we discovered (as remarked by Aristotle: an educated mind can understand a thought other than its own without having to accept it). Perception and interpretation are idiosyncratic: as I said before, our sensory organs are only similar from one individual to another, which is why the information gathered from the environment never ends up being identical, from one individual to the next; more than this, the understanding and interpreting of what is collected from the environment depends on the cognitive assumptions of each one, and on the consistency of their personal cultural inter-text and then, if revisiting the Whorf-Sapir theory, we can affirm that each individual understands the world around them through the lens of their mother tongue.

Even when talking about nonverbal communication, we need to have this discussion on the verbal, since the understanding of the nonverbal is accomplished only because we translate into verbal what we perceive as nonverbal. Hence, the wide variety of interpretations of each signs, verbal or nonverbal³. I mentioned that somewhere (Stoica 1996): in understanding metaphors, everyone gains approximately as much as they initially brought with them, when they met the metaphor. The theory applies here as well. It's somehow the same theory, presented from a

³ See also: Pascal Lardellier, "Pour en finir avec la «synergologie». A critical analysis of a pseudoscience of "nonverbal decoding", in *Communication*, Numéro 2, Vol. 26 (2008).

different angle. Peirce, Foucault, Whorf and Sapir, Preston, Henri Wald (see below) and, with your permission, Dan S. Stoica emphasize the same ideas: capturing a sign in the things of the surrounding universe belongs to a specific exercise of each individual in the sense of observing the details of this world. Then, the “tools” each of us can put at work to understand what it is about are different and this makes the interpretations be idiosyncratic.

And there is another reason to accept the above ideas: perception, as a process, is something very complex, unfolding in stages (in extremely rapid succession, so that everything seems instantaneous), and the last stage - as say all psychology textbooks and treatises - is called verbalization, that is, the naming and, implicitly, the classification of the element perceived according to the individual's mental structures. If, at the first stages of nonverbal perception we have reflexes (as Henri Wald said), at this last stage we have reflections (the Whorf-Sapir theory and also according to H. Wald). Let's hear Henri Wald on this.

Henri Wald, in *Idea comes while speaking* (Wald 1983):

"[...] thanks to speech, hearing becomes the supreme human sense. Hearing can learn what the eyes cannot see. Man listens to the words that tell him what the things he looks at are. Speech allows man to perceive with the mind what he cannot perceive with the senses."

And further on:

"As soon as it is named, the sensory image of the real becomes a relatively autonomous representation, which goes beyond the immediate mirroring of the present and begins to target the absence targeted by the notion evoked in the meaning of the word, thus transforming into its sensory-affective element. The meaning of a word consists of a notion accompanied by a stabilized representation and a crystallized emotion."

It seems that an idea is being emphasized once more: as I said before (see above), the nonverbal is understood because it is translated into verbal, with a speed that allows us to say that it is a phenomenon with instantaneous occurrence. Hence, the verbal is always there in communication.

9. Observing the world through the lenses of books reading

From such reflections was born the idea of a study (and not just a review of the results of observations made on the surrounding world). As the reflection deepened, more and more examples of events, of human actions, of behaviors were revealed to the mind as being part of this class of nonverbal in human communication. Always attentive to everything that the senses pick up from the environment, one cannot avoid interpreting some information as signs (marks, as Foucault calls them) in the behavior of fellows humans and thus it is found that many elements in the surrounding world belong to a nonverbal communication, made with intention or unintentionally.

How beautifully Evgheni Vodolazkin puts it in his novel *Solovyov and Larionov*:

"[...] in general, the emphasis is on all kinds of similarities and coincidences, and this, because in every similarity there is a meaning: we discover another dimension, we open a new perspective, without which the gaze would remain focused on the void."

Everyday events or things, observed by chance, can be registered, for example, in the marks of convenience. Things are "convenient" which, when they come close to each other, end up juxtaposing each other (their edges touch, the end of one marks the beginning of another): similarity as the deaf reason of proximity is superimposed on a similarity which is the visible effect of proximity. "Place and similitude overlap. Convenience is the similarity related to space in the form of "from close to closer". It is of the order of conjunction and adjustment. Therefore, it belongs less to things and more to the world in which they are found", says Foucault. And he concludes: "The world is the universal convenience of things".

10. Interpreting events

Events happen all the time. Some of them seem to be meaningful to some of us.

There will be examples in this paper of extra-ordinary things that I have remarked in relation with events and which I have interpreted, like the fact that, even if the prime meridian crosses Spain, taking at times the concrete form of a white line across roads, the official time in Spain is CET. One could ask why that is. As for myself, I thought that avoiding

being at the same official time as Britain could be explained by the fact that the two countries have a frozen dispute over Gibraltar. It's the same issue that made Queen Sofia of Spain not be present at the Gold Jubilee of Queen Elisabeth II, back in 2002. Absence could be as loud a message as presence.

Let's see another example. 2010 – One and a half century since the foundation of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iasi. The big anniversary will be without the presence of the minister of education: Daniel Funeriu refuses to be part of the celebration.

The Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iasi is the first university of the country. In the year 2010, an anniversary with great pomp of the 150 years of existence of this first university was on the way. Preparation with attention to detail, high-class protocol in carrying out all activities dedicated to the great anniversary, branded guests. Everything was at the highest level, as befits the academic world, in situations of great celebration. Among the guests, the minister of education at that time, Daniel Funeriu, was invited. Only he didn't show up. Looking to the context, one could observe that the period was agitated and troubled: there were disturbances in the world of education in Romania, there were agreements and disagreements in the discussions between representatives from the top of academic education. Possible interpretation: the Rector of the University of Iași at the time might not have shown himself ready to accept without reservations all the ideas that Minister Funeriu was coming up with. It's a possible answer to the question: Why didn't the minister come to the celebration in Iași? He sent a lady secretary of state, who, in a neutral tone, read what I supposed to be the minister's greeting to the country's first university on its 150th anniversary. It was a text of terrible platitude, in a wooden language that could have stood as an example in any linguistic work on the topic of the wooden language. Of course, the lady from the Ministry apologized in the name of the minister, saying that important affairs had prevented him from coming personally to the Al. I. Cuza University. Fortunately, the absence of the minister did not break the hearts of those gathered to celebrate the first anniversary of this kind in the country. One could say that this state of mind shows that the minister was not liked by the university staff and students from Iași and their guests, to the same extent that the University of Iași was not liked by the minister. Once again, an absence was "speaking" as loud as a presence.

11. Buildings and meanings

To look at the “Traian” Hotel in Iași with confidence that this is a solid, long-lasting construction means to compare by analogy two constructions made according to Gustave Eiffel's design: the tower in Paris and the hotel in Iași. Obvious in the first case, discreet in the second, the soundness of the construction is certain: it has been made by Eiffel!



Recently, *The Guardian* published an article signaling other constructions by Gustave Eiffel, less known, even most of them are in Paris, where the famous tour is. It is a church (Notre-Dame-des-Champs), a footbridge in the Parc des Buttes Chaumont, the Passerelle de l'Avre crossing the Seine (cycle path and footbridge which runs above an aqueduct originally built to carry water to central Paris), as well as other iron structures for buildings like the Palais Galliera fashion museum or the department store La Samaritaine. Here below, an image of the church Notre-Dame-des-Champs:



12. Readings and examples

Signs. We learn from the readings to discover them in the reality of our lives and to assert their meaning. "We communicate much more than we encode and decode", says Dan Sperber (Sperber 1995), and this is because our mind is built in such a way that it makes inferences, starting from anything that seems remarkable in the surrounding universe. The behaviors of others leave traces, and our mind perceives these traces as signs pointing to meanings, sometimes surprisingly. Let's find out some examples.

Based on two readings – a travel book and a study in the field of anthropology – I will continue to draw attention to nonverbal items in communication (other than that of the body).

In *The Greyhound America* (Romanian original title: *America ogarului cenușiu*), Romulus Rusan writes about the surprise he had when he entered the home of Mircea Eliade from Chicago, in America, where he had been invited. What he noted there may also surprise the reader: Eliade's office looked exactly like any interior of a study of any Romanian intellectual from the interwar period. We can deduce that the intellectual Mircea Eliade, in order to feel good at work, had recreated an interior like those he had known in his young years in Romania. As I had myself had the opportunity to be in such spaces of studious intimacy, I could, when reading Romulus Rusan's book, recreate in my mind the image of Eliade's study. *Aemulatio* and analogy in the same exercise.

Talking about interiors, an interesting discussion is proposed by anthropologist Kate Fox, in her book *Watching the English* (Fox 2014).

The look of the interior and the way the inhabitants of a house relate to the interior of their dwelling can serve to specify the class to which the members of British society belong. Aristocrats (upper class) keep eclectic furniture and not exactly in perfect condition, and the carpets that cover their floors, too. They are more interested in preserving the echoes of the past, in the tradition of the family they belong to and in the objects that bear witness over the centuries of those times and that family. For them, it is more important to know from which epoch and from which ancestor a rug (which reached a state of extreme wear) comes, than to match the rug with the furniture, for example. For the middle classes (middle class and upper middle class), the care for the matching of objects in interior decoration comes in the first place. This can be achieved by calling on companies that offer standardized products that are easy to "assemble" in the composition of an interior. At Ikea, for example, the dining room table and chairs are perfectly similar in material and, of course, in design and age. There is no 17th century chair around the table (it would look discordant with the rest of the furniture).

Also related to books, a second-hand story comes to mind, as they say. Someone told me about the surprise experienced by the director of the first French Cultural Center in Iasi, after 1990, Georges Diener, when he noticed that in all the houses where he had been invited – with the specification that he had been invited by the elite of the intellectuals (and francophone, too!) – that there was a kind of furniture that occupied a large part of the living room : it was the bookcase. Moreover, a large part of its shelves was occupied with some strange volumes, lacking the usual marks of publishers (colored covers, with the title repeated on the spine, etc.). These were the famous Xerox copies that had replaced the originals for many years and had managed to satisfy the need for reading and information of our intellectuals. Double astonishment, therefore, experienced by the French visitor: the furniture called a bookcase is not currently part of the interior design in France (except for the spaces designated as “study”), nor are the volumes of strange shape and covered in the same gray ugly cardboard. We wouldn’t notice these elements in the homes where we were received, at a teacher’s, a colleague’s or a friend’s place, but Georges Diener did not miss recording these elements of interior decoration and was impressed to note the dimensions of the personal bookcases of some of our fellow citizens, as well as the impressive number of volumes acquired with difficulty – because illegally – that hid wonders under repulsive covers. For him, these

elements of interior decoration gave the measure of the intellectual quality of the host.

The object “book” as a metaphor in an "installation" art. A friend from Canada recently pointed out to me the existence of a web page (www.mymodernmet.com), where she had noticed an installation made by a Mexican creator, an installation designed to draw attention to the power that books have: the artist succeeded to produce a visible deformation in a brick wall, about twenty-five meters long and about four meters high, slipping somewhere, at the base, a book. The choice of the book is also interesting: it is Franz Kafka's *The Castle*. The result is impressive. I'll let you appreciate it in the images below.



13. Nonverbal in other arts

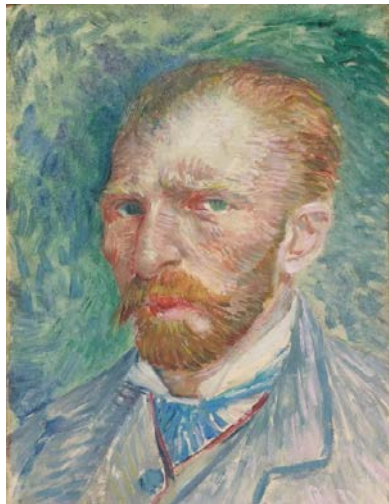
We could follow the functioning of marks in the perimeter of other arts, too.

The world of music. The band Deff Leopard: the break taken until their drummer was restored. Highly acclaimed rock group, Deff Leopard

stopped their concerts and recordings after the drummer lost an arm in a car accident. The other members of the group did not replace their colleague, as is usually done in the world of rock groups, but waited for him to overcome his trauma and post-traumatic stress and learn to handle the drums with a single hand. This approach to the misfortune that had struck them is a clear sign that between the members of the Deff Leopard group the relationship was not only one of musical cooperation, but of friendship. There are also extreme cases to remember from the world of rock music: after the death of drummer John Bonham, the band Led Zeppelin ceased its activity.

Paintings. I am by no means an expert in deciphering messages from creations related to plastic arts. I was of course interested in works such as *Ways of seeing* (John Berger) or Daniel Arasse's *On n'y voit rien* (Eng. We don't see anything there). I have always paid attention to the explanations of each guide in the museums I visited. Guided visits to museums, readings like the ones mentioned above, plus the ever-changing cultural inter-text in my mind change, from time to time, the way I perceive art. I know, for example, that the saints in the church of the Agapia monastery have been painted after the faces of the villagers more than a century ago, and so I understand why I feel in their midst as if I were in the midst of familiar living people, with gentle and wise faces, who warmly accept my presence. As I enter the church, I feel watched, with interest, as it were. It's the eyes from Nicolae Grigorescu's self-portrait, the one on the top left, on the iconostasis.

I know why Van Gogh's gaze from his self-portraits stuns me, but I let myself be absorbed by the whirlwind of coughs as if I understood how his whirlwinds were interpreted based on mathematical theories.



Dali: Jesus on the cross. And then I wonder: in the place of Whom does Salvador Dali imagine himself, if he's allowed a view from above of Jesus on the cross? Does he propose to us to assimilate him to God? It seems to me that this is a plausible interpretation, because only from His position does this perspective seem possible. A great creator being claiming to be recognized as an analogue of the Creator. Is it arrogance? Is it blasphemy? Or is it just the assumption of one's own condition as a genius? The sign is there. The interpretation is up to each of us.



Also from the world of museums, I would evoke the image of an object in a showcase in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. It is the Bible that the painter's father used in his capacity as a pastor. The book is open and you can easily see that it is open to the pages where the pastor used to read most often: the pages are worn in the area of the lower corners, where (we learn that from the guide) the pastor used to rest his palms, leaning with all the weight on them. The Bible is presented in such a natural way that you have the impression that it is just a break in the service and that the pastor is going to appear from moment to moment, to place his hands on the Book and resume the religious service. The image of the Bible of the painter's father adds something to the state of amazing communion with the world of nearly two hundred years ago. Just as the painter's incredible and unique touches leave you with the impression that you see his hand twitching to mark the canvas, you also see the hands of the painter's father resting on the open Book, as if seeking support not

only in the contents of the Bible, but also in the object itself. Indexicality, that is, the study of indexical signs and their functioning, can explain the states experienced by the visitor to the famous museum in Amsterdam. On the other hand, this field of study called indexicality can be a way of approaching the study of the nonverbal in communication: an indexical sign will always refer to other meanings depending on the change of the context of occurrence (and let's not forget that the interlocutors must be assumed as part of the context in a communication instance).

14. Perceiving with other senses

Smelling. Longtime ago I read a phrase in some reportage on Central Europe, a phrase I will try to reproduce from memory: Around 10 in the morning the entire Empire smells the cooked onion. It took to me, because I found it be a nostalgic ironic reference to the former Habsburgic Empire with its culinary habits that could be found all over the Central Europe. The Empire is long gone, but the smell is there, at 10 in the morning.

This is just an introduction to this section where I intend to bring into attention the nonverbal we perceive through the smelling. As a sign, the smell is evocative: it is there to make us think of what could produce it, why, how and then see what implications it could have.

So, we should talk about perceiving and interpreting smells. The perception is culturally oriented and also idiosyncratic, and maybe more than what is done through other senses, it is contextual. The psychic state of the person can influence the perception.

An example well-presented could be found in Marin Preda's *The most loved person in the world* (the original title of the novel, in Romanian: *Cel mai iubit dintre pămînteni*). At the beginning of their romance, Matilda loved the scent of Victor Petrini's body, but when the relation went sour, one of the major reproaches she would make to her ex was that he smelled badly. There has been little time between the two moments, so no natural modification could have happened. Matilda's perception was just psychically influenced: first, she was in love, and then she wasn't.

One of the most beautiful discourses on the sense of smelling is the movie *Scent of a woman*. „Ogilvie Sisters Soap” is the immediate guess of the blind colonel, when he gets near the beautiful Donna and perceives the delicate scent of a well-known brand of soaps. He would also guess the delicate vitality of the teacher from the Baird College just

by noticing that she wore a perfume known only to the connoisseurs, the house of Caron came out with in 1934, *Fleurs de rocailles*.

Everyday life is more interesting than we know it

15. Common situations and less common meanings of things

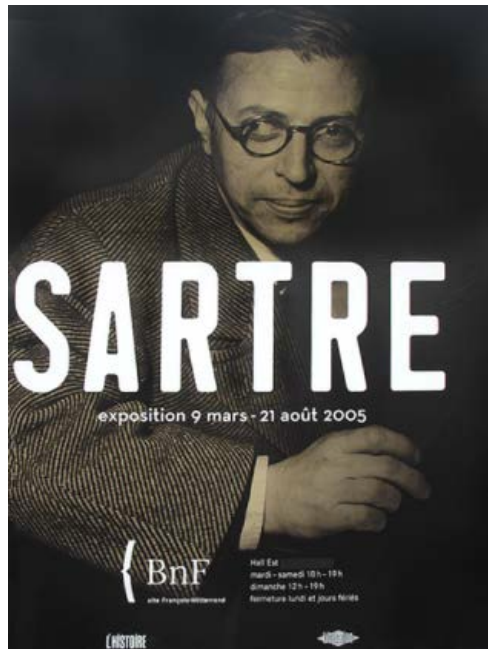
Gifts. Anthropologically speaking, gift giving is a contract between the giver and the receiver. Like any (social) contract, it simultaneously builds and describes a relationship within a hierarchical social structure. Also from an anthropological point of view, one has to note that giving gifts is, like any form of communication, a culturally marked activity. Who and to whom gives a gift, when, on what occasion, where, in the presence vs. whose absence and especially what is offered are aspects related to cultural coordinates. A detailed analysis could take such a vast work that it would be the subject of a book, so it will not be covered here.

I will just present something uncommon for the spirit of Europeans. It seems interesting, in my opinion, a custom known in the life of some Amerindian tribes, a custom called *potlatch*. It was generally practiced between tribal chiefs or between candidates for a leading position and consisted of exchanging gifts, each trying to give the other more and more valuable gifts. This contest was intended to publicly humiliate the other. Or, as a general rule in European cultures, gifts are given for other purposes: to please, to honor, to show gratitude. Potlatch jumps out of the way: in this type of ritual, the aim is to overwhelm the other with gifts until the tribes – present to the ritual - find out who has humiliated the other more by giving. The winner will receive the higher status in dispute.

Signs of being away. There is this case of a village in Transylvania where the broom in the front door is a sign that no one is at home. In the televised report, the source of this custom, from a village in the Bistrita-Năsăud county, was not specified, but it was clear that it is an old custom that works flawlessly in practical terms: the last one to leave the house places a broom against the front door. Whoever passes by and would like to talk to someone in that house sees the broom and understands the message: no one is at home. There is also another custom in that village: people leave a bag with suitable money hanging on the gate post, so that the person in charge of distributing the bread can make the transaction without having to personally meet anyone: he takes the money and puts the bread in the bag. Money doesn't disappear, bread doesn't disappear, and people take care of their business, without necessarily leaving someone to guard the household or buy bread.

Exhibitions and their posters: Sartre on the BNF poster: no cigarette! In 2005, the National Library of France announced the exhibition open for the centenary of the birth of the French philosopher and writer using a poster that showed a "slightly corrected" image of Sartre: the cigarette was missing from Sartre's hand! The intervention, of course, had been made so that the BNF would comply with the requirements of the law against smoking, without renouncing the use of a famous photo.

In the text taken from *Le Figaro* magazine one could read: "In 1946, Lipnitzky photographed Jean-Paul Sartre observing the actors of one of his plays, with a cigarette in his hand. In 2005, the stump disappears from the image used for the poster and catalog of the "Sartre" exhibition at the National Library of France. Indeed, the French law on the fight against smoking prohibits "any direct or indirect propaganda in favor of tobacco". The press then denounced the "sanitary correctness" of the retouched image. BNF apologized (...). But it's hard to find a photo of Sartre, a heavy smoker, without a cigarette, so it's hard to broadcast a legal image of him..."



Nota:

The photo of Sartre with a cigarette was taken during a rehearsal of the play *La Putain respectueuse*, at Théâtre Antoine, Paris, November 1946, by Boris Lipnitzki / Roger-Viollet. Above, the cigarette was edited out, but Sartre's fingers kept the position as if it was still there, which seems odd.

I was looking for photos of Sartre and I couldn't find a single one where he wasn't smoking. Pipe or cigarette, posing for some photographer or being surprised in his natural self, he was smoking all the time and anywhere. Those who knew him as well as those who studied him in the archives, they all knew that he was a hard smoker. In those times, an intellectual, man or woman, felt like smoking was part of who they were. If, in the midst of that world, Sartre was known for hard smoking, one can understand how unnatural was the edited image on the big poster at the BNF. I will let you see part of my "collection" of public photos of the French philosopher and writer in order to appreciate the message in the poster. It provoked a huge scandal in the cultural press in France, but the French National Library could not ignore the law against promoting cigarettes and smoking.



LIBÉRATION JEUDI 21 AVRIL 2011

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Sartre à huis clos Conversations inédites entre le philosophe et son «non-filleul»

JOHN GERASSI Entretien avec *Serène Toker* de l'agence (Halo-Lha) par Jérôme Stodolski et Baptiste Bourvignier. Grasset, 2016 p. 254.

Fernando est allé se scolariser à la Chouette. Stépha est tombée à la clinique, agitée de ses bobos. On ne se lit pas s'ils sont arrivés ensemble : mais Castor et Sartre ont été les poètes à rendre visite au petit John. Fernando Gerassi est peintre, ami de Modigliani, Chagall ou Picasso. Né à Istanbul d'une famille aisée, il a sa maison au 18 boulevard — dans la même classe que Heidegger — et, marqué par les cours d'Edmond Husserl, se destine à la philosophie. C'est lui qui, probablement, fait découvrir à Sartre la psychanalyse, avant que celui-ci, succédant à Raymond Aron, s'aille en parler à la connaissance à l'Institut français de Berlin. Il quitte la philosophie pour la peinture après avoir assisté, par hasard, à une conférence de l'histoire d'art Heinrich Wölfflin. Engagé dans la guerre d'Espagne, il est l'un des fondateurs de l'armée républicaine.

Né à Stépha Awdykowicz est une éminente ukrainienne. Elle perdure l'application de philosophie à la Sorbonne et a pour meilleur ami l'homme de lettres, qui recevra son appui d'elle à son habitude de membre plus agité, à sa mère beaucoup, pour donner les quelques lignes de la biographie. Avec Fernando, qu'elle épouse en 1929, Stépha a eu même genre de relations que Sartre avec Castor, mais sans les «mêmes contingences». Sartre est amoureux d'elle, mais Stépha, on ne dit pas bien que «partenaire», écrit à «la fille» comme Fernando. De ces liaisons contingentes, Fernando — qui se dépose l'opinion d'Edmond de Beauvois, le frère de Castor », en a, lui, beaucoup — autant que Sartre et Beauvois épouse. Source: Paul Sartre et Fernando Gerassi.

apparaît que Sartre est le plus beau personnage de l'œuvre de Sartre. Les relations entre le philosophe et Gerassi ne sont pas seulement personnelles, mais à certains égards — mais aussi littéraires. Dans les *Chimères* de Stépha, «Sarkis», c'est Stépha, et «Gerassi», personnage central, c'est Fernando. John Gerassi : «Dans le roman, il ne s'agit d'être le roman. C'est un combat pour le fascisme pour gagner. On combat le fascisme parce qu'il est fasciste. Répétition quel qu'il soit pour nous pour tout un mal public. Si j'étais pour Sartre, moi plus tard — Jean-Paul Sartre : «Le plus important, je pense — et en le sent très bien dans l'âge de raison, de ce qu'on en dit — c'est l'histoire que votre père, Gerassi, c'est sur moi, avec Mathieu, occupé par Sartre pour me faire commencer à comprendre pourquoi le capitalisme n'est pas satisfaisant, pourquoi nous devons être révolutions. Et pourquoi, bien sûr, c'est un jeu, je n'ai rien fait pour pendant toute ma vie.»

Ces *Chimères* (pour lesquels Gerassi avait reçu, par une lettre manuscrite de mai 1974, l'assurance de leur excellent) constituent un document très précieux, car, vu la proximité entre l'interviewé et l'intervieweur (qui partage de longues heures d'été), Sartre s'y livre mais restreint, et il est évident qu'il n'aurait sans doute pas dû dire devant quelqu'un d'autre (même le frère) — il peu quelques excès, traitant Mathieu de «père», et réservant tous les noms d'oiseaux, «monstrueux», «atrocité», à De Gaulle. Si l'on note : «C'est un aveu — vous ne pouvez pas savoir ce que c'est le grandeur de la France» qu'il nous servit en regard à longueur de temps ? Ce n'est pas de vous, Gerassi, de vous laisser aller par cette manière ? D'une certaine manière, ces *Chimères* auraient pu constituer l'ambiguïté que Sartre, comme Mathieu, s'a terminée avec le frère.



Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) à Paris, en 1946, dans son bureau. Photo: J. S. / Getty Images

pendant une répétition de la P... respectueux. PHOTO BOIS BRUN

politique, les hommes (Wanda, Michelle, Isabelle (I), Sylvie, ... mais on ne se voit jamais au coin des cheminées, Paul Nina, Albert Camus, Raymond Aron, ou Maxine







L'écriture, une activité incessante

Sartre écrivait sans cesse, n'importe où, en toute situation. Il écrivait vite, sa plume courait au fil de sa pensée, et il réécrivait beaucoup. Son immense production dans tous les domaines de l'art littéraire, philosophie, roman, théâtre, journalisme, politique..., est curieusement en partie inachevée. Il le reconnaissait lui-même à l'occasion d'un entretien avec Michel Contat et Michel Rybalka (*Situations X*) à propos de *L'Idiot de la famille* qu'il avait un temps laissé tomber: « Je me suis dit que je ne pouvais continuer à abandonner mes travaux en cours de route: *L'Être et le Néant* annonce une morale qui n'a jamais été donnée, la *Critique de la raison dialectique* en reste à son tome 1^{er}, l'étude sur le Tintoret a été interrompue au milieu, etc. », et l'on pourrait ajouter à sa liste *Les Chemins de la liberté*, dont le dernier tome est resté à l'état de projet, et *L'Idiot de la famille*, dont le quatrième tome ne sera jamais écrit. Une partie de ses manuscrits a été étudiée par les chercheurs qui ont analysé la genèse de son écriture. De multiples ouvrages ont paru sur son œuvre. Sartre ne redoutait pas le jugement de la postérité: « Non pas que je sois persuadé qu'il sera bon. Mais je souhaite qu'il ait lieu. Et il ne me viendrait pas à l'esprit d'éliminer des lettres, des documents sur ma vie personnelle. Tout cela sera connu. Tant mieux si cela permet que je sois aussi transparent aux yeux de la postérité – si elle s'intéresse à moi – que Flaubert l'est aux miens » (*Situations X*).

Jean-Paul Sartre au Dôme,
à Montparnasse.
© Rapho / Dominique Berretty

La fonction de l'écrivain, c'est de parler de tout, c'est-à-dire du monde en tant qu'objectivité, et en même temps de la subjectivité qui s'oppose à elle, qui est en contradiction avec elle. Cette totalité, l'écrivain doit en rendre compte en la dévoilant jusqu'au bout.
Sartre, *Situations X*

{ BnF

Polite gestures to the visitors

“LOOK RIGHT!” In London, at the edge of the sidewalks, at the pedestrian crossings, an inscription in capital letters, in white paint, attracts the attention of visitors: Look right! It's not the content itself (expressed in verbal code) that counts here, but the very existence of the inscription. In Great Britain, the traffic is on the left side of the streets, opposite to the rules of the Continent. So, the Londoners make this gesture of good will addressed to the visitors from abroad, signaling that

they should first get sure no vehicle would come from their right, in order to cross safely.



Advertising

Ideas of using the nonverbal in advertising. It's a vast domain, so I choose to present just some examples where the use of the nonverbal is admirably surprising. For a campaign aiming to attract the public to the study of foreign languages, the texts – which have one single verbal variable, the name of the foreign language – are written in characters evoking the specific alphabet of each of the languages.

又王刃及九
7刃为刃九王与王
十井王 主刃与也 由刃也

 Inlingua
language center

تَنْظِمَةُ رَجْمًا
بِحَسَبِ رِيحَةِ فَطَا

 Inlingua
language center

ΛΕΑΡΤΙ GREEK
ΓΗΣ ΣΑΣΨ ΨΑΨ

 Inlingua
language center

The use of this kind of characters in writing could induce the feeling that all those foreign languages are not that far away from the English, so learning them will not be so difficult. Like in the example with the inscription on the

sidewalk in London, it's not the meaning of the text itself, but the relation created by the nonverbal that counts.

Of course, the presence of the nonverbal in advertising is such a common place that it would take a whole book to talk about it. I opted for something less present in the analysis of advertising creations.

The text above is just a part of a larger study on that nonverbal which does not imply the body. There are there discussions on set design (in the theatre and the cinema), the photos in promoting a person, the traffic lights and the lights in traffic, the lights ashore for the maritime navigation, the flags, the colors, the granulation of the sand on different beaches, setting the table, planning the distribution of guests around the table, and then landscape and buildings, management of the public domain, cultural differences in architectural patrimony questions.

Trying to avoid being too long in a study dedicated to be published in a scientific journal, I decided to stop here and go to the...

16. Conclusions

As I said it all along this text, the main idea of the present study is to invite the reader to consider the nonverbal in communication as a larger issue than the body language. In fact, all that is not verbal and conveys meaning is part of the nonverbal in communication. My presentation resembles a puzzle, as I wanted it to be suggestive of the randomness of our encounters with the nonverbal in communication. It's there, everywhere, all the time, under all kind of actual forms. Perceiving its presence could become an art (mostly for those interested in studying human communication). Interpreting it is as personal as in any such endeavor, verbal or nonverbal. One should never forget that meanings are in people, not in messages, if they really want to understand communication. Interestingly enough, the verbal is always there in communication, whether we talk about verbal communication or the nonverbal communication: we understand the world through the lenses of our language, and we understand the nonverbal only because we translate it in verbal code when perceiving it. It's a rich world around! The nonverbal lies all around us, and capturing and interpreting it could enrich our way of communicating.

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