

THE MASS MEDIA AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POSTMODERN CULTURE OR LATE MODERNISM

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The city seen as an ideology. Any city is able to become another city whenever love transforms it. Any city is able to become a number of cities according to the number of people in love who go wandering about (...).

Any city is able to become another city whenever love paints both the walls and people's faces at dusk. Anyone is the very face of love (...)

Now, if love escapes and doesn't come back, the burden of autumn falls over the city which has been only left with sorrow and the statues of love.

Mario Benedetti

"Cada ciudad puede ser otra" (*Any city is able to become another city*), fragments.

Postmodernism –I had rather calling it "late modernism" or "low-spirited modernism", is a name that has been given to a series of manifestations dealing with architecture, music, philosophy, and the arts at large, a kind of culture which is peculiar to our times, wherein visible traits can be detected among economic, political, and social traits, plus, of course, social interactio.

Out of Modern culture, let's say, from the 18th and the 19th centuries, political, economic, and industrial revolutions have been born; the ideal of rationality as a basis for functionality and productivity that, in turn, represent the humankind's progress as conceived to be under the influence of the West –thus a progress apt at creating new instruments for both production and thinking, apt at considering an articulation of the ensamble of society into classes defined by their place within the realm of production, and their capacity to enjoy production goods. These, and other elements have been expressed within a culture aiming at both attuning art with the social development, and rebelling against artistic conventionalism and norms that perpetuate time-honored, established social forms. Ours has been an 'affirmative' culture, the affirmation of which starts from opposition and criticism. Of course, it has not been a monolithic culture – neither society has been, and this is why, within the society there have occurred rebellions even beyond criticism up to the point of challenging either the very essence of art (that has been the case of the Dada movement) or the creative process of art (that has been the case of Surrealism). In other words, the depth of those avant-gardes makes it difficult for the Postmodern Culture to devise new rebellious postures that, up to date, have not been in a position to reach the high grade of radicalization of Modernism.

After WWII, different authors told us that a new type of society had arisen, and, according to them, this new type has been called post-industrial society, consumerism society, multinational capitalism, neocapitalism, wild capitalism, massmedia-driven society, and so on. Names that, indeed, point out to a characteristic differing from the characteristic the former period was endowed with. Currently, social classes as they had

been devised by the industrial society are no longer valid. Conflicts do not arise among classes any longer, they arise between people and the establishment –i.e. huge organizations wherein power does not depend of any social class but is exerted by governments and bureaucracy. This implies a fragmentation of the action that, before, was amalgamated into social classes –hence, we cannot talk about exploitation any longer, we have to mention an alignment, a consequence of a super-adaptation to the system through a manipulation of the Massmedia Culture that controls the "apparatus".. We could say that this new order brings about the demise of the culture monopoly caused by the major countries of the western world. This, coupled to the arising of the culture of countries pertaining to the so-called Third World that had been damaged by the European model and the arising of the so-called sub-cultures thanks to anti-establishment movements. That is, progress based on science and technique is suffering a deep crisis... followed by a simultaneous crisis suffered by several elements pertaining to the Culture of Modernism, namely: the cultural unity (as regards the universal values of its proposals, the authority of scientific rationality –i.e. the intrinsic goodness of technology, the rational foundation of any aesthetic model. All this leads to a de-categorization, so to speak; that is, being prone to a fragmentation against the cultural patterns universalization promoted by the mass media while evidencing a pseudo-goodness that manipulates us.

Marshall McLuhan, in his book *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*, proposes a great many statements –there is one, however, that I consider to be fundamental: the message is the mean –that is, from my own perspective, this statement induces us to think that reality is both positive and human, and that all the "setting" surrounding us lends some tonality to life.

Anyhow, I would like to clarify that, even though I have a deep respect for this author I disagree with him at times. Now, if we follow a research conducted by Oscar Masotta about a correlation between the mass media and the artistic activity we can observe some points: for one thing, worldwide, the manufacture of TV sets, since their mass irruption in 1948, has reached astronomical figures. Now, let's consider the style of two creators, Ranschenberg and Tinguely (in the 50s and early 60s), a style called super-realism that incorporates what we could call a market-oriented super communication or the over saturation of consumerism and, from a certain point of view denounces the underlying authoritarianism by alerting us against it. If we follow this trend of thought, we could reach the camp works of art: they have to do with a naïve style endowed with a certain caricature of Romanticism due to a constant inversion of values, the conversion of bad taste into good taste, a style that makes fun of everything serious, with a touch of a somewhat decayed innocence, and a rather frivolous judgment. In other words, we can infer that this "new aesthetic object" is bound to constitute a new and original message on the one hand as well as allowing an inspection to be performed about the conditions ruling the way any message is constituted, on the other hand.

Whenever we deal with the mass media, and the mass media entourage it is like trying to either work with music, computing, poetry or operating within criticism itself by

means of informatic models. As Umberto Eco would say "both the notions about the number of information, and entropy become inseparable".

So, we must have a critical posture, we must analyze contents, analyze the idea that, within any communication-related situation not only the visible contents are simply forwarded but also it should be noted that those contents are "articulated" –that is, they form part of structures that are unlikely to be visible.

Now, if the communication process is something else than simply transmitting the signifié of concepts, this is because there exists an efficacious "size" of the signifier inasmuch as the message forwarding processes include either a fundamental sense, that is the message proper, or a sign devoid of a specific material substrate because this substrate reacts upon both the very concept and outside the concept as well –and this is why that substrate is efficacious with regard to behavior.

As Oscar Massotta put it: "Grasping any message could become a differential process with regard to the qualitative characteristics of the channel involved, and the appearance of any new medium could cause a progress or a change in the discrimination grade of differences". Anibal Ford states that refraining from confusing the study of the media with an eulogy for the media is important. Or criticize without any knowledge about the media and their relationship with people is also important.

So, it is also important to take into account both a social massmediatization, as well as an alternative-oriented opposition to this, in order to avoid that studies on mass media do not dodge culture and communication policies –because that would be a "nice" way for not exploring where the social injustice comes from.

It should be taken into account that the ups and downs we can observe in the constitution of the culture-communication-plus-media realm are real strong when it comes to production while, however, they are weak as far as their epistemological foundations are concerned –a characteristic, at that, of the so-called transversal knowledge, and this we say without falling into the postmodern skepticism.

Peirce speaks about: a) the indicial, that is the realm of body and contiguity, and: b) the educational, that is the realm of conjecture and hypothesis, a non-deductive and non-inductive territory. Both are important for studying the media.

In a connected consideration, M. McLuhan says that our current electronic times with their unavoidable evocation of simultaneity presents a first, serious threat to the 2,500-year long predominance of the left hemisphere. Thus, we should not be surprised when we see that students whose right hemisphere has been TV-educated for 18 years face problems when dealing the the left hemisphere-conceived school programs.

Indeed, within the current strings of dyslexia and other culture-linked difficulties, 90% of victims are men. These problems are a direct result from the pressure that not only TV but also other electronic media exert on us with the idea that we come back to the right hemisphere.

Kerckhove points out that the virtual image accepts a point of view but this is not a once-and-for-all process or, in other words, an image becoming a stable and reliable reference. The image of the body that either an interactive screen or a virtual mirror reflect is not the image of a unique being. It is the image of an open, protean, tentacular net people go through.

F. Roustang states that, as can be expected, Lévi-Strauss, as an anthropologist, stays within the social and collective field. Lévi-Strauss, however, opens the way that Lacan will take in the future, when he says that, as this is the case with language, the social field is an autonomous reality; symbols are more real than the things they symbolize. The signifier both precedes and determines the signifié. So, Lévi-Strauss establishes the autonomy of a concept that, in the future, Lacan will name "the symbolic". Thereafter, Lévi-Strauss will resort to the structural linguistics to put in mathematical terms the unconscious mental structures that can be reached at through institutions or, better, by means of the language.

Thus, it would be sufficient to replace "institutions" by both Oedipus and the law. Thanks to such a way of expressing mathematically language aspects which reveal the unconscious, Lévi-Strauss considers that excluding everything pertaining to feelings, desires, and believes is possible. Psychoanalysis allows the same –i.e. getting more involved with all that enhances affects, imagination, that which has been lived, the unspeakable, the unfathomable.

Such a perfect construction, however, is only able to stand up provided the identity of two irreconcilable definitions is maintained: on the one hand, the symbolic –facts that create exchanges and are linked to the significant language. On the other hand, the definition referred to the algebraic sign that, by definition, cannot and must not mean anything.

Lévi-Strauss tells us that there exists a "floating signifier", that is an excess signifier that has still not been used to signify, to which a symbolic value zero will be attributed, as a pure symbol, thus apt at acquiring any symbolic content.

Life –I should say people and paths, have sustained me, giving me the possibility to envision reality in an operative way, and not a de-structured way.

So, in my analysis I will start from the invention capacity, the "micro-aspects", the marginal aspects, through what could be called an "explored drive" –in other words, an inventive capacity to articulate communication, culture, and the mass media.

It is rather easy to watch how the social injustice, violence, and the deconstruction of institutions appear suddenly through the multiple images that A. Ford calls "the TV tribe" –as well as the market of loneliness. As already pointed out, the field of articulation is strong as far as production is concerned but weak as far as its epistemological foundations are concerned, a feature to be found in any transversal knowledge.

We have to read the history of social transformations from the people's level, and not at the heroes' level –I insist: let us not resort to either nostalgia-tinged responses or the low-spirited modernism's skepticism, and let us avoid the possibility of being absorbed by

economy-based forecasts. Instead, let us resort to transversal, transdisciplinary strategies.

The distinguished neuropsychologist and psycholinguist Oliver Sacks casts some light over the "postscriptural" writing in a short story the title of which has been translated in Spanish as "The man who confused his wife with a hat"(1987). His main character, Dr. P. only expresses himself by means of formal gnosis –i.e. the capacity to the abstract; he never resorts to concrete gnosis –i.e. the capacity to recognize someone's face. Dr. P. constructs his world as if it were a software, by means of distinct and computer-like schemes features –thus, it would seem that cognitive sciences suffer from a similar agnosia. So, in an apparently naïve way, he will impugn the displacement the scientific knowledge produces over feelings, continuous judgment, the personal, the particular, the concrete, the real. Sacks criticizes (not in an Hegelian way) the concept of the concrete as something primitive, as something that has to be elevated, through the writing, to abstraction and generalization.

Conversely, Lévi-Strauss considers that science is an ascent to the concrete.

We have already seen that Peirce deals with the indicial –that is the realm of the physical and the contiguous, and deals with abduction –that is, the realm of conjectures and hypothesis.

As Joseph Campbell should say: our computers, our tools, our machines are not enough. We have to rely on our intuition, on our most genuine being.

I am deeply against anything likely to replace the contents of communication. I believe that, in the future, importance will be awarded again to the person, the imaginary, and the thought contents. As anthropologist Marc Auge should say: the world of instantaneity, simultaneousness and universalization is a mix of promise and threat. A day –one day whatsoever is a symbol which allows us to setting up our relationship with other people, a fact that is symbolized by ritual activities. Through the gods that are convened, rituals aim at either giving back a person his or her health or avoiding that this person be attacked by another person –that is, the relationship among people is always at stake.

The gods represent mediation –without any mediation no society could exist. While, with computers, there exist a power of relationship based on anonymity and instantaneity. The technological power allows relations to be multiplied –however such relations lack sense if they had not been pre-organized without the help of any computer whatsoever. In other words, any relationship takes place between symbol and violence. Insofar as computer alone is unable to symbolize, there exists a risk for violence. Modernity has created its own prospective types myths: class society, liberation, etc. – that is, future-oriented myths that do not explain origins any longer, conversely they design the future.

The low-spirited modernism disregards the past that does not interest it any longer, and it does not believe in the future thus replacing the fiction myths, in the poorest meaning of the word. If we are to deal with more and more images, we will "grow" less and less imagination –in a way we cannot imagine other images, a fact that can be observed in TV: there is not a lot of difference between an actor and the character he/she plays: both

pertain to the script. In other words, we replaced the world of the myth with the world of fiction. Imagination always nourishes the myth: nowadays, image is killing imagination.

McLuhan foresaw what was due to come but, it is my contention that he failed his diagnosis: his global village has become a global tenement.

The organic culture featuring its being systematic, homogeneous and homostatic had been thought to suit the Victorian needs. Nowadays it has gotten extended by means of globalization, transnationalization, and communication technological developments thus forming up a communication utopia ruled by some kind of *McDonaldization*...

Following A. Ford's thinking it seems to me that I am envisioning in the city, the border (that is the limits set up by the mass media), the information transportation systems, the media fragmentation, and in the cultural widening as well, a conjecture-like focusing which roads are the political, the economic, and the social aspects.

As an ensemble, as well as within the inter-relationships, such axes are likely to constitute dark areas into the group of problems wherein we have so many questions about identities, cultural frontiers, transnationalization systems, negotiations and conflicts clashing between our own cultures, and among our cultures and the First World and/or certain aspects of the East to be found in articles manufactures in South Eastern Asia that are so widely sold on the poor Latin American markets.

In other words, this is a non-homogeneous globalization. It is much closer to the cultural promiscuity that was found in the Buenos Aires, end-of-XIX-century tenements (*conventillos*), than closer to the Victorian asepsis that was devoted to functionality and the homeostatis that, ideally speaking, underline McLuhan's "village" –aspects that are also found in the ways that many "communication-linked utopias" try to solve social conflicts starting from systems that "formalize" communication. However, communication systems are unlikely to solve the problems affecting this world of ours where symbols are more than enough but too little food.

We need frames of reference for a general reasoning to explain our peculiar global society, however our cultures are exceeding themselves in the observation of the particular, and the private aspects of the "case" at stake that is now always either framed or generalized as it should be. The crisis of the macro systems –well, the crisis of explanations thereof takes the case to narrative aspects, it not only implies a greater ethic demand about its utilization but also it means avoiding that the case becomes an alibi to conceal the structures and networks of power.

Communication, information, and the mass media are going to play a central role when it comes to covering the needs of local types of knowledge as far as territory and symbol are concerned, without de-contextualize those types of knowledge from the globalization processes. Society possesses other communication and information networks as well as networks dealing with the construction of meaning –in other words, society keeps establishing the difference between fact and symbol.

There exists a crisis of otherness. Something goes wrong whenever violence appears instead of communication.

The development of technologies increases the possibility for loneliness –loneliness becomes possible whenever it is accompanied, or compensated by an imaginary, illusory relationship: fiction.

Each time you get much more used to the illusion of being submerged within the world... as a result, the relationships with people get more and more difficult.

Should be cast a glance at the production of thinkers and writers from the 20th century modernity, and compare it to the production of thinkers and writers from the 19th century we find that perspective has been radically flattened, and the field of imagination has been reduced. The 19th century thinkers were, at the same times, friends and foes of modern life, they struggled tirelessly hand to hand against the many ambiguities and contradictions of modernity. The main source for their creative capacity could be found into their inner strain, and their being ironical toward themselves proper. Their 20th successors have preferently oriented themselves toward rigid polarizations and rough totalizations. Modernity is accepted with a "neo-olympian" estrangement and disdain: it is considered as a closed, monolithic structure unlikely to be shaped or changed by modern humans. It should be noted that the fundamental polarizations have occurred at the very beginning of the 20th century.

Any future adaptations will demand, so to speak, wide social and political turmoils inasmuch as the modernization of the future adaptations always thrives within conflicts, within an atmosphere of "uncertainty and permanent agitation". Within such atmosphere, the culture of the late modernism, or low-spirited modernism will keep developing new visions and expressions with regard to life since the very economic and social impulses that, tirelessly, transform our surrounding world –for good or not, will also transform the inner life of people who live in, and keep it moving.

Let us recall Marvin Minsky when he extolled a future physiological reconstruction, saying that¹ "this means that [people] will have within their skulls all the space they may need to implant additional systems and memories. So, little by little, we will be in a position to learn more, year in year out, to add new types of perception, new ways of reasoning, new thinking or imaging habits".

So, the mega-design of neurosciences is no longer limited to the shaping of either the structure or the infrastructure of an industrial "object" –instead it regenerates the impulses of the neurotransmitters of a live "subject", so that a kind of cognitive ergonomics be set up, the last type of neuroleptic connection that could be called the infrastructure of behavior.

¹ All quotations are back translations into the English language, inasmuch as the author worked with books translated into the Spanish language (T's N.)

Converting, so to speak, the body and its vital energy, in a contemporary of the era of the teletechnology of instant transmission is, at the same time, abolishing the classical distinction between the inner and the outer realms in favor of a "most modern" type of centrality... well, we could call it a hyper-centrality, the hyper-centrality of a "present" time (not to say an "actual" time) that replaces definitively the difference between periphery and center. Until some time ago, to be present meant to be near (or next to) another person, physically, through our look, our voice, our being able to touch his or her body. Now the massmedia proximity, based on electromagnetic waves, discredit the value of nearness.

Instead of acting, we –sorry for the neologism, "teleact", that is we see, listen to, speak, and imagine that we touch or even feel at a distance, a nice way to alter our proprioception wherein the essential notion of being and acting, here and now, loses every possible meaning.

Let us also recall Nietzsche when (in Zarathustra) he presents a model "to understand this type of person: in principle you have to realize what is his or her first physiological condition that is what I call the Great Health. We new men or no-named man, difficult to convince, that have been born too early for a future the demonstration of which has not been done yet, we need a new aim, a new means and I refer to a new health: more vigorous, more acute, more long-lasting, more daring, and more joyful than all classes of health have been up to now".

According to this philosopher: "A Great Health will be necessary, a health that you possess but that you have to conquer time and time again because you have to sacrifice it. Supermen are dangerously needed whose compensation should be an unknown country the borders of which nobody has seen until now, a far away land further than all possible countries".

Unfortunately enough, this far away land has become a very near thing...in spite of the great illusion of the cosmic conquest, the reaching the absolute speed, and the relativization of "every magnitude and a getting back to the infinitesimal".

From now on there is no future for long distance trips, and losing the terrestrial horizon of one's own world in the loss of every possible measure.

When Karl Popper states that "the space for the possible is on the increase" his theory of propensity allows us to work within the frame of an objective interpretation of probabilities, independently from the fact that we do not know the future, objectively speaking future has not been fixed yet, it is open, objectively open. Only the past is fixed, it has been updated reason for which it has disappeared. Thus, present can only be described as a "continuous updating process of propensities".

Should we substitute "statistical trend" –or, more simply, "media", for "propensity" we can see that the famous Popper's open universe is the product of a hidden logic interference motor, analogous to the "expert systems" of the fifth generation computer science. Similarly, the present time would not be the "updating continuum" of History's strong trends any longer –it would have become only an "effect of reality, a product of a

kind of general statistics of historical evolution which means that our present reality is nothing more than an "illusion of synthesis".

Says Popper: "The cyberspace is the result of a cooperative work between the motor of the computer lab-supported reality, and the motor of reality of the brain".

Virillo defines the living present as a little more than a live movie.

The cybernaut has become a prey of a synthetic illusion which is more virtual than visual wherein the visual thinking so dear to Rudolf Arnheim relinquishes the prejudices of a virtual thinking which, in turn, has been originated in an imaging which owes everything to the control on an individual subject to the theme of a cybernetic ideography, while the new imperialism of the instrumental thinking discovers abruptly, together with its "territory" its Psychographic Empire.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON KNOWLEDGE

Common knowledge is likely to make you believe that the new scientific discoveries burst out of new ideas. Sorry, but this is not so. Not only the old ideas survive but they also maintain a strong influence over the new ones. It takes a great creativity to see how it is possible to apply already existing ideas to new, unusual situations.

I believe that the true justification of the advances in the realm of knowledge is culture, and not technology. Nobody ever remembers whether there were water and sewage installations in ancient Greece –but, yes, day in day out we all remember the philosophical and scientific ideas that were established at that time and place.

"Let us not assume that the portrait we are painting is the truth and nothing than the truth: it is only a resemblance" wrote Victor Hugo in *Les misérables*. We never know for sure if we are aware of all that exists, the only thing we can be aware of are the things we know. In other words, the fundamental principle of science is: we cannot demonstrate that anything is true –never. All we can prove is that something is false.

It is Francis Fukuyama's contention that, in the contemporary world, all cultures tend to come together into the ideal of capitalism and liberal democracy, by giving momentum to socially diverse communities for them to head towards the creation of liberal, capitalist democracies as the last stage of the historical process. F.F.'s expansionist ideology goes the same way as globalization with a market totalitarian vocation.

What Samuel Huntington calls the clash of civilizations is the contrary to the end of Fukumaya's end of history: S.H.'s is a call for a stoical resignation inasmuch as we cannot cause the planet to become a Wall Street branch by supporting the idea that the Occidental predominance is threatened and that religions –not the different aspects of economy, could become the social classes of the XXI century.

The physicist who launched the quantum theory, Max Plank, said: "The fact is that there exists a unique point in the vast word of mind and matter, wherein science, thus the causal methods for research are unapplicable not only due to practical motives but also due to logical motives. That point is the individual ego. It is a tiny point within the universal realm of the being but, in itself, it is a point comprehending one's own

emotion life, the will, and the thought. This realm of the ego is at the same time the source of our deepest sorrows, as well as the source of our most sublime joys".

Huntington's thesis is rooted on the clash of civilizations –thus, it objects that supremacy be awarded to a globalized world most capable to corner into insignificance all the nuances, all the differences, all the singularities. As far as he is concerned, the Global Village conceals much more than revealing due to the fact that it is aimed at a Western hegemony based on the technologic expansionism, the economic prevalence, and the military superiority.

Huntington is against all this. Instead, he is interested in the resistance energy the principle of heterogeneity offers to homogeneity.

He stresses the importance of that energy, places great emphasis on it because he thinks that an Occidentalized world is an improbable thing –however, he nonetheless acknowledges the Occidental culture: its values, its meaning, its rightfulness, as well as the need there is that its decadence be counteracted, in the event that religions are set to take up the niche ideologies have left vacant. In other words, Occidental values would become a vertebral axis for cultures.

Instead, thinkers such as Cornelius Castoriadis consider that a come back to religions is no viable a possibility in Occidental societies. The Islamic integrist reaction, as well as the religious persistence in India are different phenomena because, here, we are dealing with societies that never came out of the religious heteronomy. In our societies a come-back to religion not only has a marginal character but is also artificially swollen by some intellectuals who resort to old ghosts to express something.

The Davos Club members, that is the worldwide capitalist leaders who meet every year to celebrate their ideas' success and health, should not forget that they are now surfing the crest of the wave but rocks where waves break are at hand, any time.

In Umberto Eco's and his co-authors' "The sign of the three", Eco has Sherlock Holmes saying that the extreme lack of noteworthy successes could be, *per se*, a singular event apt at giving us a clue inasmuch, a Sherlock could say, "there is nothing more unnatural than a common place", so we can see that, in Eco's vision, good old Holmes is cautious whenever he assesses circumstances: he advises that there should not be skipped over because, at times, such an evidence is most convincing –for example, when you discover a trout in your milk... This, however, is a very deceitful evidence: investigators have to be most careful because evidence could give the impression that they are aiming some definite place but, should the investigator switch his/her point of view, the evidence at stake could be aiming just the other way round now. Holmes-Eco insists in the importance of following several possible explanation lines –you should never lose any alternative. Starting from the reconstruction of alternative explanations that adjust themselves to the facts, you have to go on towards a guessing trend that, actually, is the "region wherein probabilities are being evaluated, and the most unlikely one is chosen" –i.e. this is the scientific use of imagination that has always a material basis to start speculating.

You can reach the truth by contrasting an hypothesis with other hypotheses. Now, weighing alternatives does not imply only a comparison in terms of probability, because

explanations should be considered in terms of possibility thereof. The possibility, however, is not only determined by the viability of successes suggested: it is a remnant left whenever alternative possibilities have been considered to be impossible. Hence "when all the other eventualities fail, the remnant –even though it seems highly unlikely, must be the truth".

First of all, the "Holmes" analytical process is an exercise of logic wherein you do not resort to the empirical world direct. It would be an hypothetical-deductive method that, constantly, sets up an inter-relationship among logical –mostly deductive, considerations. In other words, this is a foretaste of the relationship between theory and research as sociology points out to.

The intellectual community supports and fosters the protection of individuals against the mega-corporations so that a better distribution of riches, in an attempt at eliminating poverty and protecting the environment is obtained.

It could be said that the idea is proposing a song against reification the lyrics of which are humanized. That has been a centuries-long analysis line eagerly looking for the positive aspect of the human development in liberty. Civilization has ripened through intellectuals because they were more concerned about their fellow men and women than about themselves proper –that is, they were ahead of their time, endowed with a higher Weltanschauung for humankind.

The mass media, supported by a wild capitalism are unable to gag the thinking people who report either the mass media manipulation or the transformation of subjects into objects –insofar as capitalism tries to have alleged environmentally-oriented however economy-based laws enacted, on the basis that: a) any human action has an economic correlation, b) consumption speeding-up is a fact pervading the link between people and capitalism, and c) society's indifference, or deep individualism with regard to poverty, are the symptoms of an economic asepsis.

However, being a servile subalternate is not precisely the best way to forward us towards a better quality of life. We will achieve a better quality of life if we use our freedom and our liberty through the use of the critical thinking so that we are in a position to fight the potentially lethal discrimination, manipulation, and dogmatism.

Homer as well as Virgil, Socrates as well as Hegel, Aristotle as well as St. Tomas Aquinas, Rousseau as well as Marx, Jules Verne as well as Sartre, Herman Hesse as well as Carlos Fuentes, Dante Alighieri as well as Umberto Eco, Victor Hugo as well as Emile Zola, Chesterton as well as John Cronin, Edgar A. Poe as well as Mark Twain, Feodor Dostoevski as well as Anton Chekhov, José Hernández as well as Walter Benjamin, Niccolò Machiavelli as well as Michel Foucault, as well as the thousands of unnamed intellectual did not only learn the *lyrics* of the song but heard the whole music of the song. That is, they went beyond the overture of the opera.

According to I. Prigogine, it has been said that the division between the two cultures: the humanistic sciences, on the one hand, and the exact sciences on the other hand, was

due to the fact that the "non-scientists" did not read Einstein's works while the "scientists" lacked literary culture.

Indeed, there is a contraposition stemming out of the fact that Science's ideal is a universal, intellectual schema while human sciences are based on a historical schema linked to the concept of new situations overlapping other structures.

The literary creation is entirely based on time, and a great amount of time that you have been living within, for one thing. From this standpoint the 2-culture dilemma is important. The fact that abstract art was born from the need to renew the artistic envisioning has produced a dicotomy: for example, Kandinsky and Mondrian were inspired by theosophy –that is, an anti-scientific dimension, while Malevic and Beckett, in the realm of literature, have described the human loneliness stemming from a scientific standpoint.

Indeed, a dicotomy has been produced between the human, existential situation wherein time is essential, and the vacuum-like, untemporal vision of physics even though physics has been enriched by the contribution of the quantum mechanics and relativity. Hopefully, however, such a dicotomy could be surpassed without attacking science with any positivist means or attacking art as if it were an artifact devoid of any actual content. Dicotomy could be surpassed by evidencing how a cultural unit coming from the indepth of science, thus presenting a fresh belief in science itself, a belief, at that, apt at surpassing such an antagonism.

Says Starobinski: "Today, there does not exist any field –physical sciences, humanist sciences, artistic creation, legal institutions, political economics, the problems of which do not appeal to either the antagonistic notions of order and disorder or to the more flexible notions of equilibrium and lack of equilibrium". That leads us to consider that those concepts are indispensable to understand the concept of realities within ourselves and within our environment as well.

Some people think that the future of the universe will be a mere repetition of the present universe, because they consider that time is an illusion. Some other people foresee an unavoidable decay due to the depletion of resources, as the classical thermodynamics states. Well... the actuality of the universe is tremendously complex, and the "game" of gravity and the entrophy is very far from being clarified.

The dialectics between gravity and thermodynamics is likely to create surpassable possibilities. Neither the future of life in our society nor the future of the universe can be foreseen. It is an open future, subject to transformations and complexities where we are presented with a universe where time is no illusion, no dispersion –it is creation.

Adorno and Horkheimer state that, currently, there is no difference between the economic destiny and humans themselves. We tend to homologate a given person with his or her patrimony, his or her salary, his or her business opportunities, his or her job.

The economic mask and what is hidden below overlap within the human consciousness, up to the most subtle coils. Each one of us is worth what he or she is paid, and each one of us is paid what he or she is worth. It has been said that consciousness does not determine the being: instead it is the being that determines consciousness. So, any search for the truth of society is unlikely to be found among the idealizations society indulges in: it is to be found within society's economy.

Individuals value their own self according to their market value, and learn what they are by means of what happens to them within the realm of economy.

An attempt at changing the world is done by means of a propaganda system that resorts to the mass media: that is, language is transformed into a tool, a machine that has a tendency to foster a sustained social inequality, the support of which is...the mere people they subjugate.

Anyone knows that, through the media, he or she is converted into a medium, as it happens to materials in a manufacture.

Anyone knows that the exit the propaganda offers is a false exit inasmuch as what propaganda does is the manipulation of people –a perfect case of bad faith. Since the propaganda system alters the truth as soon as truth is put through the propaganda riddle, resistance could consist in ignore it. Even though the freedom propaganda is likely to generate confusion since propaganda must annihilate the difference between theory and the peculiar interests of people propaganda is aiming at.

What is not suspicious is the description of reality seen as a kind of hell, what is suspicious is the routine encouragement to get out of reality. If the discourse is to be addressed to someone, this "someone" is by no means the so-called masses, or the individual: the discourse addresses an imaginary witness to whom we bequeath the discourse so that this imaginary witness could be free to grow up..

Marshall McLuhan says that the visual space is a secondary object, the character of which is uniform and continuous, fragmented from the phonetic alphabet created by the Phenicians, and improved by the Greeks. Some neurologists and sociologists maintain that the hierarchical reasoning is a sensory reference of the left hemisphere of the brain, while the auditory-tactile is a sensory reference of the right hemisphere –i.e. a look into the myth intuition of the primitive humans. The physiology of the eye could have inspired the first steps of linear logic.

Cash and the compass –the leading technologies of the XV century, illustrate the first figure-background-style transformations of the archetypes from the visual space to the acoustic space, from the tangible to the intangible, from the domain of the hardware to the domain of the software. In other words the leading technologies of the XV century could be understood as analogous to the current role the computer is endowed with nowadays. Currently, an acceleration in the change from the visual space technologies to the acoustic space technologies has been observed.

Robotism –if you prefer, the right hemisphere-ruled thinking, is the capacity to be a conscious presence in many places at a time. This is the right hemisphere mode, the

dominant mode of the brain for the mechanical, extended capacities of our bodies, harmonized to a sole moment and to a sole place. The massmedia of the future will place an emphasis on the extensions of our nervous systems forasmuch as these extensions can be separated from the body to be converted into collective systems. The new population norms shall foster a change: that is, switching from industries-cum-chimneys to computerized marketing information. Particularly in the USA and Europe, video-related technologies will issue the predominant social norms during our XXI century and centuries to come. For example, the new, multicarrying telecommunication company, devoted to move any kind of information to the speed of light, will generate, on a continuous basis, products and services tailored for individual consumers that have previously pointed out their preferences through an unending data base. Users will become producers and consumers simultaneously.

Says E. Fischer “Poetry is indispensable, however I would appreciate knowing why”. This charming paradox has been taken by Jean Cocteau to show that, in today's world there still is a need for art even though the function of art seems doubtful.

Painter Mondrian has talked about the possible “disappearance” of art. It is his contention that reality could eventually be able to displace the work of art the essence of which lies, precisely, in replacing the equilibrium that reality lacks currently: “Art is bound to disappear as life becomes more well-balanced.

Art as a “substitute of life”, art as a medium apt at setting up equilibrium between the human being and the surrounding world... well, this is an idea encompassing a partial recognizance of the nature of art and the need there is for art –and, since in the best developed society it is unlikely that an unending equilibrium can exist between humans and the surrounding world this idea also suggests that not only art has been necessary in times past but also that art will always be in demand.

Originally, art was a magic help to dominate the actual world –actual, yes, but unexplored. Within magic, in a latent, germination way, religion, science and art mingled. Little by little, this magical function of art has disappeared: the current function of art lies in clarifying social relationships, enlightening men more and more immersed in more and more opaque societies, helping humans to recognize and modify the social reality. It is no longer possible to represent any highly complex society, with their multiple relationships and their social contradictions by means of a myth. In this kind of society –which demands a precise knowledge and a general consciousness of all aspects involved, it will be more and more necessary to break the rigid norms of times past wherein the magical element was still in operation, to arrive at more open forms of freedom –for example, the freedom that you can read about in a novel.

One of the following elements of art is likely to predominate at a determined time, according to the stage society has arrived to: at times, the magically suggestive element; at times the rational and enlightened element, at times the fantastic intuition, at times a desire to sharpen perception.

Even though art both alleviates and keeps us awake, even though art both clouds or illuminates us, art never limits to a mere description of reality. The function of art lies in enticing human beings, in allowing the self to get identified with someone else's life, and obtaining what does not exist but could be likely to exist.

I understand that the essential function of art lies in changing the word –with no magic whatsoever, no: only by illustrating and stimulating action. Well, anyhow I understand that we will never be able to get rid of certain magical residue: in all the forms of its development, in dignity and joke, in persuasion and exaggeration, in sense and nonsense, in fancy and reality, art has always a relationship with magic. Sort of.

Art is necessary for people being able to know the world and change it. Thus art is also necessary on account of its inherent magic.

Art is almost as old as human beings. It is a kind of work –and work has always been a peculiar activity of human beings.

Said Marx: "The working process is an activity aimed at adjusting natural substances to human needs: this is the general, indispensable condition for the material exchange between humans and nature, this is the everlasting condition imposed on the forms of social life –that is to say, it is common to all social forms".

Humans take possession of nature by transforming it. Work is the transformation of nature.

Humans also dream of operating magically upon nature, be endowed with the power to change object, and giving them new forms through magical means. In imagination, this is the equivalent of what work means in reality. From the dawn of times humans are wizards.

At the time Goethe was writing Faustus, 90% of the inhabitants of the grand duchy of Weimar were illiterate. Art and literature were the privilege of a most reduced minority. Conversely, the industrial society needs people who can read and write. All kinds of knowledge –plus the need for more knowledge, have grown at the same time as industry. As Walter Benjamin said this has always been a demand that has not been satisfied –and will take time to be satisfied.

André Breton said that a work of art is valuable if and only if future vibrates within. Now, apart from this Avant-Garde's anticipation of the future there exists a need for conquering again the lost terrain that, nowadays assumes the need for entertainment.

Taking advantage of such a demand is the essential aim of both the producers and distributors of the "mass art". In this capitalist world, the immense possibilities offered by the mechanical reproduction allow us to enjoy and distribute good books massively, reproduce good paintings massively, "canning" good music, and run good movies before millions of movigoers. However, this world has also discovered there were huge benefits in producing artistic narcotics, and the dream vision becomes commercialized: the poor girl marries a millionaire, the young, humble, guy becomes a hero by

vanquishing all possible obstacles and enemies. In other words, fairy tales get updated and are launched on the market.

... and all this happens in a time when writers and artists fight against the old clichés, taking great pains to find how to reproduce a new reality.

As Thomas Mann could say: this is an insufficient divorce: for one thing there exists the necessary search for new means apt at expressing new realities: getting conscious that our artistic means are exhausted, we are tired of them, we are looking for new ways, on the one hand. On the other hand, we can say, with regard to human masses that, as far as they are concerned, the ancient art is, for them, something absolutely new –hence they have to learn how to distinguish between good and useless. That is their *bon goût* has not been configured as yet, so their ability to appreciate quality is still to be created.

Art is a servant to culture unified by something else than education. That is culture, as a concept does not implies art. Any community apt at adding art adds humanity to culture. As baron Munchhausen boasted to have done, this culture must enjoy the ability to fly, and the ability to dream. That will be the only means to perform all the "voyages" we are craving for, we will be able to deal successfully with everyday life and, eventually, we could see that imagination has achieved power.

Lyotard says that science quarrels over narrations because narrations are, chiefly related to fables while science is not only reduced in stating useful discoveries but science also works in search of truth –a way to attain philosophy. Whenever such meta-discourse resorts to any possible narration such as the dialectics of spirit, the hermeneutics of sense, the emancipation of the reasoning subject, then we can say that science is "modern".

Giving legitimation to knowledge by means of a meta-narration implies a philosophy of History. The validity of institutions ruling the social links is questioned.

Postmodernism would represent incredulity with regard to meta-narrations. The coming society is not so based on a Newtonian anthropology –i.e. structuralism, theory of systems: it is much more based on the practical side of linguistic particles, so knowledge changes status, a fact that began by late 1950s jointly with the reconstruction of Europe.

Phonology, linguistic theories, communication problems, cybernetics, computer science, modern algebra, computers and their languages, memory problems, data bases, and telematics witness such a trend. The incidence of those technological transformations on knowledge is simply huge. It could be said that knowledge is affected in its main functions: a) research, and b) knowledge transmission. The multiplication of information-related machines is affecting, and will keep affecting the dissemination of knowledge, as it has been performed with the available means for the transportation of sound and image media.

The time-honored principle stating that acquiring knowledge could not be separated from the formation of persons is being forgotten little by little. A useful relationship has been set up among knowledge suppliers and knowledge users, and knowledge becomes

a value (just as suppliers of goods and users of goods do). Knowledge will be produced to be sold, and will be consumed to be valued within a new production. It will be a fixed asset any longer.

Dashing within the orbital field of Earth to place communication satellites and/or data banks out there is fine –however, who is supposed to have access to them? Who is going to define the channels and/or what data can be accessed or not? We can have many more questions like these, a way to make the transformation of the nature of knowledge much more complex –all of this is likely to exert a direct action on government powers. A fact that forces us to reconsider our relationships based on fact and rights with the mega-corporations. The problem lies between telecommunications and the civil society at large.

E. Trias offers us a unified table wherein key ideas by Frazer, Freud, Jakobson, Lévy-Strauss, and Foucault are coordinated inasmuch as those ideas have a common factor: the opposition between term pairs –that is a binary opposition with, however, a certain coordination among those ideas. Indeed, the ideas pertaining to the above mentioned thinkers are of a binary nature: similarity/contiguity; condensation/displacement; combination/selection; metaphora/metonymy; identity/difference, that the communication media have analyzed.

In brief, Trias says that magic is the realm of similarity/contiguity while science is the realm of identity/difference.

We have to take care not to fall into the scientific pedantry inasmuch as it can generate what Jakobson would call "aphasia" since it can affect the metaphoric development of the discourse as well as its metonymic development. If we resort to Peirce and Chomsky it would be like searching, within the magical thinking, rational ways to make easier new thinking ways so that we could benefit from a wider understanding of communication-related phenomena.

Within a theory of science, and an aesthetics symmetrically different (hence... complementing themselves), there exists a moment where a split occurs between a type of science expelling similarity while keeping metaphor to hand it over to poetry that is, as Shelley would say, "the lawmaker of the world". From that moment on, you can say that art and literature are like storerooms where the similarity-driven poetic thinking can grow up nicely.

Mention should be done of tolerance that allows some censored activities to blossom as art, activities linked to other denied or repressed activities such as hallucination, onirism, magic that have been widely worked by both psychoanalysis and semiology. It would be, however, a repressive tolerance, giving a lesser emotional meaning to artistic and literary activities.

Language is materially used as a physical object, playfully manipulated, that underneath its problematic "meaning" reveals its character of material sign. Antonin Artaud cause

us to remember the materiality of the sign by reflecting upon the "gesture" character of a language that conventional prejudices have deemed to be "sense-revealing". Says Deleuze that sense, if it exists, is an "effect of surface": it is the result of combining corporeal and material strengths from either a gesture, a sound, or an iconic order. De Saussure demonstrates the duality of "the acoustic image and the concept" any sign encloses. What we should look for is how viable could be any discourse that, instead of manipulating images playfully could be able to complete a free and playful construction with concepts. It should be considered whether we could arrange an exercise completely opposed to the scientific exercise. In other words, setting concepts free from their contexts, achieving a de-contextualized use, so to speak, to organize a "ludic language".

Benjamin –whose thinking is akin to Horkheimer's, and Adorno's, members of the Frankfurt School of Philosophy, points out to the secularization process that has taken place in the Modern Age, and criticizes the notion of progress: thanks to the Enlightenment, we have been able to uncover religion's covering up of both reality and thought so that we have been in a position to face the world's need and misery, to realize that there is no such thing as an egalitarian justice... and to get aware that enlightenment itself is now a new religion.

Benjamin is deeply interested in culture, with a special attention devoted to literature, and the arts in general inasmuch as they express the most positive traits of each period, they anticipate future proposals with regard to the realm of aesthetics. Benjamin defends the art as a constitutive part of culture, and even links art to ethics because art evidence in its manifestations the social contradictions, a transforming world, a struggling world the action of artists causes us to get aware of, while artists keep fighting with themselves to attain higher and higher levels apt at giving them a higher degree of conceptual capture for grasping, and expressing, social problems.

That is, Benjamin has started to purify-plus-poeticize the philosophic language that forces the reader to stop at each sentence and reflecting about it. Previously, he had to do this too –i.e. meditating before choosing how to express his ideas and their form. He had to reconstruct his inner dialog before transferring it into words. It is my contention that poeticizing the mode to express ideas stemming out of a moment spent in reflection, as a result of a rigorous inner thinking is an essential characteristics of Benjamin's work.

Mircea Eliade thinks that humans, through their techniques, replace time –that is, the human work replaces the "work" of time, human work cooperates with nature in that sense that human work helps nature to produce faster and faster, human work modifies the modes of the matter, so to speak, and human work transforms humans into sucklings of the alchemy sources: indeed, alchemy lies at the origin of modern chemistry –and what did chemistry do? stripping substances from their alchemy-originated sacred character. A chemist is devoted to the exact observation of physical and chemical phenomena, his/her systems are aimed at penetrating the structure of matter while an alchemist was devoted to the "passion-marriage-and-death" of substances aimed at the transmutation of both matter and human life.

If you wish, it could be said that, from this standpoint, chemistry entails a "degradation" due to a secularization of matter.

I consider that, before judging them, it is indispensable to understand all the cultural, exotic or archaic phenomena from their own ideologies, whichever are their way of expressing those phenomena: through myths, symbols, rites, social behavior, whatever. As far as those phenomena are concerned, creation is a sacrifice, and you can only give life to what has been created if and only if you transmit your own life to your creation – be it through blood, pain, tears, sperm, soul..., thus creating a system that could be called as developmental disparity.