

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ADVERTISING

HABILITATION THESIS

– SUMMARY –

CONVENTIONALITY AND INTENTIONALITY IN THE COMMUNICATION GAME:
LOGICAL, PRAXIOLOGICAL, AND SEMIOTIC APPROACHES

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By claiming the right to initiate and train future researchers in the field of communication sciences, I assume a great responsibility. On the one hand, based on the scientific results obtained, I have to prove that I have reached the age of intellectual maturity, increased valid knowledge in communication sciences, and have sufficient resources to continue the research activity at a higher level. These resources also include the desire and ability to continuously improve my capabilities to be up to date with the current state of knowledge in the field and the research methodology used. On the other hand, I have to assure the academic community in the field of communication sciences that I have the necessary competence to select, coordinate and guide Ph.D. students in the research activity. Poorly trained Ph.D. students pass on knowledge errors and inadequate research practices across generations.

The responsibility of candidacy for habilitation takes on additional weight in the field of communication sciences. The plural form of the field name suggests that it is a mix of social and human sciences or a hybrid science that addresses various topics using a wide and sophisticated palette of research methods and tools. In this regard, I must prove that my membership in the field of communication sciences is legitimate and that my proposal constitutes a distinct and valuable contribution to the training of future researchers in communication sciences.

In the first chapter of the habilitation thesis, I mentioned the main milestones in my scientific and professional evolution in the academic environment. To begin with, I referred to the doctoral research program that I completed in 1999 by successfully defending the doctoral thesis in philosophy (specialty: logic), “Regimes of quantity in formal logic.”

The doctoral thesis includes one of the widest systematizations of quantification forms at the level of all categories of logical operators. To give consistency and rigor to this systematization, I ordered the quantification forms using 266 definitions, 117 transformation rules, and several dozen order structures. Throughout the doctoral thesis, I highlighted the correspondence between logical forms and the course of thought in natural language. We have thus tried to prove that the hundreds of poses of logical quantification are not free formal games but logical operations that underlie thinking and communication in natural language. The logical forms of quantification are not abstractions independent of the course of thinking in natural language but constitutive elements of this thinking. Cognition and communication of knowledge products are possible only if these formal quantification poses are discerned and operationalized.

Although my dissertation was a synthesis, I also managed to make some original contributions in logic: the redefinition of the singular class, the reinterpretation of sentences that have as their subject determined individual descriptions, the demystification of the so-called “paradox of material implication,” the sketching of a syllogistic system using the cardinality function, defining all 81 “well-defined” dyadic relations that can be established between two classes, and highlighting the lack of ontological commitment of formal logic.

The successful completion of the doctoral research program was largely due to the three-month research internship at the University of Konstanz (15 May – 15 August 1996) under the guidance of two renowned logicians, Paul Hoyningen Huene and André Fuhrmann. Aware of the importance of these intensive training periods, when I focused my research interest on communication themes, I resorted to new documentation and research internships: (a) November 7–19, 2011: The Ludwig von Mises Institute Auburn (United States); (b) 14–20 March 2011: Örebro University (Sweden); (c) 21–26 March 2010: VIA University College Viborg (Denmark); (d) 17–28 August 2009, 01 June – 31 July 2002: Universität Konstanz (Germany); (e) 01–30 November 2003: Université de Neuchâtel (Switzerland).

I have enriched and refined my research methods as I have expanded my range of research topics. Thus, in my first decade as a researcher, I mainly used the method of logical analysis; later, I turned to conceptual analysis, praxeological analysis, scholastic method, thematic analysis, and experiment method. My scientific communications, articles published in scientific journals, studies in collective volumes, and two-author books constitute tokens of applying the new methods to the latest research topics.

In terms of teaching, after defending my doctoral thesis, I proposed and taught the following courses: “Logic and Theory of Argumentation,” “Modal Logic,” “Argumentation Techniques in Legal Debate,” “Communication Theory,” “Fundamentals of Public Relations,” “NGO Public Relations,” “Political Communicatio,” and “Business communication.” Several lectures on “Communication Theory,” “Introduction to PR,” “NGO Public Relations,” and “Political Communication” were taught in the nine Erasmus+ mobilities that I carried out from 2008 to 2016 at the following universities: EFAP L’Ecole des Métiers de la Communication Paris, Università di Corsica Pasquale Paoli, Université Paul Valéry Montpellier III, Universidade da Beira Interior Covilhã, Philological School of Higher Education Wroclaw, and Arteveldehogeschool Ghent.

The teaching and research activity was doubled by the administrative tasks related to certain functions and responsibilities assumed after 2004: chancellor of the Faculty of Philosophy, head of department and then Director of the Department of Communication Sciences and Public Relations, member of the Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences and member of the Senate of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in Iași, responsible for the “Communication and Public Relations” bachelor’s program and the “Public Relations and Advertising” master’s program.

My involvement in seven research projects (one of them as project director) and four institutional development projects illustrated my ability to work in research teams and coordinate work teams. Also, in the last eight years, I organized five international conferences with colleagues from my department.

In the second chapter of the habilitation thesis, I presented the most important research directions I followed and some personal contributions that I made in the field of communication sciences. Mixing directions – (a) Logical order of thinking and communication; (b) Praxeological approaches to communication; (c) Evidence-based persuasion as a non-coercive social control mechanism; (d) Building the agonistic public sphere by debating some political and cultural themes; (e) Investigations in the sphere of public relations – bear the imprint of my training as a logician and constitute a distinct offer for future Ph.D. students who would like to work under my supervision.

All scientific contributions reflect the duality of the fundamental characteristics of communication: conventionality and intentionality. The basic assumption was that no act of communication is possible without the knowledge and observance of a system of constitutive rules. Among these constitutive rules, logical rules are of utmost importance because they maintain the coherence of thought and communication, even when we reflect and communicate about irrational (semiotic) behaviors. Anchored in the scaffolding of logical rules, the constitutive rules of a praxiological order define the multiple communication games in social reality, from the informal conversation within a couple to the televised debate in the electoral campaign. Once the constitutive rules of the communication game are defined, recognized, and respected, the social agents involved in its development can pursue their own goals with the semiotic tools they consider effective. Whether these goals are common, convergent, or divergent, communicators are compelled to cooperate in following the rules of the communication game.

The main original contributions so far would be the following:

1. Regarding the logical analysis of thought: highlighting the plurality of logical forms of the same discursive objects; the presentation of the various formal languages into which the discursive objects from a natural language can be “translated;” the correlation of the main syncategoremes from the Romanian language with the corresponding logical operators from formal languages; matching formalizations from predicate logic with those from set logic and syllogistic; highlighting the standards underlying logical correctness: syntactic accuracy, consistency and validity; presentation of the features of an adequate formalization: parsimony, precision, transparency, fecundity and reliability; the demystification of some logical paradoxes (*e. g.* the liar paradox) by highlighting the deviation from the criterion of syntactic accuracy; highlighting the closing clauses of the logical analysis; underscoring the possibility of deriving deductive structures from other argumentative structures through the operations of expansion, respectively simplification.

2. At the level of the praxeological analysis of communication: modeling the communication process as a game characterized by the Nash equilibrium, highlighting the importance of the constitutive rules of communication; the theoretical reconstruction of the communication process as a system consisting of six semiotic interactions; correlation of communication with non-communication and anti-communication; highlighting the importance of normative rules of communication.

3. Regarding evidential persuasion as a non-coercive social control mechanism: highlighting the evidence-based belief formation mechanism; highlighting the ethical dimension of the process of establishing doxastic states of belief, respectively doubt; correlation of doxastic states with other propositional attitudes; highlighting strategies to combat resistance to persuasion.

4. At the level of the agonistic public sphere: highlighting the constitutive rules of the public sphere by referring to the standards of openness, transparency, external evaluation, and external control; underlining the features that characterize the democratic-liberal public sphere; highlighting the attractors of some ideologies, such as liberalism, libertarianism, cultural socialism, and right-wing populism.

5. In the sphere of public relations: the presentation of the specialist in public relations as an agent of creative destruction; systematization of PR roles and activities; building a theoretical model of fake news; identifying public relations strategies to combat fake news in the field of

public health; studying the effects that fake news can have on trust in food brands; studying the leitmotifs of war propaganda (used in the Russo-Ukrainian war).

In the last part of the thesis, I presented the academic career development plan, with an emphasis on the research topics that I would approach together with future doctoral students and on the contributions that I could make to the development of the doctoral school in communication sciences within “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University from Iasi. I will follow the directions already outlined; to them, I will add topics related to the automation of communication under the pressure of artificial intelligence and the communication dimension of electronic government.

At the age of full academic maturity but always willing to learn, I am ready to contribute to developing the community of teachers and researchers in the communication sciences.