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The Emperor's New Clothes or Simulation Theory

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Abstract: Professor in Postgraduate Program of National School of Visual Arts in National Autonomous University of Mexico. Pioneer in Mexico using digital resources in arts and design. First woman director of National School of Visual Arts at UNAM (2002-2006), has published 7 books about Graphic Design Theory, Graphic Design Metodology, Non-linear languages semiotics and Graphic Design Hermeneutics, 9 chapters in books, 61 research papers and 18 didactic manuals. Manager from two different firms: a technologic center and a graphic design place. Teacher during 30 years, is oficial tutor from postgraduate program in the lines of researching projects, semiotic and hermeneutic studies; participating in academic events in Mexico, Dominicana Republic, USA, Canada, Greece, Spain, Cuba, Peru, Holland, Uruguay, Argentina, Germany and Portugal and presentating conferenes in Mexico, Panama, Cuba, Spain, USA, Lisbon and other countries; also, being advisor thesis from more than 145 researching student thesis works in different universities. Professional graphic designer, working in Mexico, USA and Canada in firms like BMG Entertainment, Environmental Law Institute or UNESCO in traditional and digital way. Visual artist, has exposed digital art, collage and visual poetry in more than 44 exhibitions in Mexico, Panama, USA, Rusia, Spain, France, Greece, Palestine and Frankfurt.

Keywords: Culture, Simulation

Introduction

SIMULATION IS A paradise for people who are mediocre, corrupt, false and frivolous. Simulation is a lie in action, an apparent imitation, affirms José Ingenieros¹. Simulating involves adopting exterior and visible characters of what is being simulated. Lies, hypocrisy and astuteness tend to take on forms that involve the simulation phenomenon. Some of its main characteristics are the vacuity and absurdity on which philosophers have reflected for centuries.

Wittgenstein dedicated a great part of his philosophical energy to identifying and fighting, what he considered to be, insidiously dissolvent forms of “no sense”, that is, lack of substance, and content. The philosopher bases his thought on the notion of a logical space, expressed in the *Tractatus*, which is an alternative for explaining the location of thought in analogy with the object arrangement. Thus, it is possible to distinguish *empirical* spaces from *abstract* ones, the former being where simulation is placed in its quality of immediate experience that never transcends to new stages of reflection.²

¹ Cf. José Ingenieros. *La simulación en la lucha por la vida*, pp. 127-137

² Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1921/22), ed. 1971 by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, Werkausgabe (8 volumes), volume 1, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a/M, 1984. In relation to the different logical spaces the Wittgenstein mentions in his texts, cf. e.g. *PB* 1, pg. 51; 42, pg. 76; 45, pg. 79; 73, pg. 102; 82, pg. 110; 162, pg. 191; 185, pg. 228; 206, pg. 257; 212, pg. 265; 214, pg. 268; 215, pp. 269-271

Little or badly developed intelligence, especially due to media futility, has increased the capacity to search for and demand the real sense of each of the phenomena that occur around us. Triviality has formed a spectating, functional, operative mass that has forgotten its humaneness, “collective life is on its way to annihilate individual life, and the greater the number of individuals reunited and bundled by the bonds of need, of conventions and “social” obligations, the smaller the individual becomes.”³

The discourse of simulation doesn’t communicate anything, it is “speaking for the sake of speaking” attempting to justify nothing from nothing, feeding singular bonds of solitude, in which the human being justifies to himself his behaviour, his actions, his “decisions” which are not really decisions because they have not emerged out of argumentation or reflection.

In this oblivion of dialogue with oneself and with others, and in complete acknowledgement of reality, “pseudo paradigms of veracity” have been created which include small talk and verbosity accompanied by merging with groups that share similar thought and ambitions; here, the strong are distinguished from the weak, and the latter, being incapable of reaching dominion, also compete for power.⁴

These are relatively and artificially educated people but with scarce or no humanistic education, incapable of synthesizing their perceptions, insignificant, flippant and fickle, traitors by nature and with great moral emptiness. As Rojas suggests,

[...] his ideology is pragmatism, his behaviour standard is social vigilance, he takes what is fashionable; his ethics are based on statistics, substitute for conscience; his morals, full of neutrality, lack of commitment and subjectivity [...] neither solidarity nor collaboration prosper easily, but rather rivalry stained with hostility [...] man has no bonds, he does what he wants in all the fields of his existence and he only lives for himself [...]⁵

This impoverishment of intelligence annihilates the spirit’s most important manifestations, developing cover-up patterns with which individualism and massification are sharpened. Nihilism leads to the omission of duty and responsibility, and the miserable automaton emerges, as Nietzsche⁶ affirmed, the lion cannot create new values; but it can create itself freedom for new creating-become free for the new creation, create itself freedom, and give a holy Nay even onto duty.

In my own thinking, these people are scoundrels that establish vices benefiting from other people’s qualities, individuals whom any institution can shelter in favour of a simulated stability. In these spaces, the philosopher becomes a bureaucrat, the quack becomes a leader of opinion, and the lout is acknowledged as an intellectual. This is relevant to understand the simulation settings.

³ Paul Valéry. *Los principios de an-arquía pura y aplicada*, pg. 75

⁴ Rüdinger, Safranski. *El Mal*, pg. 35

⁵ Enrique Rojas. *El hombre light*, pp. 14-17

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Así hablaba Zaratrustra*, p. 31

Institutionalized Simulation

It is the simulation of simulations, the institutionalized simulation, the one that prevails above the use of reason and the exercise of intelligence, in spite of affirmations by Arnold Gehlen who assumes that:

[...] although institutions simplify us in a certain way – coining and typifying, not only our behaviour but also our thought and our sensibility -, they allow us to reserve energy so as to be an original individuality in its surroundings, that is, to act contributing a lot, with imagination, with benefit.⁷

In fields in which knowledge should be the principal argument in the actions and decisions of individuals, absurdity is what underlies stupidity, and this may be shown in several ways; the strategy is that of complacency, of elaborating the best possible farce. This is reminiscent of the famous *Vatel*⁸, attempting to comply with the *Sun King* even at the expense of his own life.

All valued possessions, tasks, efforts, principles, and convictions are vain when faced with potentiality: *do as if we're doing although we don't do because if we do... they make us stop doing to force us to do as if we're doing*⁹, acting is transformed into truism... Savater affirms:

Acting [...] is not only about moving to satisfy an instinct, but carrying out a project that transcends the instinctive [...] with the symbolic registering of possibilities that do not wear out in the compliance of paradigms established in the past, but that open up to untold and even dissident futures. Action is linked to prevision but also to what is unforeseen: it is attempting to foresee by playing with what is unforeseen and counting on its uncertainty [...] the active being does not only work on account of reality but activates reality itself, puts it under way in a way that, without him this could never have happened.¹⁰

This type of action is not that of the simulator, the simulator becomes fossilized of thought, word and deed, he does not mind destroying any preceding work and, of course, the future's horizons only mean something when they benefit him materially.

The Emperor's New Clothes

The *theory of simulation* is based on false and hypocritical actions, with an undertone in which fictitious beings, qualities and actions are defended. The emperor could be anyone who, having held some power, enjoys the subservience and complicity of those who are familiar with, in addition to the obscurity of his actions, his ineptitude in exercising his obligations. Every field has specific simulations, its phenomena of simulation, forms and actors suitable for the actions of simulation, for example, all the members of a given profession

⁷ Fernando Savater. *Antropología de la libertad*, pp. 91 and 92

⁸ Roland Joffé, *Vatel*. (film). GB/Fr. Miramax. 2000

⁹ Author's emphasis

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 18 and 19

live in a tacit agreement to simulate the excessive importance of their task; however, the simulation of stupidity is among the most common.¹¹

The emperor always has an adulating figure and, he is, to this principle, the simulator par excellence. He passes seemingly unnoticed while shaping meticulous plans to return again and again to power, always with new clothes, always with a new face, always with a new puppet whose strings he handles with skill and mastery. As Rubert de Ventós¹² affirms, only a soft inclination is enough to pass from reason to argument and from there to justifications and from there to alibis, in a progressive degradation of the most subtle concepts. What is being sought are not ideas that inspire but ideologies that confirm the sense of corruption.

When the ignorant and compulsive masses do when faced with this phenomenon is applaud the *emperor's new clothes*, they simulate admiring his clothes even when he is completely naked; they comment wisely on the cut, the ornaments, the shoes and the outfit's harmony, or they keep quiet and, as Franz Marc contends, "there are times when silence is coward and guilty"¹³. Thus, the coward will always bow in front of the emperor, because the thinking mode from which all his ponderings arise revolves around the possible benefits or feared harm that the emperor will send upon him.

When in this simulated informity, accustomed to obtaining, not to achieving, due to his or her servile attitude, someone has the opportunity to propose a viable project that will benefit those who surround him or the institution, this person hides behind in all types of pretexts that only cover up his mediocrity: "*I can't because I need a post*"... "*for what they're paying me, and they want me to do everything*"... "*they promised to improve my position*"... "*until they keep their promise I'm not proposing anything*"... "*they owe me because I'm an acclaimed intellectual*"¹⁴ ... Saramago argues,

[...] the cultural hegemonies of our times have resulted essentially from a double and accumulative process that consists of making evident what is ours and hiding what is someone else's [...] like something unavoidable, it has been favoured many a time by resignation, if not by complicity [...] many people, when they wake up in the morning, they realize that due to the work that they have to do, and to the circumstances in which they have to do it, they are no longer men [...]¹⁵

Deep down, we must justify the fact that we do not know how to deal with freedom because we're used to the emperor making all the decisions and we are certain that everything that's obtained - work, stimuli, promotions, project signing, scholarships, support for exchanges, etcetera -, has been bestowed to us by him or by his closest circle of subordinates whom "had rather part with their father's land than their foolish opinions [...]" the more ignorant each of them is, the more insolently he pleases himself, that is to say, vaunts and spreads out his plumes [...]¹⁶

In the institutions, most people do not realize that for decades only a small group of people has received benefits, or if they do realize it, they simulate not being aware so as to not have

¹¹ Cf. José Ingenieros. *Op.cit.*, pp. 73-90

¹² Xavier Rubert de Ventós. *El cortesano y su fantasma*, pg. 83

¹³ Marc also affirms that "*every silence has a beginning and an end*". Franz Marc. *Los 100 aforismos. La segunda visión*, pg. 12

¹⁴ Author's personal experience

¹⁵ Saramago, José. *El nombre y la cosa*, pp. 56 and 77

¹⁶ And Erasmus of Rotterdam adds: "*if the more foolish a man is the more he pleases himself and is admired by others, to what purpose should he beat his brains about true knowledge ...?*" *The Praise of Folly*, pg. 58

to react to such injustice and impunity. Furthermore, some hand over their working place to those who steal it with flimsy deception in order to pass it on to whomever they consider is a more loyal servant or belongs to the royal family. These are concrete examples seen in places like universities.

Everything, absolutely everything is transformed into a haul that is distributed imprudently among a few and is distilled with a dropper to many who, from the moment in which they are touched they are committed, “sold” to the whims of a minority. This seems to be a sleeping, unsupported statement but it’s only the description of some irremediable realities. Borges, quoted by Kertész, said:

“Infernos [...] are marshy areas, areas in which there are cities that seem to have been destroyed by fires; but there, reprobates feel happy. They feel happy in their own way, that is, they are full of hatred and [deep down] there is no monarch in this kingdom; they are continuously conspiring against each other. It is a world of low politics, of conspiracy. That is what hell is” [...] ¹⁷

Likewise, nobody observes how, gradually, these groups obtain sinecures in a suspicious manner, in such a way that presuming to be professionals in different disciplines, they infiltrate the communities with the sole objective of breaking up groups whose intentions are development and knowledge and undermining them little by little, leaving only a few who payroll-wise justify their presence.

Painful lists could be written of the marginalized, the retirees, or those fired from institutions. Perhaps the most serious audacity and insult is committed upon those who, under tortuous deceit, have their contracts taken away or are pressured to retire. According to José Ingenieros:

Hypocrisy is the art of silencing dignity; it suppresses scruples in men who are incapable of resisting the temptation of evil. It is lack of virtue to renounce evil and courage to assume responsibility. It is the guano that fertilizes vulgar temperaments, allowing them to prosper in lies. ¹⁸

This is usually left arranged by the emperor in his abrupt exit toward another post and it tends to be one of his assistants, the substitute on duty, who is in charge of processing this injustice.

When the hypothetical royal family - the emperor’s family - loses its privileges and all the concessions that it enjoys: working a single day of the week, having phantom commissions, signing in and not working, sending someone to collect with a power of attorney, obtaining funding for “*supposed institutional projects*”, having spaces such as operation headquarters, deciding on the future of others, granting privileges, etc. -, aggression becomes the daily action with the strangers - those that never will belong to the empire -.

These are only some of the manoeuvres of the members of the hypothetical empire, whom the hatred for having been discovered, added to the possible substitution of their dominion, the envy and the frustration, forces to desperately search for a way to maintain their image,

¹⁷ Borges quoted by Imre Kertész. *Yo, otra crónica del cambio*, pg. 55

¹⁸ José Ingenieros. *El hombre mediocre*, pg. 107

keep the emperor in power remaining surrounded by the most reproachable interests, while cowardice spreads in the face of representation. *It doesn't matter if the emperor is nude.*

Conclusion

We must deal with these appearances that consume our society. We should recover the lost values of dignity, of greatness in the face of adversity, courage, integrity, honesty, respect and shame.

When the amount of cultures plays down values and globalization crushes with its power and imposes an arrogant uniformity, the human being, in his disconcert, loses the sense of values and of himself and no longer knows in whom or in what to believe [...] ¹⁹

In the face of simulation there is reason, which equals precisely to building a new order in the face of the chaos that has been propitiated by superficiality, a disorder that “as it ages, it becomes fixed, fossilized, and it acquires the appearance of order, but only because it is immobile, because it is dead.” ²⁰

The previous supposes an intellectual revolution that overthrows the old contaminated, corrupt and rotten social spaces, substituting them with spheres through which runs a profound renovation and transcendence of the conscience to

[...] preserve an individual life beyond the grave; [understand] that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction [...] Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built [...] ²¹

The mere perception of the phenomena, or the acknowledgement of their attributes are not enough, it is indispensable for their understanding to be the effect of reasoning, because the life of truths that are obvious and approximate to understanding has led us toward an absurd and apparent schematization of the world.

We need to pass from evidences of the senses and the conscience to evidences of reasoning, that is, those fundamentals that are “capable of governing our credulity as intelligent creatures” ²² that allow us to acknowledge the emperor's nakedness.

We should analyze from the outside, with no media intermediaries, the image that we have of ourselves, of our being and our context, so as to perceive reality and not the staging that we have built with ignorance and with an inability to capture what can be seen. Only by understanding that the human condition is the last explanation for the ethical condition ²³, the human being ceases to act without a reason in the humiliation, evilness, and violence of man against man, in his destructiveness, in his ability to hurt, to offend, to annihilate others. ²⁴

¹⁹ Ernesto Sábato. *La resistencia*, pg. 46

²⁰ Aldo Pellegrini. *Para contribuir a la confusión general*, pp. 7-8

²¹ Bertrand Russell. *El credo del hombre libre y otros ensayos*, pp. 70-71

²² Cf. Thomas Reid. *La filosofía del sentido común*, pp. 181-193

²³ Cf. Juliana González. *Ética y libertad*, pp. 27-36

²⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 242

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