

# From regularity to norm or “the three-step efficient communication”

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## 1. Posing the problem

It is known that there are spheres of human life and areas of human activity so complex in nature that they inherently become, on the one hand, absolutely exceptional, and, on the other hand, impossible to seize in any global model: we lack data, we cannot corroborate data extrapolated from the analysis of the various perspectives meant to observe the objects in question but above all things we cannot count on the faithful repetition of the events specific to these spheres and areas. I include in this category the spheres related to both natural and social phenomena, to human thinking, and, finally, to the language activity, deeply embedded in thinking and also seen as central to any instance of communication in our world, namely the world of the living.

## 2. Starting points in constructing an argumentation

a) I have been trying for quite some time now to teach myself to use, as frequently as possible, lateral thinking. I obstinately keep on reading Edward De Bono’s book, *Lateral Thinking*<sup>1</sup>, willing to do the exercises proposed and in the manner suggested by the author. I have already developed some skills as a result of my frequent contacts with *The Art of Looking Sideways*<sup>2</sup> but I must also confess to having exclusively used vertical thinking for a too long period of time. I am suddenly being asked to be not necessarily obsessed with finding the best solution but especially to embrace something that might look childish (not to call it worse!) at a second glance, to be more creative than I could have ever imagined, and above all not to stop creating. Moreover, in the chapter entitled *Attitudes towards lateral thinking* (pp. 44 ssq.), the author invites the readers to consider lateral thinking a sort of thinking resulting from what he calls “provocative stimulation”. As long as lateral thinking can lead to solving a problem, the solution being subsequently recognized and understood through logical (vertical – my addition, D.S.) thinking, the question can be analyzed as

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<sup>1</sup> Edward De Bono, *Lateral Thinking. A Textbook of Creativity*, London, Penguin Books, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Fletcher, *The Art of Looking Sideways*, London, Phaidon Press Ltd., 2001, republished in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007.

follows: either we accept that “Since all effective thinking is really logical thinking then lateral thinking is just a part of logical thinking”<sup>3</sup> or the reasoning according to which “If by logical thinking one means a sequence of steps each of which must be correct then lateral thinking is clearly distinct”<sup>4</sup>. We were already told<sup>5</sup> that “It is a function of lateral thinking to free information by challenging cliché patterns” and that “Whenever a solution is said to have been reached by lateral thinking there is always a logical pathway by which the solution could have been reached. Hence what is supposed to be lateral thinking is no more than a plea for better logical thinking”<sup>6</sup>. In the end, it does not matter if we consider lateral thinking a part of logical thinking or something totally different from the latter as long as we are able to grasp its real essence. Practice is very important in acquiring the skill of using lateral thinking, performed according to certain techniques explained beginning on page 57. In the opening presentation of these techniques (the *Techniques* chapter), the author draws attention to something important (both for what he describes in the book and the present argumentation): “The purpose of the formal techniques is to provide an opportunity for the practical use of lateral thinking so that one may gradually acquire the lateral thinking habit. The techniques are not suggested as formal routines which must be exactly learned so that they can be deliberately applied thereafter. Nevertheless the techniques can be used in this manner and until one acquires sufficient fluency in lateral thinking to do without formal techniques one can use them as such.”<sup>7</sup>

Particularly the last quotation contains an idea that must be also reiterated with a view to the practice of communication. Every apprentice in the field of (verbal or non-verbal) communication studies must learn and remember the formal techniques subsequently used and recognized in the communication acts produced in his/her sphere of perception. They will further remain the guiding marks unveiling the deviations from “genuine” communication, deviations which will be ultimately interpreted in order to understand each other. Moreover, deviations may become the norm in communication to later on fall into desuetude and become part of the wooden language, their place being filled in by other deviations without any additional appeal to the norm. I will further elaborate on the topic (see *below*).

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<sup>3</sup> de Bono, *op. cit.*, p. 45

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, p. 44

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, pp. 56-57

b) In what follows, I will refer to another area of human activity, as described in another recent reading. In *Superfreakonomics*<sup>8</sup>, the authors pose for the first time the problem of economic sciences in the way I have longed to pose it in the field of communication sciences.

In their opinion, all studies, statistics and simulations in economic sciences do nothing more than justify what has happened over a certain interval, and eventually emphasize certain noticeable regularities in citing a series of phenomena. No one succeeds in making correct predictions, nor transforming the noticed regularity into norm, and, based on this fact, anticipating with a high level of precision the evolution of things in economics, irrespective of the economic level the scholars' studies refer to. According to the two authors, this happens because the evolution of economics (irrespective of the type and level) depends on multiple factors, their complexity making it impossible to determine the invariants and variables necessary for a correct prognostic study: the economic analyses meant to determine the part of the occurrence regularity that might become norm rely on factors related to the natural environment (their very evolution being generally hard to predict), human factors (harder to describe and with harder to anticipate occurrences), and even imperfections of the basic sciences. On the other hand, even if business men and governments had the opportunity to resort to the knowledge of the Nobel laureates, the financial and economic crisis humankind is experiencing these days could have hardly been avoided; nevertheless, it is said that this crisis bears a striking resemblance to that in the early 1930s. Things repeat themselves, people can observe certain regularities in the progress registered in different domains but no one rushes into establishing and even less into implementing norms. When someone like academician Constantin Bălăceanu-Stolnici, who lived those days in the same way he lives them now, and whom I heard saying that the present crisis resembled the financial crisis in the 1930s, the speaker is right only if he provides a personal perception, characterized by general remarks; otherwise, we could not refrain from observing that the person making this statement does not even mention that we are referring to two completely different world realities. Of course, by comparing past events which took place in a familiar context with the present events which usually interest us and we inform about, we can notice some regularities of occurrence in the case of the phenomenon called "financial and economic crisis": banks go bankrupt, governments are no longer able to ensure economic and social stability, people lose their jobs, consumption shows a dramatic decline and no one is able to put an end to the general turmoil. But it is not the same to talk about less than 4 billion

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<sup>8</sup> Steven D. Levitt, Stephen J. Dubner, *Superfreakonomics. Global Cooling, Patriotic Prostitutes, and why Suicide Bombers Should Buy Life Insurance*, London, Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2009.

people or approximately 7 billion, as it is not the same to talk about the national economies almost closed in the 1930s or the globalization no one can escape from these days, not to mention the development of the economic instruments and especially of the financial ones over the 80 year-period separating a crisis from its “copy”. It follows the importance of understanding the context of our analysis and also the importance of the fact that there are certain fields in which the noticeable/noticed regularities do not necessarily result into norms, which consequently makes it impossible to predict anything and the “cook book” literature containing cast in stone recipes acquire its deserved shallow aspect. It is true that people committed suicide out of despair 80 years ago the same as they did last year but the causes of their despair usually had a national root back then, whereas nowadays they can be found in the intricate global relations affecting the planet. In the 1930s there were no issues related to the impact of an oil pipeline trajectory on the economy of the countries it crossed, the same as the path of the gas pipes did not raise continental issues based on a local misunderstanding between two neighboring countries.

c) The third pillar of this argumentation is provided by the field of natural phenomena.

The fact that in the 1970s humankind was preoccupied with the imminent global cooling for nowadays, less than half a century later, to be preoccupied with global warming does not indicate the lack of serious and solid scientific arguments for either of the two claims but the impossibility to collect and corroborate all (literally ALL!) the necessary data in order to define the status of the world we are living in, of the Universe we make part of and the status we could expect it to reach in a predictable future. Let us reflect more upon the example of global warming versus global cooling! The same as the ecologists of the 1970s based their argumentation on the “hope” to witness another devastating eruption of the Pinatubo volcano (which fortunately did not happen) we reach the point where, 40 years later, the risk of facing another ice age is replaced in discourse by the risk related to global warming. We are clearly dealing here with a change of discourse and not with a real change in the state of affairs. It takes several ages and not just a few decades for the situation to change from a meteorological point of view.

It is obvious that everything resembles the previously mentioned things on the economic sphere: according to the same pattern, certain sociologists and economists base their predictions on uncontrollable and... unpredictable elements, the result being something hilarious (unless we take into account the seriousness of the situations generated by those predictions).

From another point of view, what seemed to verify the predictions of progress through global cooperation degenerated into (an also) global crisis precisely because of the cooperation lying at the core of the other vision. This does not mean in the least that I militate in favor of the attenuation of cooperation! What seems interesting is exactly the fact that taking into account just a part of the data required for making economic and social predictions is not enough. But I ask myself, once again, what would “all” the data be? Moreover, when the data are taken from vague domains, they will not allow very precise calculi, and by adding vague data to other vague data the chance of obtaining an accurate result is increasingly smaller.

d) About utopias. I have been reading for some while a collection of literary and philosophical texts from *The Faber Book of Utopias* cycle. It is the first time I have ever seen Platon’s *Republic* presented as a utopia. It is the first time Hitler has ever been presented in neutral terms, just as (another) utopia. Moreover, writers of the above-mentioned high caliber are put next to Oscar Wilde, where the utopia of socialism is presented in an ironic, devastating tone.

I look at the great number of texts gathered in the book, I feast in reading such diverse writings, and I am touched by the forms utopia can take. I would dare though identify, inside any utopian construction, something like an explicit or implicit characteristic of all utopias: the norm. Either it is real or imagined, applied or just planned the norm is the one freezing everything in the incredible, the impossible, the utopian.

### **3. Straight to the bottom of the problem: the language activity**

Verbal communication implies the use of the natural language or, from a linguistic perspective, the use of a (historical) language as a means of communication. But using a certain language means to combine the social side of the phenomenon – in Saussure’s terms, the language – with its individual part – the said *parole*, as identified by Saussure himself. They cannot exist one without the other and everything is based on an innate capacity of the human mind, i.e. the ability to speak. Although we learn that Saussure defines *langue* (*limbă* into Romanian) as the language from which *parole* is deducted, we know that this is just a stratagem based on which the linguist tries to make his distinction between *langue* and *parole* clearer and easier to understand. Adopted and developed during the last century, Saussure’s linguistic theory can also be found in Eugeniu Coșeriu’s language theories. According to the

latter author, language is seen and defined as a complex phenomenon, “implying more simultaneous aspects, but which manifest themselves in different plans and which can be thus approached from different points of view”<sup>9</sup>. Whereas Saussure was preoccupied with not letting the object of linguistics seem a “confuse agglomeration of inconsistent and unrelated things”, Coşeriu thought that the idea of a complex phenomenon allows us to hope reaching a holistic perspective on the object of study. Coşeriu also informs us that language is a phenomenon marked by uniqueness. The fact that we articulate it by means of a definite article in singular must be understood rather as a reference to a unique and sympathetic object, and not to a unitary and homogenous one. It must be seen as an assembly of differently organized parts in relation to which we must empirically recognize that they are holding together, without acknowledging the existence of a homomorphous or homogenous structure. Saussure believed that the method through which sciences such as psychology, anthropology, normative grammar, philology and others can claim language as one of their objects was incorrect. This fear has nevertheless been overcome in time. Nowadays, we understand that language, as a field of various sciences – among which one can find those mentioned in Saussure’s course – must exist as a definite object with coherent properties but that these properties will not be general and analytical but rather specific and synthetic. Eugeniu Coşeriu offers consistency to the apparent weak and incomplete definition (“language is a complex phenomenon”, see above), showing that this phenomenon presents an ideal reality (language) and a concrete reality (the linguistic act). Language is an abstraction, a virtual existence in the speakers’ conscience, used as a deposit, a memory of certain linguistic acts that took place but also as a means for the speakers to produce, according to the previous linguistic acts taken as a model, more or less identical but, in any case, intelligible linguistic acts. On the other hand, the linguistic act, seen as a concrete reality of language, is seen as a fundamental aspect of the latter. According to Coşeriu

“Always an expression of a novel and unique intuition, the linguistic act is an act of creation, a singular act that does not identically reproduce any previous linguistic act and which ‘resembles’ other previous linguistic acts belonging to the experience of a community only through the limits imposed by the need of social intercommunication. As such, the linguistic act is thus an exclusively individual act but socially determined by its finality, namely to ‘say something to someone about something’.” (Coşeriu 1995, p. 26)

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<sup>9</sup> Eugeniu Coşeriu, *Introducere în lingvistică (Introduction to Linguistics)*, Cluj, Editura Echinox, 1995, p. 92.

We would also have to add that the meaning of the linguistic act is defined by the context of its production. And, as every context is unique in itself, the linguistic acts, the language productions, and Saussure's *parole* will also be unique. The part related to the immanence of language remains unchanged but we communicate through utterances and not through sentences, and the utterance is something unique resulting from the enunciation of a linguistic content. When someone says (in front of a certain audience, with a certain intensity of voice, tone and mimic, accompanied by a certain body language): "Each utterance is unique", adding, one second later (in front of the same audience, with the same voice and para-verbal and non-verbal elements): "Each utterance is unique", one can ascertain that the two utterances are different, although they have the same linguistic content. The latter utterance does not carry anymore the same intentional content of the former, although their informational contents are similar. When hearing the second utterance, the audience understands that it must look for the purpose of the new utterance of the same sentence. No one is asking himself/herself anymore "What did he mean by that?" but "Why did he repeat that?", "What did he want us to focus on?", "What did he really want?" because the latter utterance is produced in a new context containing the former. The linguistic acts leave traces, and their (indelible!) traces continuously rebuild the context of an interaction. Only memory (or rather its absence, namely oblivion) can ensure the deletion of the effects of an utterance from the context of our (verbal or non-verbal) interactions. Otherwise, X continues to be the person who offended me (even if he apologized and "took back his words"!) and everything he is going to tell me from now on will be decoded in the context containing the offence brought by the uttering of a certain sentence. It is not the sentence that offends me but the fact that X included it in the utterance he addressed to me. This utterance is the event I cannot erase from my memory. I was familiar with that sentence before it had even been addressed to me and it meant nothing in particular. In fact, it does not mean anything in particular at this point either: it is simply a sentence in a given language. What upset me was that a concrete individual (X) addressed me the sentence (P) at a particular moment (T). On the other hand, it is very likely that my feeling is wrong: maybe the sentence used in that utterance is not offending *per se* but my psychical (and perhaps physical) condition was not so festive at the moment it was addressed to me and I consequently decoded it in a less fortunate manner. But who could tell?! Who could have predicted such an event and on what grounds? Based on what regularities? Regularities related to the language semantics? Regularities related to the social life prerequisites in a given culture? Regularities related to the relationship existing between X and I? Regularities observed in my social behavior? Then what regularities?

Maybe a certain state of the weather (a low barometric pressure, for instance) could have influenced the unfortunate conclusion. A period of intense solar activity might have induced a nervous mood to people like me, who rush into decoding the messages they receive, making them lose their temper and unable to “rightly” interpret the data (are the “right” interpretations possible?). Impossible to say, generalize or encapsulate in a norm. As in the case of any other events, the event consisting in the linguistic act of uttering that sentence that I perceived as offensive is a unique event because it is contextual. Still, similar events might have happened in the past and will surely happen in the future as well. They will be characterized by a degree of similarity but will nevertheless remain unique. Then, as long as they do not repeat themselves, how can one statistically manage and comprise them into a norm to be applied in similar cases? One can of course ascertain *a posteriori* some regularities in the production of these events. But what about the norm?!

### ***3.1. A phenomenon present inside an utterance: the quotation***

Why do people quote? What is quotation good for if there are norms that can orient people at any time, in any standard situation, and which, once learned, are useful to everybody?! Also, what and whom do people quote when they quote? Would be quotation needed any longer if we were all saying the same things about the same issues and in the same contexts?

Montaigne claimed quoting others in order to better express himself. One can explain this situation based on the idea of a shared cultural intertext: people belong to a culture, live their lives in a language, adopt – as individual knowledge – stereotypical thinking, prejudices, ready-made solutions for various standard situations, even expressions meant to help them communicate something to others and put them into communication with the people around. Seen as a whole, all these are patterns derived from the creation and application of certain standards or norms. And still, at different times, there is someone who says differently, who deviates from norms, who innovates. Moreover, (s)he remains in the collective memory and becomes a new landmark, and the things (s)he says, the way they were said, clearly derailed from the existing norm, become forms of expression preferred by the people who want to increase the impact of their own discourse or who want to explicitly show adherence to a famous forerunner’s ideas. One can obviously express himself/herself in a simple, clear and plain language by calling things by their names, i.e. the names retained by the norm. But if a person desires to offer additional impact to his/her discourse, to imply more than (s)he says

(also see P. Grice, about implicature), to add value to his/her expression, it will be desirable to recur to something remembered from the deviations produced by someone else at a certain point in time. Even when somebody is quoting Chomsky's famous sentence (*Colorless green ideas sleep furiously*) the purpose is to shock, to attract attention, to empower one's discursive intervention, whether it is about a didactic or scientific discourse or about any other type of discourse. Did the first man to give life to an oxymoron have in mind the deviation from norm or he simply thought he had no better expression for rendering what he wanted? Nowadays we seem too much accustomed to some of these figures of speech because of their excessive use. Who thinks about the "logical monster" from expressions such as *sweet grief* or *eloquent silence* any longer? It is easy for someone to leave the impression of having read Camus by "dropping" in a conversation the expression *deafening silence* or to claim adherence to Rimbaud's way of thinking by adding to his/her discourse – of course, where possible – an *invisible splendor*. I chose as an example the oxymoron because it is, in my opinion, the figure of speech with the highest deviation from logic (and norm). I might have as well decided to talk about the use of metaphors and I would have still had some deviations to comment upon. Yuri Manin, former president of the Russian Academy of Sciences, once said that the entire language was a metaphor. Nevertheless, by using language, minds capable of some of the most astonishing associations succeed in obliquely defining (cf. A.J. Greimas) the objects of our world, gaining in this way our attention and marking our memory. A scene in the movie *Looking for Richard*, about and with Al Pacino, contains a discussion on this topic: when working on the text, sitting at the table, the actors try to understand the Shakespearian text by posing the problem from as many different angles as possible; one of them is asking himself, for instance, why the Shakespearian characters do not simply call things by their names, why when one of them wants water he does not say, like the rest of us, "Will you, please, give me a glass of water?" but launches instead unknown formulae, such as – and this is the point where the actor makes up something that I reproduce from my memory – "Turn into Hermes, make wings that go on your feet and fly instantly to bring me the liquor of life in a goblet". The answer is clear: the way we say it, the line (perhaps!) takes effect on the spot (meaning that the person asked to bring the glass of water complies with the requirement) to later on be buried in oblivion; the way Shakespeare says it, the line is impressive and sticks to the memory of the persons who hear it. And it will obviously stick to the cultural memory of humankind for centuries.

We thus quote someone else simply because we find, in his/her certainly non-standard formulation, something strong, impressive, and seemingly totally different from any common

way of expressing things, but which perfectly suits our expression needs at a particular moment. How can we remember the words of the person we decided to quote “in order to better express ourselves”? Because, from a certain point of view, those words ignored the norm and marked a distance from the monotony of common expression. They became visible, singular, they simply popped out. They defied the norm as our distinguished fêted person observed in a book title (*Sfidarea normei* – i.e. *Defying the Norm*). How could a formula of the type not be tempting? And how tempting could an ordinary formula (much too) often used by everybody in the standard situation it was designed for according to the language norm be?!

There is, of course, the slipping effect, the excessive use of an expression, i.e. when remarkable expressions tend to be flattened, trivialized, embedded in the quotidian. They can degrade themselves, make part of the wooden language, just remain trivial and thus lose their impact force or they can simply be used – as part of the wooden language – in ironic sentences<sup>10</sup>. In the last case, the sonority of an expression makes its presence felt longer whenever it is used by the members of that linguistic community, even if the effect changes register. Nevertheless, it is not less remarkable that the meaning of that expression is completely different, sometimes astonishing, on the occasion of its new use and perhaps even more astonishing than originally produced (let us not forget that its initial meaning was granted by a deviation from the norm, nor that it had an additional impact force!).

### **3.2. Poetry**

And I have not discussed yet the poetic discourse!...

I begin with evocations and then I discuss the topic. The Romanian teenagers of the 1980s were proud to be able to choose to be *trimbulinzi* as a sign of riot against a fixed system they did not want to succumb to. An invented word, a result of the creative force of the Romanian genial poet Nichita Stănescu, made sense and was strong. What is its connection to the Romanian language? What norms were respecting the people who used it in order to justify their belonging to a certain generation?

Also during those years, Nichita Stănescu confessed to having felt living an epiphany when he finally understood Eminescu’s peerless verse “I never thought I would learn how to die, ever”. Where is the logic, the triviality of the common expression given by the strict

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<sup>10</sup> See on this topic Dan S. Stoica, „Corectitudinea politică și limba de lemn” (*Politically Correctness and Wooden Language*) in *Revista Transilvană de Științe ale Comunicării (The Transylvanian Review of Communication Sciences)*, no. 5/2007, pp. 60-64.

adherence to the norm? Then, in what wonderful land does Nichita allure us with his verse: “Foaie verde de albastru / Azi mă doare-un cal măiastru” (Green blue leaf / A masterly horse is soring me today)? I involuntary think of the popular poem (too) often sung in the 1970-1980s, “Marjoram/trefoil/other known plants with green leaves”. If I am asked to complete the expression “green leaf” I automatically answer “blue”. The masterly horse expressing the poet’s grief is life marking. Moreover, why do lovers pick a verse from God knows what poet or popular song in order to (each!) express inner feelings? The explanation also seems to lie in the force granted by the deviation and resulted from acting outside the norm. As Sorescu noticed once with admiration that actors knew best how to play our lives, I would say that poets, writers and philosophers know best how to express emotions, thoughts, attitudes, and communication intentions.

#### **4. The middle way**

As I would not want to pose as an anarchist, I will try to soften up something that might appear in this study as militating in favor of the abolition of norms simply because this would be no more and no less than another utopia... As written before<sup>11</sup>, the development period of an individual, school, does not aim at teaching this one mathematics, foreign languages, geography etc. Its main and overwhelming purpose in terms of importance and difficulty is to teach the child how to communicate in order to further integrate into the community and the culture he was born and will continue to live in (at least for some time). As observed by neurophysiologist Zachary John Young<sup>12</sup>, “The essence of the entire process is to learn how to conform to the conventions of the group one is living in as an individual”.

The middle way I actually militate for is one that I envisage only in the field I try to serve, i.e. communication. Although I only tackled here verbal communication, and vaguely mentioned other communication forms and means used by humans, what I propose as a middle way option targets all forms of communication and, in order to begin the argumentation, I invite the reader to think about the simple fact that one can speak about a deviation only as compared to something that would normally be the norm. In absence of the norm, the deviation would be a non-sense. In relation to the norm, the deviation reveals its distance from this one and they acquire together value and, thus, they can seduce.

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<sup>11</sup> Dan S. Stoica, *Comunicare publică. Relații publice (Public Communication. Public Relations)*, Iași, Editura Universității “Al.I.Cuza”, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Zachary John Young, *An Introduction to the study of man*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971.

## 5. The (huge!) distance between regularity and norm

And still, ....

The norm must exist, and not be imposed by usage. The ascertained regularities must make part of the shared knowledge of a linguistic community, not as immutable norms, but as guiding marks for the expression possibilities. Based on these ones, the practice of communication will be (or has to be) understood as matching the possibilities to the concrete communication situation and the discourse context at that particular moment. It is up to the speaker to decide whether this matching implies resorting to a deviation from the norm (and he will also be the one to bear the consequences of his decision). One will never be able to anticipate the correct choice, he will only determine *post festum* whether it was an appropriate discursive approach.

For this reason, the lessons about how to speak during a job interview (see, for instance, *Methods and Techniques of Written and Oral Expression*<sup>13</sup> by Ferréol, Flageul, 2007) or how to gain the sympathy of one's future in-laws at the first meeting are nothing more than stupid predictions regarding situations unknown both to the author of such works and the reader in search of practical counseling. Titles such as "Ten Steps to a Successful Job Interview" or "How to Impress Your Boss through Efficient Discourse" (without repeating the – invented! – example from the title) are but sad examples of wrong approaches. In the practice of communication one should bear in mind a single rule: "There are no rules!". Faced with the rules from the theories explaining the field of communication, any deviation will guarantee an impact higher than the resort to norms. I chose the word "impact" because nothing guarantees the efficiency of the discourse.

Finally, I bring to the fore an example I consider perfect for supporting the idea exposed in this study. In the fall of 2009, deputy Adriana Săftoiu made a demonstration at the tribune of the Romanian Parliament: she asked for the right to address the meeting and, once she reached the tribune, she enumerated a series of nonsense, unconnected sentences, and even random topics. At the end of her discourse, the people in the room applauded her, and the president of the meeting thanked her for her interesting intervention. At that point, Adriana Săftoiu gave a meaningful discourse unveiling to the audience that the previous discourse was made up of a series of nonsense sentences meant to highlight that no one in the Parliament listens to the things uttered by the person invited to give a speech. As underlined

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<sup>13</sup> Gilles Ferréol, Noël Flageul, *Metode și tehnici de exprimare scrisă și orală (Methods and Techniques of Written and Oral Expression)*, Iași, Polirom, 2007, translated from French by Ana Zăstroiu.

by Adriana Săftoiu's brilliant demonstration, the Parliament members take care of the shallow conveniences, applauding and thanking the person giving a speech, but without listening to what they were told. The speaker's intention was not to transmit any information by means of that nonsense discourse but simply to create the context of a demonstration regarding the lack of quality in the communication between deputies. This is why by saying something illogical Adriana Săftoiu said more than her colleagues had ever wanted to hear. Also, she implicitly and indirectly told us what she really meant to say.

## **6. In conclusion**

The same as in the case of weather forecasts or the status of economy, what is ultimately left for us in communication is to ascertain regularities and, based on them, build provisional norms. What is going to be validated in practice is nevertheless unknown. As in the case of Bono's lateral thinking, there must exist for everyone a starting period when the individual acquires (we would say fixed) norms and techniques but the real lateral thinking and the real communication appear when the individual uses, with easiness and by resorting to most unusual deviations, lateral thinking, and, respectively, the language.

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