

## AESTHETIC INTERFERENCES IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract:** *The paper presents some philosophical practices and categories that can be successfully applied in organizations, trends that come from the openness manifested by aesthetics, a field of philosophy that although initially was dedicated to the art and concept of beauty, now it shows an opening for everyday life, where the interpersonal communication is present. The application of concepts and categories specific to aesthetics was developed in the form of applied philosophical norms and concepts, and will positively influence the communication process that takes place in organizations at all its levels. The aesthetic concepts may be involved in other activities of the organization, such as marketing, building branding or in promotion and advertising actions, or active participation to building messages and press communicating, preparing the company's mission statement, organizing events, presence and promotion of the organization in online, activities that will take into account and compliance to some rules derived from aesthetics. The elements taken from aesthetics are the form of some categories, defined since antiquity by Aristotle, synthetically reformulated by Kant, and contemporary, they are adapted to other forms of the social application, in a new applied concept called the organizational aesthetics, which can be successfully introduced into the practice of any organization, with beneficial effects on the organization as a whole, but also on the community in their areas. The introduction of the new concept of aesthetics applied in organizations can have a wider area of implementation than that of organizational communication, such as social actions of the organization, with effects in developing the social responsibility applied in the community and to increase the organization's reputation, both within the community and in the business environment where it is located. The paper also indicates some adaptations of organizational communication for periods of crisis, with the recommendation to include in the communication process rules and concepts specific to applied aesthetics, in order to maintain the current trend of including them in business consultancy, offered in the form of specialized services of philosophical practice, through the new specialists called the organizational philosophical consultants. Other philosophical practices and the ethics applied in organizations are briefly presented in the paper, projected to support leaders and managers in making optimal decisions, which can benefit from professional organizational consulting and ethics services, which are promoted through a new specialization in Romania, that of the philosophical counselling and the consultancy applied in organizations and communities.*

**Keywords:** *organizational communication; aesthetic; marketing; philosophical consultancy; organizational aesthetic; crisis communication.*

**JEL Classification:** *D83; M10; M31.*

## 1. Introduction

The paper shows the role that aesthetics can play, as a philosophy of beauty, expressed by philosophers in the applied field of arts study, but extended to other fields, reaching an aesthetic seen as part of everyday life (Bejan, 2014) and through this philosophical approach, art has undergone a paradigm shift, in the sense of being seen as an investment, which brings us closer to the field of business, a reason to analyze whether aesthetics can be part of everyday human activities. Starting from the option of involving aesthetics in everyday life, the question is whether philosophy can be applied in the process of organizational communication, by introducing philosophical categories and work elements specific to aesthetics, and to conclude that it can be included in the communication process that has place within organizations, to amplify and support the message sent by the organization, in the various forms, becoming an integral part of the public communication of organizations or institutions.

The approach of the paper starts from the premise that, like interpersonal relationships which are based on communication, the organizations are concerned to build their own communication system, carried out in public, where the connection takes place with society but also with the state authority. This process of the organizational communication will be subject to formal and substantive requirements, which may also interact with some categories specific to aesthetics, as part of a philosophy applied to the organizational field. We consider identifying the interdisciplinary links that can be built between aesthetics, seen as a philosophical practice, and organization-specific communication, and will be presented their characteristics to emphasize the need for their interference, both used to optimize and improve the communication process in organization, carried out both inside and outside it.

## 2. The organizational communication: approaches, objectives, forms

The organizational communication is a process present in any economic entity or institution, being the subject to permanent requirements for development, improvement and adaptation to the evolution of the community and society where it is located. The analyzed communication is one based on interaction, which is based on people working within the organization, from the manager and management team, to all employees, who are concerned with lucrative activities, in accordance with the purpose and stated strategy of the organization.

We thus highlight some approaches to the importance of communication within an organization, as they have been presented by other researchers in the field, namely: the mechanistic approach, which aims to achieve strict objectives; another is the perspective of developed human relationships, which focuses on the person and not on goals; the perspective offered by information systems, another approach promoted by Karl Weich, which highlights the organization as a system open to the environment; the cultural approach, identified by Clifford Geertz and Michael

Pacanowski, which introduces the concept of culture, which is seen as a metaphor for organizational life, and the manager as an agent of change; as well as a critical approach, developed by Stanley Deetz, which notes the differences between information and communication, but also develops concepts specific to corporate organizations, such as strategy and consent, considered elements of a camouflaged control used by managers, or issues of employee involvement even the concept of democracy, if it can be used in organization (Griffin, 2019, 337-384).

Communication within an organization pursues the several main objectives, that can be expressed as follows: transmission of information, expression and facilitation of belonging to the common values of the organization, fostering the development of cooperation with other entities or institutions, identification of the role of the communicator communication skills, the ability to generate the collective identity of the organization, the acquisition of a system of rules, seen as rules of conduct of the communication process, as well as the development of relational perspectives derived from the communication process (Mucchielli, 2008, 85-87).

The main forms of organizational communication can be analyzed according to the destination of information, first is the internal communication, which develops interpersonal relationships between all employees, being based on the flow of information between them, being part of the management system of organization; and second is external communication, of the public or community type, which ensures the connection of the organization within the society (Haineş, 2008).

The strong organizations are those that can develop their own communication capabilities and structures, being concerned in defining their own public communication policies and strategies, aiming to constantly adapt to the requirements of the community and develop an organizational culture, which will increase the organization's reputation.

The designated department for the communication process, for internal and external areas, is the first structure of the organization that can use the facilities of practices inspired by aesthetics, which can take specific characteristics and categories of work, in order to frame the message and from an aesthetic point of view, which will amplify the quality and performance of the communication process. The argument we make is that the recipients of the information or message transmitted are always people, in different positions in the community, institutions or other organizations, and who react naturally to those stimuli that define the concept of beauty, considered to be the main the field of work of aesthetics, which has recently become an applied practice of philosophy.

### **3. Aesthetics, seen as a philosophical applied category**

Tudor Vianu is the Romanian philosopher who initiated the teaching of aesthetics in the Romanian university environment, presenting a course in which he defined aesthetics as "The science of artistic beauty", debating the theme from the point of view of a philosophical interpretation of the work of art, what are the aesthetic categories of beauty, stating that "the so-called aesthetic categories are therefore outside the aesthetic sphere of art" (Vianu, 2011, 130), which permanently supports

the usefulness of creating an aesthetic attitude necessary to receive the art. Through this approach, he places aesthetics in a broader dimension, going beyond the initially studied field of arts, and in a way anticipating the options that open up to identify specific categories of aesthetics in other fields, one being the organizational environment, where it can be applied in various forms.

In 1970 the German philosopher Theodor Adorno published in Frankfurt his reference book *Theory of Aesthetics* (Adorno, 1970) in which he resumes the theme of aesthetic categories, in the form of philosophical interpretations that frame art in society with the help of aesthetics, developing in his theory the concepts of natural beauty and artistic beauty, thus placed in the series of categories specific to aesthetics, studied by other philosophers.

The categories of aesthetics are general concepts defined by philosophers to express specific characteristics and evaluate works of art, in the form of qualities attributed to them being inspired by the categories of Aristotle (who identified ten such categories), later reduced by Kant to a number of four categories (Bejan, 2007). The concepts we refer to are considered to be human (Dufrenne, 1976, 151) not simple labels for recognizing the value of certain things, through which aesthetics can be distinguished as a form of philosophy, which is why we can conclude that they can be included in other applications intended for people, as recipients of beauty, in any form of its expression.

Aesthetics use the knowledge method of the aesthetic object, developing to the users a certain aesthetic experience, based on the observation of creation, which leads to the creation of an aesthetic attitude, being capable of an aesthetic valorization or even an aesthetic judgment to the object of art (Sabados, 2019), and these means can be extended in other fields of life, including in organizations.

#### **4. Discussion**

##### **4.1. Optimizing organizational communication by cultivating some aesthetic categories**

Given the aesthetic characteristics we referred to, the aesthetics can make the transition from the initial object of study, philosophy dedicated to the arts, to an applied philosophy that can now address other areas, one being organizational, where aesthetics can support to optimize the communication specific to an organization, by applying its concepts in some forms of communication, in order to improve the message and the way it is transmitted. One of the premises of this movement was the emergence in the 70s of a sociological practice specializing in the arts, called "sociological art", which led to the emergence of the theory of communication aesthetics, initiated by Fred Forest and Mario Costa, who launched the so-called *Manifest of the aesthetics of communication*, aiming to overcome the limits given by the field of arts and "the purpose of this aesthetic of communication is to show how new communication and information technologies can succeed in changing our relationships with reality, the time and space" (Bejan, 2007).

This movement makes aesthetics to be recognized in more and more fields, through communication, and which can easily take on aesthetic forms. Here the quoted

author refers to "social processes that have an expressive side in communication (advertising, personal development, leisure) and, on the other hand, the phenomena of aesthetic expression that perform a function of communication (media, shows, ceremonies social)" (Bejan, 2007).

An interdisciplinary link between communication and philosophical practices was presented by the philosophical counseling practitioner Sandu Frunză, who in his book (Frunză, 2019, 135-167) related to the human body, identified by the author as a powerful tool of communication, which he considers it to be in line with the self-concern identified with the philosopher Michel Foucault, and concludes on the role of philosophical counseling, stating that it "can facilitate the integration of the body into the development of technologies of the self". Based on these statements, we consider it appropriate to emphasize once again the role of applying aesthetic rules in the management and care of the body of the person participating in the transmission of a message, and which can contribute to improving its image; or the concept can be applied to the location, defined to be the host for the development of the communication process. Semiotics also deals with body language, as a part of communication that has been studied and debated by philosophers or practitioners concerned with improving the person's communication, using other means of communication than language, identifying the body as the language of communication, but also the image that can take on the same important role of human communication (Codoban, 2011). The process of communication with the help of the image, can take into account some aesthetic categories referred to in the work, through artistic inspirations generated by productions that use this communication vector by using the image, in various forms, either photography or film, and which may include and capture exceptional artistic elements, which may at any time be subject to aesthetic requirements having a source, the aesthetics dedicated to art.

Communication with aesthetic elements included in the content may also take place in the field of advertising or brand or marketing promotion, as activities organized within an organization, the activity which may operate separately from the communication department, and which may also have the task of organizing events specific to their field of action. Another sector of the company can successfully interfere with organizational aesthetics, when it is applied by those involved in work organization, and where aesthetics can influence the way of arranging workspaces or professional ones, by creating a benefic environment for people who works in such location organized on aesthetic principles and norms, aspects which will implicitly lead to increased productivity and increased satisfaction of the workers from these organizations.

A remark on these interferences that we deal with, comes from Bejan (2008, 53), through his interdisciplinary approach about the possibility of applying aesthetics in other fields of interest, expressing that "Undoubtedly, there are areas of beauty beyond art - nature, relationships between people, industrial activities of environmental design, design, fashion". The author emphasizing the role of aesthetic communication, as a concept part of the aesthetics of the communication society.

Aesthetic communication, as a new concept, was presented by Denmark researcher Ole Thyssen in his book about this topic, and his conclusion about organizations is they always used the aesthetic ideas to have a good communication, using the organizational aesthetics referring to create an aesthetic strategy for organizational communication (Thyssen, 2011), and this aims that can be to the attention of any manager. Returning to the application of aesthetics in organizations, another Romanian author, Rațiu (2016), writes about the concept of organizational aesthetics, including brief references to a new specialist called aestheticist, who has a certain accumulated aesthetic experience, can make specific judgments, show sensitivity and acknowledge beauty in all its forms, the author indicating at the end the importance of "the role of aesthetic elements in mediating action and in everyday life in organizations, as well as in their functioning". In the same context, a Romanian ethicist, when analyzing the moral rules underlying the application of ethics management in organizations, does so by distinguishing them from other norms, including the aesthetic norms (Mureșan, 2009: 164).

#### **4.2. Applications of the organizational communication in times of crisis**

The Covid-19 pandemic quickly generated a global crisis that affected all states of the world and surprised all of humanity, and the unprepared world's governments, in their fight to combat its effects, have taken some restrictive measures with present and future effects on people, both on national economies and on contemporary society as a whole. Starting from the negative impact generated by an unknown virus, we need to consider the challenges faced by all organizations, both those in the business environment, in the field of health or social services or care, and the institutions involved in managing the effects of the pandemic crisis, which were forced to take swift measures, leading to the creation of the social security conditions and the protection of people's health, by facilitating remote work, and maintaining a physical distance, which proved effective in combating the spread of the pandemic virus.

Leaders and management teams have been under great pressure to make quick and efficient decisions that will ensure the best possible functioning of the organization, having to adapt to restrictions that may affect long-term activity, through the economic effects generated by the cessation of activities, relocation of activities, increased costs generated by the pandemic crisis or rising unemployment, with effects throughout the community. In this context, we believe that the entire communication specific to a period of crisis must be in the attention of each organization, in order to limit the effects and the achievement of an efficient and operative communication, both inside the organization and outside.

An important role for achieving the effective communication is played by the communication department, which must be developed and encouraged to carry out a coherent and unitary communication process, in accordance with the management decisions of the organization, by creating clear information messages for employees, business partners, shareholders, stakeholders, community institutions, and which can be transmitted in various forms specific to the field, such as press releases, marketing communications or advertising promotions for

markets, socially responsible community actions have adapted to combat pandemic effects, public reports for institutions managing the effects of the crisis, with reference to its economic effects (unemployment, restriction of activity, costs for ensuring safety and protection of persons).

For internal communication, the organization will maintain some forms of communication that respect physical distance, making a quick adaptation to online communication, in which workers receive information by e-mail or video conferencing meetings, and the communication materials used can keep the same form: internal notes or managerial decisions, submission of operational reports on ongoing activities or proposed working meetings facilitated by online platforms, in order to maintain a permanent dialogue between the organization's management and those involved in the smooth running of the activity.

Consistent with this topic, we conclude for the need to use elements of aesthetics applied to communication in times of crisis, avoiding the elimination or non-application of aesthetic rules, due to urgency or severity of the effects of the crisis or events facing the organization, thus realizing the importance of applying minimum aesthetic rules on how to present communicators, organizing communication events or even in conducting crisis information and public communications, which must send a message of stability and control, which can be supported by application of the rules taken recently, about aesthetics applied in organizations.

#### **4.3. Philosophical practices and ethics applied in the organizations**

In order to highlight the increasingly real involvement of philosophical practice for the business environment and organizations working in this field, we return to previously published studies (Hațegan, 2018b, 2019, 2020b) that refer to the possibility of use by managers and leaders, the other methods and working tools provided by new specialists, in the form of organizational philosophical consulting or counseling services, or ethics applied, in organizations.

Starting from the premise that philosophy can be applied to managers, in previous research we have identified different various forms of work of philosophical practitioners with teams of managers, highlighting the practice of reflective leadership (Hațegan, 2020b, 41-70), dilemma training (Hațegan, 2020a) the theory of 4 C to clarify any problems (Hațegan, 2018a) or using contemplative practices that can be applied in the training and preparation of leaders.

In the field of applied ethics we find specialized services offered by specialists in organizational ethics counseling, which can assist organizations in developing codes of ethics and deontology, preparing the company's mission statement, applying the concept of ethical compliance or conducting an ethics audit, all these are activities can be applied in organizational and business area (Marinoff, 2002, 161-163). We support the importance of implementing and promoting these new services to the business environment, through service packages for personal development, similar to coaching services, individual or group counseling services, through professionals and facilitators specializing in philosophical counseling or organizational or ethical consultants, which use methods and tools specific to philosophical practices and ethics applied in organizations. Another involvement of

philosophical consulting for organizations is given by counseling activity for leaders, offered by specialists in communication specific for the field of social responsibility (Hategan, 2018c) and communication for communities, these new specializations that are generically grouped under the name: *Philosophy for community*, or the acronym *P4Com*.

## 5. Conclusion

We conclude by supporting the importance of introducing organizational aesthetics in the business environment, as a utility application that can successfully intervene in the communication process but also in other activities to promote the organization, by identifying and recognizing it in the community.

All these approaches presented refer to the openness manifested by philosophical practice, by taking over specific concepts of aesthetics, which will generate the appearance on the market of organizational consulting services of specialists in applied aesthetics, for organizations and communities, which may have specific skills of organizational consulting, using the concepts taken from aesthetics, specialists who can be called organizational aestheticians, and actively and qualifiedly contributing to the development of an aesthetic code to be adopted by the organization, as a form of aesthetic compliance within their community.

In the absence of these new specialists, we presented in the paper some adaptations of organizational communication for periods of crisis, with the recommendation to include in the communication process rules and concepts specific to applied aesthetics, in order to maintain the current trend of including them in the counseling services, offered in the form of specialized philosophical practice services, through new specialists also present in Romania, the organizational philosophical consultants or other philosophical practitioners.

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