



THE 12<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION  
REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

**Interdisciplinary Dimensions of Communication Science**

**On the Necessity of Free Speech in Science**

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**Abstract:** In this paper we aim at developing, through both John Dewey and R.G. Collingwood's work, one of Eugenio Coseriu's ideas regarding the necessity of free speech in science. In order to adequately approach such a problem, I thought it proper to refer, first of all, to the relation between thought and speech and afterwards to the relation between the freedom of thought and freedom of speech. John Dewey accurately demonstrates that there is no authentic freedom of thought in the absence of freedom of speech. Expression as such is necessary, since, on the one hand, in order for us to clarify our own ideas, we have to verbalize them (either in an oral or written form); on the other hand, we have to communicate them to the others, to deliver them to the public debate, with a view to verifying the accuracy of these ideas, so as to correct, confirm or reject them, etc. (When dealing with aesthetic issues, Collingwood has the same opinion.) Starting from the way Dewey discussed about the relation between intuition and expression, Coseriu refers in a similar manner to the relation between theory and inquiry of facts (as it happens in linguistics, for instance).

**Keywords:** John Dewey; R.G. Collingwood; Eugenio Coseriu; freedom of speech; freedom of thought; intuition; expression

**1.** In an ample interview, given in Romanian, Eugenio Coseriu refers to an ethical issue of science which he exposes as follows: "The professional duty of the one who knows something and who had some (scientific) information is to pass it to everybody. Keeping a piece of information to oneself, so as not to be found by one's colleague, is not appropriate. (...) The man of culture, who has to be a moral being, fully aware of the moral of culture, would immediately inform the others. He would say: «Here is what I found. New ideas. Here it is! Read it! We will immediately multiply it, so that everybody can read it». This is how I would do it, for example. (...) Especially when the information is scarce. Ideas are not lost when shared. *Science is a form of communication.* If I have an idea and I share it with you, it is not the same as giving you 100 lei and no longer having it." (Coseriu, 2004, p. 61).

**1.1.** Where does the morality of such an attitude stem from, or, better said, what exactly justifies the necessity to adopt such ethical behaviour? I assume there is no deontological code to include the following rule: *Scientists are obliged to share the others the valuable ideas which they acquired as a result of their own study or from other sources.* One could say, for example: "Well, on the one hand, I am in competition with others, and on the other hand, I do not trust the morality of some of my colleagues (What if they steal my ideas?)... By no means should I share the important thoughts that trouble me to the others, before publishing them in a book or an article!"

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1.2. Could this be interpreted as naivety on Coseriu's part? I doubt it. There is an ethics of science that does not need to be recorded or legislated in any way, since, as it happens in other cases, as well, it stems from the intrinsic, normal nature of cultural activities. I think that the principle formulated by Coseriu is related to the necessity of expression (as well as of its freedom), obligatorily correlated with the necessity of freedom of thought, when it comes to science and philosophy, but not only. I will try, in what follows, to clarify and develop this point of view by referring to both John Dewey and R.G. Collingwood's theory.

**2.** In his book, *Freedom and Culture*, Dewey states that, in some persons' case, scientific ethics has developed to such an extent that it is absolutely normal for them to share the discoveries made by them to other specialists from the same field of research (Dewey, 1989a, p. 116). However, as the American philosopher remarks, such a responsible attitude is not widespread enough, due to some internal and external circumstances which have influenced the development of modern science: on the one hand, the deliberate withdrawal of scientists from society in order to preserve the purity of science, defending it from practical needs; on the other hand, the persecutions (coming from Inquisition, dictatorships, etc.) which prevented them from freely performing their activity. (Dewey, 1989a, pp. 116-117)

**2.1.** Here is a self-evident quotation, in which John Dewey refers to these issues, fighting against certain prejudices and, at the same time, supporting the necessity of free speech: "It has often been assumed that freedom of speech, oral and written, is independent of freedom of thought, and that you cannot take the latter away in any case, since it goes on inside of minds where it cannot be got at. No idea could be more mistaken. Expression of ideas in communication is one of the indispensable conditions of the awakening of thought not only in others, but in ourselves. If ideas when aroused cannot be communicated they either fade away or become warped and morbid. The open air of public discussion and communication is an indispensable condition of the birth of ideas and knowledge and of other growth into health and vigor." (Dewey, 1963, p. 297) Dewey deals with two aspects here: (1) on the one hand, in order to clarify our own ideas to ourselves, we have to verbalize them (either in writing or orally), (2) on the other hand, with a view to verifying the accuracy of these ideas, in order to correct, nuance or confirm them, we have to communicate them to the others as well, we have to entrust them to public debate.<sup>1</sup>

**2.1.1.** Let us observe, first of all, that the irrepressible necessity of verbalizing our thoughts, with a view to make them clearer than they are inside our mind, is felt by simple speakers, as well. Otto Jespersen, a famous Danish linguist, provides some examples to illustrate the feminine verbal volubility. Jespersen is slightly ironic in his comments, but, in my opinion, many of the quotations provided are worth being taken more seriously: "A woman's thought is no sooner formed than uttered. Says Rosalind, «Do you know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak» (*As You Like It*, III. 2. 264). And in a modern novel a young girl says: «I talk so as to find out what I think. Don't you? Some things one can't judge of till one hears them spoken» (Housman, *John of Jingo*, 346)." (Jespersen, 1964, p. 253)

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<sup>1</sup> In Albert Einstein's case, probably due to his particular field of investigation, the first phase seems to involve a rather nonverbal semiosis (as Thomas A. Sebeok rightly remarks): "It would be well to recall that Einstein originally constructed his model of the universe out of nonverbal signs, «of visual and some of muscular type». As he wrote to a colleague in 1945: «The words or the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The psychological entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be "voluntarily" reproduced and combined». Later, «only in a secondary stage», after long and hard labour to transmute his nonverbal construct into «conventional words and other signs», was he able to communicate it to others." (Sebeok, 2001, p. 23).

**2.1.2.** Even the ancient Latin formula (frequently mentioned in the didactic literature), *docendo discitur*, refers, in fact, to the same thing: while teaching the others, you teach yourself (not only due to the fact that you have to prepare better, as a teacher, but also, because, by teaching, by speaking to the others, you get to master that specific subject).

**2.1.3.** Obviously, the relation between thought and speech is not one of equality (from a quantitative point of view). One may start from the premise that people should think more and speak less. Thus, the Romanian folk wisdom coined the phrase “*ce-i în gușă, și-n căpușă*” (literally: “what is in the crop is also in the tick”), which characterizes the sincere people, who say exactly what they think. The characterization is certainly a pejorative one and it must have stemmed from the usual life experience (it is not recommended to always say what you think), and not out of intuition or of a politician’s ability (according to Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand, language is meant to hide our thoughts, not to reveal them).

**2.2.** The same necessity to express thoughts and interior images is true for artists, as well. In Coseriu’s philosophy of language, art, unlike language, is not characterized by that universal called (by A. Pagliaro) *alterity*. An artist does not need the other people’s approval for the works he creates. On the other hand, the same artist feels the urge to express himself (by using a certain substance), because only in this way can he clarify himself the “artistic” content of his conscience.

This thing is held with relevant arguments by R.G. Collingwood, an important British philosopher. Even if he does not use a certain term to designate either «alterity» or its absence from the work of art, he explains very well how the communication between the artist and his public/audience takes place: “If what he wishes to do is to express his emotions intelligibly, he has to express them in such a way as to be intelligibly to himself; his audience is then in the position of persons who overhear him doing this. Thus the stimulus-and-reaction terminology has no applicability to the situation.” (Collingwood, 1958, p. 111) Thus, the receptors turn into some persons who “eavesdrop”. Collingwood resumes the matter later on, also mentioning the idea of an identity between art and language: “For *art*, on this theory, *is the expression of emotions, or language* (my emphasis, Cr.M.). Now language as such is not necessarily addressed to anyone. The artist as such, therefore, is a person who talks or expresses himself, and his expression in no way depends upon or demands the co-operation of an audience.” (Collingwood, 1958, p. 300)

If art is an internal form of consciousness, how come the artist feels the urge to communicate his experience to other people, as well? (“It seems to be a normal part of the artist’s work that he should communicate his experience to other people”. (Collingwood, 1958, p. 300) Why does he “pour” it into a concrete substance (in “something bodily and perceptible”)? Because this thing is also part of the artistic process: “...a good painter – any good painter will tell you the same – paints things because until he has painted them he doesn’t know what they are like” (Collingwood, 1958, p. 304).

Collingwood permanently points to the difference between authentic art and art as “craft”, aimed at entertainment, naming “technical theory” any approach targeted at the latter. That is why an artist keen on true art must not look for the public’s approval in what he does: “An artist need not be a slave to the technical theory, in order to feel that his audience’s approbation is relevant to the question whether he

has done his work well or ill.” (Collingwood, 1958, p. 313); and this, despite the fact that “every artist knows that publication of some kind is a necessity to him.” (Collingwood, 1958, p. 313)<sup>1</sup>

**3.** Coming back to John Dewey, I find captivating those places in his work in which he discusses about that phase (specific to those times of revolution in science), subject to a kind of unutterability, in which some ideas, some meanings, are only glimpsed, when the speech proper cannot be expressed fully, not even for the one who thinks them: “There is a peculiar intrinsic privacy and incommunicability attending the preparatory intermediate stage. When an old essence or meaning is in process of dissolution and a new one has not taken shape even as a hypothetical scheme, the intervening existence is too fluid and formless for publication, even to one’s self. (...) This process of flux and ineffability is intrinsic to any thought which is subjective and private.” (Dewey, 1958, p. 221)

**3.1.** Dewey is mainly interested in those thoughts which lead to a change of perspective in science (a “change of paradigm”, as we would call it today), such as, for example, the case of the scientific and philosophical revolution caused by Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859): “There is a difference in kind between the thought which manipulates received objects and essences to derive new ones from their relations and implications, and the thought which generates a new method of observing and classifying them. It is like the difference between readjusting the parts of a wagon to make it more efficient, and the invention of the steam locomotive. One is formal and additive; the other is qualitative and transformative.” (Dewey, 1958, p. 222)

**3.2.** Referring to freedom of thinking, Dewey draws attention to a common error, which probably comes from the individualist psychology, namely considering that thought is “a native capacity or faculty; all it needs to operate is an outer chance” (Dewey, 1963, p. 296). This mistake was, in fact, promoted by liberalism, as well: “It has been assumed, in accord with the whole theory of Liberalism, that all that is necessary to secure freedom of thought and expression is removal of external impediments; take away artificial obstructions and thought will operate.” (Dewey, 1963, p. 296)

Dewey is even clearer elsewhere: “He knows little who supposes that freedom of thought is ensured by relaxation of conventions, censorship and intolerant dogmas. The relaxation supplies opportunity. But while it is a necessary it is not a sufficient condition. Freedom of thought denotes freedom of thinking; specific doubting, inquiring, suspense, creating and cultivating of tentative hypotheses, trials or experimentings that are unguaranteed and that involve risks of waste, loss, and error.” (Dewey, 1958, p. 222)<sup>2</sup> In fact, another way of expression or, better, of exteriorization (since it is not only about verbal communication, this time) is putting ideas into practice, applying them, verifying hypotheses, etc. However, this form of exteriorization of the content of consciousness needs a certain kind of freedom, as well.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As Coseriu puts it, “there is an ethics of art, which implies, among other things, not to make any allowances out of reasons external to the artistic intuition and to create art as it should be created, which, in fact, is understood by any valuable artist, since he considers himself as a universal subject, who paints the way he should do it and who says: «This is how you do it!» and not «I paint this way because I am required this by the ones who pay me» - for example – or «This is what I am asked by the ones I need to flatter in order to gain a certain status in society» etc.” (Coseriu, 1994, p. 165)

<sup>2</sup> When it comes to politics (or to the theory of politics), the problem of communication, of public debate proves to be even more necessary: “Reference to the place of individual thought in political theory and practice has another value. Unless subjective intents and thoughts are to terminate in picturesque utopias or dogmas irrelevant to constructive action, they are subject to objective requirements and tests.” (Dewey, 1958, pp. 220-221).

<sup>3</sup> Dewey explains in his article *Philosophy*, published in 1934, how the freedom of speech of Ancient Greeks was possible: “Greece was distinguished from other ancient civilizations in that priests lacked political authority, having indeed become subordinate civic officers. Equally important was the fact that religious beliefs were early set forth in literature of great artistic

Knowing social phenomena is equally dependent on communication or dissemination, since only by sharing can such knowledge be obtained or tested. However, dissemination is not spreading information at random: “Seeds are sown, not by virtue of being thrown out at random, but by being so distributed as to take root and have a chance of growth. Communication of the results of social inquiry is the same thing as the formation of public opinion.” (Dewey, 1954, p. 177)

3.3. The idea of *alterity* “otherness” (in Coseriu’s terms; see above 2.2.; also cf. Munteanu, 2015), in relation with individual experience and freedom of speech, is excellently grasped by Dewey in the following fragment: “The experience has to be formulated in order to be communicated. To formulate requires getting outside of it, seeing it as another would see it, considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be got into such form than he can appreciate its meaning. Except in dealing with commonplaces and catch phrases one has to assimilate, imaginatively, something of another’s experience in order to tell him intelligently of one’s own experience.” (Dewey, 2004, pp. 5-6)

In fact, communication, fulfilled in its most elevated form, seems to manifest itself (according to Dewey) within true friendship. The way in which Dewey describes friendship evokes an old definition of it (attributed to Aristotle, for whom a friend is a soul living in two bodies), but the characterization made by Dewey is worth mentioning here for its beauty: “Friendship and intimate affection are not the result of information about another person even though knowledge may further their formation. But it does so only as it becomes an integral part of sympathy through the imagination. It is when the desires and aims, the interests and modes of response of another become an expansion of our own being that we understand him. We learn to see with his eyes, hear with his ears, and their results give true instruction, for they are built into our own structure.” (Dewey, 2005, p. 350)

4. There are, however, other ideas in Dewey’s work that are worth being signaled and fructified. For example, Eugenio Coseriu remarks, with regard to art, the difference of opinion between B. Croce and J. Dewey: “The identity of intuition and expression, according to Croce, is, in reality, a dialectical identity, that is, when you create your work, this creation turns back to intuition. The same happens with work, it becomes better by means of these movements to creation and from creation, by modifying and clarifying the intuition one gets to a total identity. An American philosopher (=John Dewey) would observe that art as experience and as creation is not indifferent. Thus, work is not, as in the case of Croce, only an internal work, but it is mainly exteriorization, namely as exteriorization is fundamental and it seems that, in general, this materialization is fundamental for all sciences of culture. And it is also true that one chooses the material that is convenient to intuition.” (Coseriu, 2004, p. 40)

Coseriu loved Dewey’s idea,<sup>1</sup> according to which *expression* refines *intuition*, since – applying it to science – the latter confirmed Coseriu’s conception regarding the relation between *theory and investigation of facts*.<sup>2</sup> In the sciences of culture, we start from sound intuition (Husserl’s *Urwissen*; cf. Sp. *saber originario*), namely from unreflexive knowledge which, in time, gets to be reflexive, justified knowledge. When researching certain facts, we start from a theory which, during investigations, gets to be confirmed, corrected, nuanced, etc.

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merit, never in the form of dogmas. The resulting intellectual freedom furnished the primary condition for the production of philosophy.” (Dewey, 1989b, p. 20).

<sup>1</sup> In fact, for Dewey, science is a work or product of art (Dewey, 1958, pp. 378-381).

<sup>2</sup> see (Kabatek & Murguía, 1997, pp. 144-145).

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