15. Challenges and Possibilities of Media-Based Public Dialogue: Misunderstanding, Stereotyping and Reflective Attitude

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the problems and possibilities of media-based public dialogue. The educational perspective is on the non-formal and informal citizenship education of adults. The chapter starts by defining the kind of dialogue suitable for pluralist democratic societies as a 'radical' dialogue. Then the focus turns towards two central problems that arise from the pluralistic nature of contemporary democratic societies where, nevertheless, we often tend to forget the plurality of our 'normalities' in our everyday encounters. These specific problems are stereotyping and misunderstanding. In the end, I propose a self-reflective attitude as a key to successful public dialogue in pluralist democratic societies.

Keywords: *'Radical' Public Dialogue – Mediated Encountering – Homeworld – Misunderstanding – Stereotyping – Self-reflective Attitude*

Introduction: Promoting a 'Radical' Public Dialogue

In the Nordic societies, many citizens, organizations, politicians, and other public figures actively call for a public dialogue. For example, the Director General for Finnish National Agency for Education Olli-Pekka Heinonen has publicly suggested that dialogue could even be part of the government program (see Heinonen, HS 31.7.2018). At the same time, the rise of radical political forces shows that dialogue also is urgently needed as a channel for expressing the conflicting interests and underlying values that could otherwise emerge into actual social conflicts. Contemporary democratic societies consist of social groups that differ from each other regarding their identities and values. In order the conflicting interests implied by the differing identities not to emerge into actual social conflicts or deep polarization, the different social groups must have a way to express their interests and opinions in a peaceful and democratic manner, without feeling their existence being questioned or even threatened by other members of their society (see Mouffe, 2005; Brandsma, 2017). A public dialogue could function as such a channel for expressing the conflicting interests in a peaceful way.

In Finland, for establishing dialogue in societal discussion, the Finnish Innovation Fund *Sitra* has started to foster dialogue by an ongoing project called "Timeout" (*Erätauko*) that aims at providing practical dialogue tools. This and other projects of promoting dialogue in the public sphere can be seen as non-formal and informal nation-wide adult learning programs that aim at a self-governed democratic citizenship education in practice. This form of citizenship education

in the form of learning-by-doing continues the line of rethinking the possibilities of ethical-political citizenship education (see Strand's Introduction). Public dialogue as citizenship education does not take place in the classroom but in the middle of the very action itself and by the citizens themselves, namely, in the public sphere as actual citizens aiming at contributing to the ongoing public discussions. These ideas as part of the Nordic model (see Strand's Introduction) of non-formal and informal education, based on the ideas of equality and inclusion, provide an applicable ideal for other societies.

However, a public dialogue functions only if it is not done by excluding the social groups whose basic values conflict with those of the other major social groups, possibly viewed by the latter as 'irrational'. During the rise of the right-wing populism in the Western countries in the 2000's and 2010', other members of the society often have had this irrationalizing attitude towards the voters of the right-wing populists (Mouffe, 2018). Indeed, it is not self-evident that a public dialogue could truly be inclusive and take place between social groups that differ very much from each other. There are multiple critical voices questioning the possibility or at least the reasonability of public dialogue. As is pointed out by one of the critiques of public dialogue, Chantal Mouffe, in a pluralist society there exist no rational solutions for the conflict of interests found out by the means of dialogue (Mouffe, 2005). She points to the theory of deliberative democracy, including theorists such as Jürgen Habermas (1981), Ulrich Beck (1997), or Anthony Giddens (1994), in which the public dialogue is characterized as proceeding rationally between equal and autonomous citizens having a common aim of finding consensus. According to her, this idea does not take into account the power relations, collective identities, and emotions or 'passions' that direct the debate. Rather, as Mouffe formulates it, this view is 'post-political' and leads the whole democracy in problems instead of establishing it (Mouffe, 2005). If Mouffe's views about dialogue were right, a project fostering societal dialogue skills of the citizens would not be a proper program of non-formal or informal citizenship education at all.

Nevertheless, unlike Mouffe seems to assume, a dialogue does not necessarily mean a process of rational deliberation aiming at consensus but understanding the others' viewpoints even if not agreeing with them. As Katarzyna Jezierska and Leszek Koczanowicz suggest (2015), this kind of a 'radical' dialogue takes into account the natural differences of social groups and creates a reciprocal situation and possibility for equal recognition precisely by not pushing the requirement of consensus or common theoretical knowledge shared by all groups and parties. This kind of a dialogue is possible also in the public sphere, if we are to remain the society democratic. In the cases where the discussion concerns disagreements caused by fundamental difference in values, for example, in the question of abortion, or factors that are part of someone's identities, finding consensus is not even a sensible option.

The possibility of public dialogue in democratic societies arises from the very nature of democracy itself. As Mouffe herself states, a functioning democracy requires what she calls a "conflictual consensus" on the ethico-political values of liberty and equality for all with dissent about their interpretation. This is because a democracy cannot treat those who put into question its very basic institutions as legitimate adversaries (Mouffe, 2005). This means that even if it is not possible to find a consensus about some fundamental factors in our lives, we must be able to conduct a functioning society. Mouffe's point comes close to the Rawlsian idea of *reasonable reciprocity* (here Mouffe is closer to Rawls than she admits even if their political-ontological

views are different), according to which citizens must be ready to propose and act according to shared standards of co-operation, given that other citizens also do (see Rawls, 2005, p. 49; Leiviskä chapter xxx). The Rawlsian idea of reasonableness necessary for the very existence of any democratic regime also includes a "burdens of judgment" (p. 54), referring to citizens' awareness that different, equally reasonable responses can be given to complex ethical and political issues from the standpoints of different doctrines. Accordingly, as Anniina Leiviskä notes, reasonable citizens recognize that they are not justified to discriminate against or exclude from participation other reasonable citizens (Rawls, 2005; see Leiviskä chapter xxx).[1]

This means that the existing democratic society already does require some common basis of shared democratic values, which implies both the possibility of and the need for a public dialogue for discussing the different interpretations of the constitutive values of the society. In order to remain democratic without universalizing the values and views of one group in the society, a functioning public dialogue should include a real possibility of having chosen between clearly differentiated alternatives and being able to discuss those alternatives (Mouffe, 2005). That is, a dialogue between different social groups must be able to express the agonistic character of the society, experienced as divided in 'us' and 'them' but not as divided in 'friends' and 'enemies' as in an antagonistic, i.e., violently conflicting society (see Mouffe, 2005; Brandsma, 2017).

In contrast to the Habermasian view, the 'radical' definition of dialogue takes the differences between social groups into account and creates a reciprocal situation and possibility for equal recognition precisely by not pushing the requirement of consensus or common theoretical knowledge shared by all groups and parties. Unlike in the theories of deliberative democracy, the dialogue as a mere act aimed at understanding others does not require refusing to acknowledge the agonistic dimension that is claimed to be constitutive of the political or societal sphere (see Mouffe, 2005; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Instead, adopting the idea of dialogue does not yet require adopting the ontological assumptions of post-structuralism as in Mouffe's theory, neither those of deliberative theory in Habermas' work. As is shown in *Democracy in Dialogue, Dialogue in Democracy: The Politics of Dialogue in Theory and Practice* (ed. Koczanowicz & Jezierska, 2015), dialogue as a practice can be developed and adopted without taking a stand on the ontological questions about the constituents of the society. Leading a dialogue does not necessarily mean overcoming the division of 'we' and 'them' but rather recognizing the division and encountering the 'they' as 'you' in discussion (Dybel, 2015; see Jezierska, 2011, p. 211). As Bart Brandsma (2017) has shown, the agonistic thought pattern of 'us and them' is in itself neutral and present everywhere. Thus, for the current purposes, we can leave the ontological questions behind Mouffe's and Habermas' theories untouched and concentrate on how radical public dialogue can function as a means to recognition and to a more just democratic society (as is discussed by Teemu Hanhela in the chapter xxx on Honneth).

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[1] The idea of reasonability does not refer to the Habermasian idea of rationality but is the very condition of a dialogue, that is, the reciprocal respect and allowance of disagreement on the interpretation and realization of the shared basic values.

How is a public dialogue to be promoted, then? In the everyday, public discussion and thus also public dialogue take place in the media, which adds some challenges to the dialogue, as the audience might be very large and the persons contributing to the dialogue often do not meet other parties in their physical presence. However, as the Head of Audience Dialogue at Finnish Broadcasting Company 'Yle' Sami Koivisto has repeatedly emphasized in his posts in Yle's website *Näkökulma* (https://yle.fi/aihe/yleisradio/nakokulma), a dialogue, especially a public dialogue, is not an easy task and requires some effort but is, nevertheless, doable. We just must be aware of the challenges and the ways to deal with those challenges.

In the sections that follow, I provide an insight of the two central problems of public dialogue in the media that arise from the pluralistic nature of contemporary democratic societies: these are stereotyping and deep misunderstanding. Based on the framework of contemporary philosophical research of dialogue, this chapter contributes to the discussion by the means of analyzing the classical phenomenological investigations of Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schutz, and Edith Stein, a fruitful resource not yet utilized in the current dialogue discussion. In the end, I propose a self-reflective attitude as a key to successful public dialogue in pluralist democratic societies.

Problems and Possibilities of the Media-Based Public Dialogue in Northern Societies

For the media-based public dialogue to be possible, the reciprocal communication and the will to mutual understanding necessary for dialogue must be possible to emerge by encountering others via media. However, the temporal distance between the moments of contributions to the discussion together with the social differences of the discussants increase the possibility of problems for dialogue such as misunderstanding and stereotyping. As recent media theoretical research suggests, we encounter more different persons via digital media than in our face-to-face encounters (Dubois & Blank, 2018). According to other recent social-psychological media studies, while activities in social media might strengthen our own social identity, the digital media also might result in prejudicing and stereotyping others, instead of coming to understand their actual views and feelings (Spears & Postmes, 2015). This is because, due to the volume and the speed of the contributions to the discussions, we might not be able to engage in deep discussions with those who do not share our views, as the views, opinions, and even arguments in the discussion flow in a massive information flood. For making sense of the public discussions in the society, it might be easier to think of others and judge what they say by the means of pre-given categories in one's social circles, possibly including prejudice and stereotypes of others, resulting in misinterpreting what another person coming from a different social group means. For example, instead of really trying to understand a person contributing to the large discussion about feminism, it might be easier to quickly scan the terminology the person uses and the social categories the person belongs to and to judge the person's contribution based on those factors external to her actual point. Thus, while the challenges of misunderstanding and stereotyping are not characteristic to a media-based discussion only, they are increased by the magnitude and the speed of the media-based public discussion.

In the following, I will first discuss the problem of misunderstanding and then the problem of stereotyping other groups, on the level of the constitution of our experience of normality. I will do this based on the Husserlian concepts of 'homeworld' (*Heimwelt*) and the concept of 'types' elaborated by Schutz. In the end, based on the Husserlian idea of reflection, I will propose the

self-reflective attitude to provide a way to have a successful public dialogue by becoming aware of one's idea of normality. The idea of self-reflection is relatively absent in the current dialogue discussion.

Misunderstanding Others Based on one's 'Homeworld'
It is very human not to be aware of the particularity of one's way of viewing the world, but to assume one's views and beliefs to be the right and 'normal' ones (a similar point about living in the everyday is also made by Heidegger, analyzed by Kirsten Hyldgaard in the chapter xxx). The environment in which we live and which affects our way to view the world and ourselves is what Husserl calls the 'homeworld' (Husserl, 2008), also called one's 'normality' by Dan Zahavi (2001). For example, a homeworld can consist of one or a few cities from a certain perspective including certain groups of people, such as Stockholm, Malmö and Copenhagen from the perspective of educated young adults. A homeworld consists thus of material as well as of ideal factors: it is a geographical and sociocultural environment. Because our homeworld is all that what we experience as normal, in our everyday, our homeworld as a structure of experience is invisible to us. Therefore, we do not come to see the foreign homeworlds as an 'alienworld', equal to our homeworld, as is suggested by Husserl (see Husserl, 2008), but we rather judge others coming from different normalities as if they came from our homeworld. For example, an educated young adult from Stockholm might not be aware of the perspective that her social-cultural environment provides and that makes her to perceive the views of an older person from the countryside from a certain perspective. By not understanding the context the other person is coming from, the young adult from Stockholm might easily misunderstand what the other actually wants to express.

Misunderstanding those coming from a different homeworld is thus partly caused by the way we understand the world. Understanding others is based on familiarity, that is, on something that we can associate with what we know already. This pattern is related to a phenomenon called 'typification': our homeworld consists of loose categories by which we make sense of what surrounds us, called 'types' (see Husserl, 1952; Schutz, 1971). We gain our types through our everyday experiences, relations with others and the culture in which we live. This means that we can only associate objects, situations and others around us based on what is normal for us. Misunderstanding others is thus caused by typification, but in the case of misunderstanding, the relevant types we project on others are false: we think we understand something because there seems to be something familiar to us, but we do not notice that the context of the original message has been different.

In our everyday communication based on our normalities and typicalities, the general assumption of reciprocal perspectives leads us to the apprehension of objects and their aspects known by us as if known by everyone (Schutz, 1982). Such knowledge is conceived to be objective and independent of our personal perspectives, typified as 'common-sense'. In the everyday, it is often assumed that others perceive the world approximately in the same way as we ourselves do, which in the most everyday cases is quite right but is problematic when assumed also of other social groups, communities, or societies. In our everyday experiences we often just take for granted that others understand what we say and vice versa. When they come up with something that we disagree with or just find odd, we rather find the fault in the other person (or maybe in ourselves) than in the difference between our homeworlds.

Of course, we also tend to misunderstand those living in the same homeworld but these misunderstandings are relatively easy to solve. A common homeworld provides a common ground for interaction, whereas coming from different homeworlds even within the same society, assuming that the society is pluralistic and divided, might mean that our experiences of a particular object have completely different meanings for persons coming from different homeworlds. According to Stein, in the same homeworld, we associate the words and concepts with the same contexts or things, and we have some sort of common understanding of how to behave and what to expect from others (Stein, 1917). When we lack this common ground for understanding each other, we lack a common context and a common language even if we used the same linguistic terms.

This is why creating "a common language" through a discussion aiming at understanding the other's views is what a dialogue coach and philosopher Kai Alhanen has proposed as one of the ways towards a successful dialogue (see Alhanen, 2019). In other words, what is needed is, as Moffe has put it, an explication of the shared symbolic space for discussion and a basic consensus of the grounding ethico-political principles in the society (Mouffe, 2005). In this way, a space in which different homeworlds meet can be created. This is crucial, because, as Schutz has argued, reciprocal understanding of some kind and communication presuppose a minimal "community of knowledge" and a common surrounding world (Schutz, 1975, p. 72). In the media-based public dialogue, this cannot be done in a face-to-face situation equally between all the participants but must be taken care of by those who are responsible for creating the media and the public sphere. Luckily, in times of the more interactive digital media consisting of the social media, such as Twitter, and the traditional media, these persons can be anyone who are willing to participate in the public dialogue and contribute to the public discussion, as all the users co-create the digital media (see Burbules, 2016). When there is a core of familiarity in what others communicate, every new grasp of their experiences, ideas, or feelings, etc., without pre-given categories as prejudices and stereotypes, provides us further possibilities of association and mutual understanding. However, the creation of 'common language' can be done only when becoming aware of the differences between our homeworlds. I will come back to this in the section 2.3 of the self-reflective attitude.

Stereotyping Others from Other Homeworlds
As mentioned above, stereotyping is something we do passively for making sense of our social environment, in the same way than we typify everything we perceive around us both in our social and physical surroundings. Roughly put, typifying means making sense of what we encounter, either things, ourselves or others. In order to make sense of the world around us, we need to perceive things and persons around us as being of a certain kind, as belonging to certain kinds of loose and vague, often non-explicated categories.

Typification is based on our former experiences and our sociocultural environment, i.e. what others tell us (Schutz, 1971; 1967). In Schutz' words, the "constructs of typified knowledge are of a highly socialized structure" (Schutz, 1971, p. 13). We acquire our types from our homeworld and typify everything based on these types, as they constitute the 'normality' for us. Therefore, we also typify others from the perspective of our homeworld. This holds also for understanding others around us, both as groups and individuals, near or far: we must form a construct of their typical ways of behavior, a typical pattern of their underlying motives and typical attitudes of their personality types, in order to make sense of their actions (Schutz, 1971; see

Gurwitsch, 1975). If others come from another homeworld, but we are not aware of it, we still typify them as if they were in ours. In other words, we expect something of them based on our own normality. This is particularly common if the society is assumed to be homogenous, as is often done in the Nordic countries.

However, if a social group lives in an everyday environment different from ours and we have never actually met any of them, we have no direct experiences of them. In the Schutzian terms, this means that we have never met them as 'consociates' but only as 'contemporaries' (see Schutz 1971; 1967). The first term refers to those who we meet personally, even if only for a short moment, and who thus exist for us as particular persons. The latter refers to those who only exist for us as being part of our society but as being anonymously 'out there', without ever meeting them in person. If we have never met someone from a certain social group, that group of people remains a mere group of 'contemporaries' to us, and thus our types of them are not based on our experiences of them but on the information that we get about them from others around us.

According to Schutz, types related to persons admit of varying degrees of 'anonymity', i.e. being detached from the experience of that particular person (Schutz, 1971).[2] As he argues, in increasing anonymization of the typifying construct the general types supersede the subjective personal types based on the experiences of a particular person. In complete anonymization, the individuals become interchangeable and the general types refer to "whoever" defined as typical by the construct. We no more can perceive a person included in the group as a particular and unique person, but as 'anyone' of that group, interchangeable with anyone else of 'them'. Schutz calls this the situation of "increasing anonymity of the relationship among contemporaries" (p. 17). If there is a social group of people we have never met but have gained impersonal information of them only through our sociocultural sphere, we construe an image of them as something we assume to know but about which we actually have no idea. Thus, they appear to us as a group defined by something that we believe dominates their personality and actions. If it is commonly believed in our homeworld that a group of people, e.g. a minority or a political group very different from one's own, is of a certain kind, we might assume that those traits are something that every one of them has as a defining trait in their lives. If they are not part of our everyday social encounters, we do not associate them with the experiences we have of our lives, that is, we do not perceive them as casual human beings and unique persons different from each other but as a group that differs from an ambiguous 'us' as a whole.

The problem with stereotypes is that they are like any other types by which we make sense of our experiences. The difference is that we have never experienced the lives of those we stereotype but we anyway need to make sense of them in some way, and thus we rely on the small bits of information we have gained via media, be it social, digital, or traditional media. When not being aware of perceiving others by stereotypes, we view the stereotyped others not as unique individuals but superficially as representatives of the groups we assume they belong to. We thus

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[2] Here I refer to Schutz' concept of anonymity that differs from the one that Husserl uses. For Schutz, anonymity takes place within our normality whereas for Husserl, anonymity refers to total unknownness which can even not be known as foreign.

think we know who they are, while they actually have a different homeworld with different social environment, views, personal histories and even values, even if geographically they would live near us in the same country or in the same city.

Viewing others through stereotypes challenges our possibilities of public dialogue. Viewing them as representatives of their stereotyped group and not as particular persons just coming from a social group different of ours strongly affects the way we see them and interpret their contributions to the discussion in the media. In other words, when stereotyping others, we project into their words something they might not really mean, or we are not able to understand them as deeply as our peers in our own homeworld.[3]

However, the problem of stereotyping might even resolve itself if we are willing to engage in dialogue. When encountering others reciprocally in person (either physically or in a media-based discussion), they become our consociates instead of mere contemporaries, and thereby we have the possibility to view them as individuals and not as a mere group of anonymous representatives of that group (cf. Schutz 1975; 1971). This is because we can encounter others as other persons also through media while we experience them through something they have produced, e.g. vlog or Twitter posts, and can thereby gain an idea of their experiences (see Stein, 1917). In other words, while the digital media has increased some risks of public discussions, the various media platforms especially in social media also provide us the possibilities to come to reciprocal contacts with one another. This might require more effort in a media-based public dialogue than in a private dialogue face-to-face but it is nevertheless possible. For this, as I suggest in the next section, we need a self-reflective attitude.

The Self-Reflective Attitude in a Radical Public Dialogue
As the tools for a successful dialogue, the Finnish Innovation Fund *Sitra* proposes reflection on the participants' roles, on the methods of the discussion and on the practical matters such as the place and time for the discussion. However, what is lacking is self-reflection related to one's social environment and personal history influenced by that environment. The latter might be difficult to do in an ongoing dialogue where we immediately answer to each other and thus do not always feel that we have the moment for self-reflection. Nevertheless, in a dialogue that takes place in the media, self-reflection is necessary. This is because understanding others from different normalities requires a different attitude than understanding someone living in the same homeworld with us. This means that we must be more aware of where we are coming from in order not to misinterpret others or to say something that undermines the experiences of other social groups. In the media-based public dialogue, there often are very many participants from different social backgrounds, and while we cannot mutually correct each other's misinterpretations and stereotypes all the time because of the magnitude of the discussion, we must be careful from the very beginning with our judgements and reactions concerning the others. In the following, I will clarify the idea of the self-reflective attitude, based on the Husserlian idea of reflection.

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[3] This is a problem especially in the public dialogue where we do not have the possibility to see each other's bodily, e.g. facial, reactions and do not have the possibility to immediately respond to others and correct their misunderstandings.

According to Husserl, the point of the reflective attitude is to make us aware of our experiences, that is, to move from mere having of conscious experiences (*Bewußthaben*) to making oneself aware of one's experiences (*Bewußtmachen*) (Husserl, 1956, p. 262).[4] By becoming aware of our experiences themselves and their content, we take distance to our naïve assumptions. For Husserl, most of the everyday we are "living in the acts" of our activities and are directed merely toward the states of affairs being brought about by these activities, not toward these activities themselves (Husserl, 1956). By turning to the reflective attitude we no longer are immersed and carried along by our naïve assumptions; In Schutz' words, "I step out of the stream and look at it, or, as Dewey expresses it, I have to stop and think" (Schutz, 2011, 139).[5] By turning towards our own ways of experiencing others and the world, we have the possibility to become aware of our perspectives and, at least to some degree, of the contingencies of our homeworld.

This kind of a reflective attitude is crucial for a successful dialogue, because a 'radical' dialogue aimed at understanding others requires an awareness of one's own perspectives and viewpoints (this is not always required if the goal of the discussion is merely to find consensus) as well as of the difference between one's own 'homeworld' and those of the others'. By becoming aware of one's own homeworld as one normality among many, we have the possibility of coming to understand the differences and the similarities of our viewpoints and perspectives, and thereby of coming to the point where a dialogue is possible.

Our homeworld and types are not created in the present but are the result of our whole lives. For Husserl, the general principle of the reflective attitude is therefore to grasp the meaning of one's past experiences in the present (Husserl, 1976, §6). This means moving away from taking information, values, etc. merely as they appear to us in the present, to disclosing the various and manifold experiences and social relations that have led to the present way of experiencing the world (Husserl, 1939, §24a). We are historical beings, which means that our experiences are 'sedimented' including ideas and expectations based on our previous experiences. For Husserl, this means that we bear our tradition and both personal and cultural history in our daily lives (Husserl, 1976, §15). By reflecting on our present experiences and ideas, we are able to realize the types and assumptions in how we experience others. We thereby realize that much of our knowledge is socially derived and distributed (Schutz, 2011, p. 140). That is, most of our ideas about the world is based on information that we have got from others or through their work in a certain socio-cultural context.

In addition to disclosing the sediments of our experiences, self-reflective attitude also makes explicit our evaluations. According to Husserl, by turning to the reflective attitude we can disclose our acts of evaluation and find out that the evaluative predicates, such as "nice", "beautiful", "bad", etc. are not found in the objects (in the widest sense) themselves but rather in our way of perceiving those objects (Husserl, 1952, §6). By becoming aware of the distinction between the

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[4] The Husserlian idea of reflection comes close also to the Deweyan model of reflective thinking.

[5] Husserl distinguishes the reflective attitude in the natural attitude and the one in the phenomenological attitude starting with the act of epoché, i.e., the bracketing of all positing of existence and reasonably questionable claims (Husserl, 1956, p. 259). In the context of public dialogue, I concentrate merely on the former because public discussion and thus also public dialogue take place in our natural attitude of everyday.

object, e.g., other persons, and our evaluative acts, e.g., experiencing others as interesting, we become aware of the contingency of our evaluations: since the value of the object is not in the object itself, the object could be evaluated also otherwise. In the context of the public dialogue, this means that when becoming aware of our evaluative acts on others we can reflect on those acts and detach our evaluation of others and the others themselves. By taking a self-critical reflective attitude we can thus turn towards our own evaluative acts and presuppositions and find out what assumptions and evaluations are unjustified, i.e., not based on the communication with the other but on our projections on others.

Analogously with becoming a self-conscious 'I' only in relation to the other, we become aware of our typifications, normalities, and assumptions only against another homeworld that we encounter as embodied in the others coming from a foreign homeworld. This means that what enables us to adopt the self-critical reflective attitude is the communication with others. Dialogue as a form of discussion or debate is hermeneutical by nature: we come to understand others little-by-little in the course of the dialogue, and having the dialogue in the first place opens up the possibility to encounter others by having ourselves reflective attitudes towards our presuppositions and assumptions. Thereby the dialogue can become more and more successful in its course. As Aron Gurwitsch has argued, in order the social relations to function, we must understand each other and interpret the objects around us in a similar way, at least to the extent to which such similarity or even identity is required for practical purposes of cooperation and collaboration (Gurwitsch, 1975, p. XXII). In the course of a dialogue, this common basis for communication is created as 'a common language' in the sense that we can come to realize the relevant linguistic terms and manners that we use differently and associate with different things.

In the media-based communication, especially in the public sphere where the discussion has always already begun, a 'common language' cannot be created in the beginning of the discussion but can be improved through the reflection of every contributor when they receive others' contributions and contribute themselves to the discussion. In order not to misunderstand others, we need to reflect on our own stereotypes and the ways we perceive the others' work as well as on the terminology with which we answer them. This means having a self-critical attitude towards our own presuppositions, in order to 'create a common language' by every contributor in their quarter. In other words, we should reflect on how to contribute to the discussion in the way that would not cause misunderstandings from others' part, based on how they have contributed to the discussion (what terms they have used, how to interpret their message in a friendly way, with what do we associate those persons with and based on what, etc.).

In addition, there is also an ethical dimension in the self-reflective attitude. For Husserl, critical thinking and responsibility require one another. The critical reflection aims at disclosing the presuppositions and uncertainties in our thinking caused by the sedimentation of our experiences (Husserl, 1976, §15). Reflecting on our own uncertain, i.e., reasonably questionable, assumptions means to critically examine our ideas about others and the world in more general. The critical reflective attitude is thus necessary for a fruitful dialogue: in a dialogue, we need to take response of how we encounter others, and in order to minimize the risk of misunderstanding we must reflect on our assumptions about those with whom we are communicating. In order to keep up the dialogue the parties must take responsibility for their own ideas about others in

order not to misunderstand them or express themselves in the way that would cause misunderstandings or be insulting.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the problems of misunderstanding and stereotyping in the media-based public dialogue. Based on the work of Jezierska and Koczanowicz, I have defined dialogue as 'radical', aiming at mutual understanding between social groups but not necessarily leading to or even directed at consensus or shared theoretical knowledge. In order to lead a public dialogue, for being able to understand each other, we should create a common basis for the discussion, especially if we are living in different 'homeworlds'.

I have suggested that we can decrease the two problems of public dialogue, misunderstanding and stereotyping, by adopting a self-critical reflective attitude towards our own ideas about others we encounter in the media. This attitude is momentary and a break from our naïve everyday attitude towards the world and others. In our everyday lives, we often assume that others know or at least should know the same things that we do, and therefore in the everyday we may not consider others to live in a different normality. By acquiring the self-critical reflective attitude, we can remain open towards others and not unjustly project our own assumptions and prejudices on them but instead learn about and from them little-by-little.

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