FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION RAFAEL CAPURRO'S CULTURAL APPROACH TO SELF-FORMATION ETHICS

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Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi makna kebebasan berpendapat dalam tulisan-tulisan Rafael Capurro yang terdiri dari tiga bagian. Bagian pertama akan membahas prinsip kebebasan berbicara yang tertanam dalam budaya Barat dan Timur. Bagian kedua dari artikel ini akan berfokus pada problematika kebebasan berbicara dalam komunikasi digital, terutama dalam hal privasi dan kemanusiaan yang berkembang. Kehidupan sosial yang harmonis dan perkembangan jiwa manusia akan dianggap sebagai argumen mendasar dari etika pembentukan diri dalam komunikasi digital. Kemudian, bagian ketiga dari artikel ini akan menelusuri beberapa implikasi dari penilaian Capurro tentang etika pembentukan diri sebagai argumen dasar untuk kebebasan berbicara. Pada bagian terakhir, akan dibahas kontribusi pemikiran Capurro dalam mengkritik komunikasi digital yang pragmatis dan memabukkan.

Kata kunci: Komunikasi Digital, Etika Pembentukan Diri, Parrhesia, Rafael Capurro, Budaya Barat dan Timur, Wuwei.

Abstract

This article aims to explore the meaning of freedom of speech in Rafael Capurro's writings. For this purpose, the article consists of three parts. The first part will deal with the principle of freedom of speech which is embedded both in Western and Eastern cultures. The second part of the article focuses on the problematization of freedom of speech in digital communication, especially in cases of privacy and flourishing humanity. A harmonious social life and the flourishing of the human soul will be regarded as fundamental

arguments of self-formation ethics in digital communication. Then, the third part of the article will trace out some of the implications of Capurro's assessment of self-formation ethics as a basic argument for freedom of speech. In this final section, a discussion concerning the contribution of Capurro's thoughts on criticizing pragmatic and intoxicant digital communication will be considered.

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INTRODUCTION

"Communication between human beings is the *modus procendendi* through which a society exists" (Voegelin, 2000: 47). However, it is not impossible that our search for "a moral basis for communication" (Voegelin, 2000: 48) in today's democratic society indicates moral confusion. Thus, Eric Voegelin stated in his essay entitled *Necessary Moral Bases for Communication in a Democracy*, published in 1956. The essay is a reflection on the progress in technology communication such as wire, radio, and radar, which were used by the military in World War II, and other technologies that were used by politicians to mobilize the mass. He finds out that the progress of communication technology does not go hand in hand with the development of moral awareness. The higher the level of technological progress, the farther we move away from the notion of substantive communication, which unfolds and builds personality and social entities. He concludes that instead of unfolding and building personality and social entity, communication turns into "a pragmatic way in which people are induced to behave in such a manner that their behavior will agree with the communicator's purposes" (Voegelin, 2000: 48).

What Voegelin predicted 80 years ago was justified in another way by Peter Sloterdijk. Looking at the progress of the media over the last 20 years, he writes:

"Everything must begin quite innocently. People read the newspaper, believe that they are absorbing things that 'interest' them, listen to the radio from the twenties on, hurry on along overpopulated streets full of advertising and display windows with enticing offers. They inhabit cities that are nothing other than are constructed, covered by transportation and sign networks that direct the streams of people." (Sloterdijk, 1987: 509-510).

Just like Voegelin, Sloterdijk anticipates the rising of moral nihilism in our society in which there is "no absolute moral values" in our society (Sloterdijk, 1987: 511). Such kind of moral nihilism is rooted in the media because the messages sent by the media are completely empty.

The emergence of digital technology in the last 20 years has not reduced our pessimism towards the ethics of communication. Although it helps in connecting people from different cultural and racial identities in virtual communities (Negroponte, 1995: 165-170), some thinkers such as Neil Postman (1985: viii), Samuel Greengard (2015: 20), and Rafael Capurro (2017: 217) emphasize that digital technology has a problematic effect on all cultures and civilizations. As far as it opens access to all information, where all things are open and disseminated to all, ethical norms such as privacy, which were previously regarded as moral guides, are now questioned. For this reason, it is no exaggeration to say that redefining new ethics for digital communication, which gives space for life, social relationships, and interpersonal relationships, is of the utmost urgency (Dua, 2022: 227-242).

This article deals with the problem of a moral basis for freedom of speech in digital communication as one of the great themes in Capurro's writings. Capurro first introduces this topic in his articles *Ethical Challenges of the Information Society in the 21st Century* (2000: 257-276) in which he proposes intercultural dialogue, and *Towards an Ontological Foundation of Information Ethics* (2006: 175-186) in which he seeks to discern the ontological dimension of digital communication. In both articles, he posits that freedom of speech is

the moral principle of information ethics, which can be found in our understanding of Western and Eastern cultures.

This thesis is more convincingly defended in his book *Homo Digitalis*. Here, Capurro defends digital communication ethics as social ethics concerned with human life in an information society. Looking at the progress of digital communication and the people's right to participate in it, Capurro (2000: 260) argues that we are living in a society in which the Internet transforms everyone into *a homo nuntiator*, acting as a producer, sender, and receiver of messages. The freedom of speech that includes the courage to state the truth in Western culture and the wisdom of life in Eastern culture is the ethical basis for human flourishing. This kind of intercultural morality is the moral basis for a digital society. In a phenomenological way of speaking, in an information society, digital mediums such as computers become the "glue" (Capurro, 2017: 217) that unites humans as being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962: 62).

This paper will discuss Capurro's cultural approach to understanding the meaning of freedom of speech in digital communication ethics in three parts. The first part discusses freedom of speech as the ethical basis of digital communication. Following Foucault's ideas on freedom of speech, Capurro shows that it has a cultural basis in Western culture and, in a certain way, in Eastern culture. In both cultures, freedom of speech has a functional meaning; that is, it develops the human spirit and social life. In the second part, this article discusses the problematization of freedom of speech in a digital society. In this case, freedom of speech has its limitations in dealing with the most intimate parts of human life, such as privacy and disease. The harmony between social life and the life of the individual soul is a fundamental element of self-formation ethics in digital communication. After discussing this cultural approach, the third part of this article will discuss Capurro's contribution to criticizing pragmatics and intoxicants in today's digital communication. My criticism of Capurro's proposal will be taken into account in this closing part.

DISCUSSION

1. **Freedom of Speech** *(Parrhesia)*, **Truth, and Wisdom**

Capurro's information ethics are based on his understanding of cultural norms of communication in both Western and Eastern traditions. However, instead of describing the communication norms of each culture, he problematizes the moral norms that justify human communication (Capurro, 2017: 128). Based on this methodology, he argues that although Western culture prioritizes direct speech and Eastern culture prioritizes indirect speech, both cultural practices of communication are based on the same norms. Freedom of speech, truth, and wisdom.

To understand the deepest norms of Western cultural communication, Capurro (2017: 133) follows Foucault's study of *parrhesia*, freedom of speech, in his lecture entitled *Discourse and Truth*: *The Problematization of Parrhesia*. Foucault (1983: 2) explains that this term was first used by Euripides (484-407 BC), an ancient Greek writer. Etymologically, *parrhesia* comes from the words *pan* (to say everything) and *rhema* (that which is said). Therefore, *parrhesia* can mean saying everything that comes to mind (Foucault, 1983: 2). *Parrhesia,* then, is understood as a personal, moral ability to speak what one thinks frankly, not hiding the truth but opening the heart and mind to others. Foucault explains that *parrhesia* is not the virtue of a government official, but the virtue of an ordinary citizen who has knowledge of the truth and the courage to convey it to the public with the aim of helping people develop their souls. A person who has this ability can challenge higher authorities and society. Foucault (1983: 2) anticipates that the life of a person who has "commitment" to *parrhesia* is always in danger and "involves risk".

Foucault (1983: 5-6) mentions Socrates–as written by Plato–as *parrhesiates* (a man who has commitment to *parrhesia*) because he dares to face the danger of speaking truth against the majority in the Athenian agora to encourage young people to grow according to *sophon*/wisdom. In Foucault's interpretation, what is meant by truth here is not determined by clear and distinctive evidence, as stated

by Rene Descartes, but by "the moral qualities that are required. Firstly, to know the truth, and secondly, to convey such truth to others" (Foucault 1983: 3). Socrates possesses these moral qualities and dares to risk his freedom. Telling the truth becomes a moral imperative for *parrhesiates*, and the basis of *parrhesia* is the reason that allows dialogue between equals.

The principle of *parrhesia* became problematic when the democratic institution of Athens reached its peak. Foucault understands that democracy is a form of government which is built on a constitution and which acknowledges the equal standing of the people before the law. Based on this law, people have *isonomia* (the right of every citizen to express an opinion) and *isegoria* (citizen equality before law). According to Foucault (1983: 29), *parrhesia* has a different character than *isonomia* and *isegoria*. For Foucault, *parrhesia* is not a terminology of a democratic institution, because there is no law that protects *parrhesiates* from being punished for what they say. Even democracy does not have the capacity to give birth to people with special qualities to speak the truth (Foucault, 1983: 27).

For this reason, Foucault reveals that Plato does not criticize *parrhesia* at all when he criticizes democracy. In the dialogue between Socrates and Adeimatus, Plato writes: "Democracy comes about when the poor are victorious, killing some of their opponents and expelling others, and giving the rest an equal share in ruling under the constitution, and for the most part assigning people to positions of rule by lot.". Then Socrates asks, "First of all, then, aren't they free? And isn't the city full of freedom and freedom of speech (*parrhesia*)? And doesn't everyone in it have license to do what he wants? … And where people have this license, it's clear that each of them will arrange his own life in whatever manner pleases him" (*Republic*, 557b in Plato, 1969: 1168). In Foucault's interpretation, even though *parrhesia* can produce corrupt leaders, the source of the problem lies not in *parrhesia* but in democracy. He explains that, in a democracy, everyone thinks and speaks what they want paying no attention to the *logos* that unites the city. In this way, Foucault

(1983: 31) wants to say that *parrhesia* is different from freedom of speech in a political perspective. *Parrhesia* has its relation to life and personal relationships and at the same time becomes a moral ability to speak the truth.

According to Capurro (2017: 136), *parrhesia* is dominant in Western traditions which emphasize the freedom of direct speaking, but not totally. Behind the tradition of direct speaking, Western people appreciate indirect speaking. Capurro refers to Leo Strauss's essay entitled *Persecution and the Art of Writing* to explain this phenomenon. Freedom of speech in public discussion has been practiced for more than 300 years in the Western world. However, during this long period of time, the pre-modern thinkers have their own way of writing the important truths, in facing state and religious persecution. In Strauss' words, their writings are more "esoteric" (which is understood by the inner group) rather than "exoteric" (which is understood by the public) (Strauss, 1988: 31). For the sake of the public, it is wise that writers do not tell the esoteric truth to the public. Strauss argues that "Exoteric literature presupposes that there are basic truths which would not be pronounced in public by any decent man, because they would do harm to many people who, having been hurt, would naturally be inclined to hurt in turn him who pronounces the unpleasant truths" (Strauss 1988: 36). *Parrhesia,* then, has its limitations in public life.

Capurro finds this practice common in Eastern cultures. In these cultures, freedom of speech is expressed in indirect ways. He quotes Confucius (551-479 BC): "Cute words and attractive faces seldom unite with morals" (Capurro, 2017: 139). In Capurro's interpretation, the goal of ethical teaching is action, not speaking. Therefore, the teacher will give instructions not by talking but by doing, not by conveying knowledge about morals, but by arousing students' attention to think about morals. In this ethical teaching model, every student who wants to attain a teacher's moral lesson must be open to the teacher's indirect conversation. Both in the case of persecution and in terms of moral education, writers and students should adapt to the structural power of the messenger for the sake

of avoiding conflict and creating harmony. By focusing on moral rules, Confucius displays the courage to adapt to the world. But the Eastern people know that the world itself is eternal. How may one adapt to the world?

Capurro (2017: 141) draws our attention to Daoism. "Man could find another way of indirect speech in Daoism". Unlike Confucius who is concerned with the problem of morality, Daoism talks about something beyond morality, something that has to do with the problem of how "to nourish" life and the world, that is *Dao* itself. What is *Dao*?

The first sentence of *Tao-Te-Ching* expresses the powerlessness of the language. "The *Dao* that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging *Dao*" (Tse, 2008: 1). Literally speaking, *Dao* means "the way" and in the widest sense, an absolute reality. Lin Yutang (1949: 41) puts it in the following words: "The *Dao* that can be spoken is not the eternal *Dao*." Or, in Martin Buber's (1999: 46) interpretation, "The name that can be named is not the eternal name." Capurro understands that *Dao* has its own way. "If one does not regard it as necessary, whose reality is experienced in a unified life but as something separate, then one finds nothing to regard" (Capurro, 2017: 141). Everyone must follow his own way and the way of the cosmos, without having to impose his narrow views.

Consequently, the first wisdom of Daoism is *Wuwei*, which means *to be silent*, or *to refrain from letting reality become actual*. Some Western thinkers understand it as "non-action" (Buber, 1999: 54) or "listening, respecting, trusting, and being open to hidden rhythms" (Rogers, 1994: 224). Behind *Wuwei* lies doubt over the words, and behind the doubt lies the longing for conversation and relationality. The relationship between *Dao* and *Wuwei* is expressed metaphorically by Zhuangzi (2013: 233) in the following expressions:

"The fish trap exists because of the fish. Once you've gotten the fish you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit. Once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning. Once you've gotten the meaning,

you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can talk with him?"

According to Capurro (2017: 143), indirect speaking in Daoism is a strategy not primarily to be silent but trying to be wise. Its goal is to build relationality and coexistence with oneself, others, and the world around us.

Freedom of speech, then, is rooted in the human search for truth and wisdom. Capurro (2000: 266) explains that in Western culture "freedom of speech and writing cannot be separated from freedom of thought." But thinking is a social process; it cannot be separated from the medium, both printed and digital, through which thoughts can be shared. Quoting Immanuel Kant, Capurro (2000: 266) writes: "How rightly would we think if we would not think together with others to whom we can communicate our thoughts and they theirs." Communication makes possible the social process of thinking. In the perspective of Eastern culture, parrhesiatic subjects who have freedom of speech would organize their lives wisely in society.

2. Towards the Self-Formation of Ethics in Digital Communication

Digital communication has been built on the imperative that reads: "Share everything with anyone!" (Capurro, 2017: 161). With this imperative, the internet created cyberspace which Rheingold (1994: 5) identifies as the "conceptual space where human relationships, data, wealth, status and power are made manifest by people using computer-mediated communication technology."

This positive role of the internet is expressed in another way by Alex Honneth. At the end of his book *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life* (2011), he (2014: 300) writes that the internet is an instrument of "transnational communicative communities" which consist of non-governmental organizations concerned with the problems of environment, of community empowerment, and protection of civil rights. These new

communicative societies are based on the awareness of the interconnection of nations in solving social and environmental problems that cannot be solved on a national scale. The internet opens the national boundaries and allows everyone into the public discourse as to global problems which cannot be overcome at the national level.

By creating a space for public discussion which involves transnational citizens, however, the internet can bring new ambiguity to the communicative society. Honneth (2014: 300) writes, "The internet allows physically isolated individuals to communicate simultaneously with a large group of people around the world, whose number is essentially only limited by the processor capacity and the attention span of those involved." With the phrase "whose number is essentially only limited by the processor capacity and the attention of those involved", Honneth wants to say that the internet is not a neutral instrument. It functions as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the internet can "create a forum for exchanging information on any number of topics" (Honneth, 2014, 300), construct a transnational society built on "social freedom" (Honneth, 2014: 132)—where one's freedom and identity are no longer an individual reality but a social reality, and become a medium of communication in which every individual is recognized as a member of a society which is based on a foundation of morality, love, solidarity and law. On the other hand, the internet can destroy national political culture when everyone involved lacks a rational commitment to factual truths which are discussed on a national scale and simply disseminates information whose truth is doubtful (apocryphal). In this case the internet can be anti-democratic (Honneth, 2014: 301) in a sense that it tends to lack control of rationality for any the presented opinions in the World Wide Web.

Capurro agrees with Honneth because what has been fought for in the international forum might not be coherent with national interests. However, Honneth's criticism of the internet is based on his understanding of a hierarchical communication structure, from

one to many as practiced in the mass-media (Capurro, 2017: 161). Within the hierarchical category of mass-media communication, senders of messages can represent the interests of business and political institutions. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that the internet can be seen as an instrument that produces democratic openness. According to this hierarchical perspective, the internet could bring about unresolved confrontations between the transnational elites which emphasize the transnational interests and national elites which fight for national interests (Capurro, 2017: 179).

For Capurro, communication via the internet has a different structure from that of the mass media. While mass media communication has a one-to-many structure, the structure of internet communication is variable: it has one-to-many, many-to-one, one-to-one structures (Capurro, 2017: 161). In such communication structures, the "physically isolated individuals" do not represent any kind of institutions but themselves. Through the internet, therefore, everyone can communicate rationally on behalf of his own will and interest in the process of deliberation with others. Here, everyone who communicates by using the internet is a free subject—who, besides being able to publish his own thoughts into the "the world of the reader" (Capurro, 2000: 266), becomes an interpreter of his own texts and the text he receives.

By explaining the function of freedom of speech for the life of the soul in harmony with the world around it, Capurro tacitly wants to build self-formation ethics in which the cultures become its ontological basis. He refers to Foucault's essay entitled *Technologies of the Self*, in which he identifies technologies of the self as the practical reason to use one's own means to achieve happiness, wisdom, and perfection (Capurro, 2000: 274). As Foucault (1988: 18) writes: "Technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations or their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality." Some scholars identify the technologies of the self as ethics: Kelly

(2013: 513-516) defines it as "a practical reason in which man defines himself creatively as a subject of history", Infinito (2003: 155) defines it as dealing "with the process of self-creation," and Hofmeyr (2015: 127) with "individual agency", one who knows and cares for himself. Self-formation ethics, then, consists of two imperatives: knowing thyself and caring for thyself. They are concerned with the practice of liberty in cases of persecution and with positive self-projection to create relationships to oneself and to the others in culture as the common world. Human existence has its roots in a community, so what is called self-caring means being in the ethos of society. Self-formation ethics, then, has an ontological foundation in "being-in-the-world" with others (Capurro, 2006: 177).

Capurro (2000, 273) explains, by emphasizing the imperative of "knowing thyself and caring for thyself", self-formation ethics focuses on the "practices of self-regulation." It is different from the coded, oriented morality developed by normative ethics. While the coded, oriented morality allows the moral limits of action ("Thou Shalt not …") to appear, this self-formation ethics "looks for the successful forms of life" (Capurro, 2000: 274) with others in society. With the internet, for example, such intention can be found in some following linguistic expressions such as "We need …", "May we …", "Would you like …", "Do you prefer …" (Capurro, 2000: 274). Self-formation ethics includes the social ethos in using information technology.

As well as referring to social ethos, self-formation ethics mean that everyone manages his own life in an information-overloaded society. Capurro explains that in this society, information comes in every second of our lives, from morning to night, before going to bed, making many people eat later and to be less calm when far away from a computer. Everyone becomes *homo digitalis*, so busy that his body and soul are trapped in digital technology (Capurro, 2017: 152). Like Don Ihde, he is conscious that our bodies are supposed to be autonomous: "We are our bodies" (Ihde, 2001: 138). But this new technology has changed the way we experience our bodies. "We are bodies in technology" (Ihde, 2001: 138). Day by day,

technology burrows deeper and deeper into our bodies; it shapes and determines the way we face and interpret reality. In such situations, Capurro prioritizes self-regulation morality, that everyone should be wise. Eastern culture has contributions in this case. In Confucian tradition, being wise means that everyone should be a *shen du*, an autonomous being who is able to control himself so as not to act against the morality and laws of society. In Daoism, being wise means being *wuwei*, letting information circulate, without having to master it. For Capurro, we cannot underestimate the meaning of information in our life. However, it can truly be the food of life, if we understand the limits of our own body and soul (Capurro, 2017: 164). He refers to Sloterdijk's argumentation that since "humanity does not constitute a super-organism" (Sloterdijk, 2013: 450), we need an immune system to keep humans alive (Capurro, 2017: 165). Capurro (2006: 177) believes that life will be sustained by its ecological environment, in which humans can live as humans. For such an ontological basis, being wise means that everyone is caring for others and himself.

3. The Problem of Internet Medialization

By establishing self-formation ethics which constitutes the meaning of freedom of speech, Capurro pays attention to the problem of internet medialization. Capurro (2013: 212) has discussed this issue with Michael Eldred and Daniel Nagel in the case of privacy. He emphasizes that privacy is a person's right to protect himself from public disclosure. The question, then, arises to: could I speak on the internet of all things about myself to all?

Capurro identifies this question as the problem of self-medialization on the internet. He discusses this issue in *Homo Digitalis*, especially in the case of AIDS. For Capurro, the digital medialization of AIDS has a different character from that of the mass-media. Every mass-media publication has an agenda in reporting AIDS. Following Elke Lehmann's study, he explains that from 1983 to 2000, *The Times*, one of the United Kingdom's

conservative media publications, issued 2307 stories which focused on AIDS protection and screening. Meanwhile, *The Guardian*, a liberal media publication, issued 1961 articles on AIDS infection and patient identification. Although they are different in highlighting AIDS, both represent Western media and voice Western interests. Both focus only on AIDS in the UK and have no interest in talking about the AIDS phenomenon in Africa which achieved the highest infection rate in the world at the same period (Capurro, 2017: 163-164).

Different to the mass media which sees AIDS as a disease experienced by others, the internet shows AIDS as a personal disease. It allows the process of speaking up to various groups of AIDS sufferers around the world. Through books and films, AIDS as a personal problem is presented in an open and interactive manner on the internet whose content is not entirely depressing but attracts many people. Introducing oneself in the process of interactivity is the main character of the internet. Consequently, while the mass media presents AIDS as a frightening disease for others due to its association with death, the internet regards AIDS as part of life, both as an individual and in society. According to Capurro (2017: 165), the internet becomes personal technology in which everyone, including AIDS' sufferers, can introduce themselves to others.

The question arises: Is it justified to talk to everyone about AIDS suffering? Being conscious of the internet's contribution in helping people who suffer to identify themselves as sufferers, Capurro (2017: 165) draws our attention to Susan Sontag's reflection on the metaphor of AIDS. Sontag explains that it is no secret that AIDS has been seen as a punishment given to sufferers because of their deviant sexual behavior. According to Sontag, society has stigmatized the disease and AIDS sufferers. Long ago, this kind of stigmatization was given to patients with tuberculosis and cancer: these diseases were seen as attacks on society and therefore should be fought (Sontag, 1978: 10). Sontag (1989: 9) calls it "militaristic metaphor". In such kind of metaphor, AIDS is regarded as "an

invasion that comes from outside" and as "the contamination". The first is "the language of political paranoia, with its characteristic distrust of a pluralistic world," (Sontag, 1989: 18) and the second is the result of the mass media's construction (Sontag, 1989: 20). She argues that such kinds of metaphor "contribute to the stigmatizing" of AIDS and of those who suffer it (Sontag, 1989: 11). At the end of *Illness as Metaphor*, she explains that such metaphors are an indication of the broad and fundamental deficiency of our own culture. It is, as she writes,

"a vehicle for the large insufficiencies of this culture, for our swallow attitude toward death, for our anxieties about feeling, for our reckless improvident responses to our real 'problems of growth', for our inability to construct an advanced industrial society which properly regulates consumption, and for our justified fears of the increasingly violent course of history." (Sontag 1978: 87-88)

Sontag knows that we cannot think without metaphor, "but that does not mean there aren't some metaphors we might well abstain from or try to retire" (Sontag, 1989: 5). She suggests that we should regard disease just as disease, "not a curse, not a punishment, not an embarrassment" (Sontag, 1989: 14). She adds that the interactive discourse on the internet which allows patients to talk about his or her own experience has a role in reducing such militaristic metaphor. Such kinds of metaphor should "be exposed, criticized, belabored, used up" (Sontag, 1989: 94).

Like Sontag, Capurro understands that human language is essentially metaphoric. He refers to Aristotle, who writes that metaphor "consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else," (Aristotle Poetics: 1457b). But different to Sontag, Capurro argues that illness as a metaphor for its contamination and mutation indicates our actual ignorance of its causes and nature. Capurro argues that illness is about the human experience of suffering that cannot easily be explained either rationally or empirically. All efforts to formulate it as a rational concept (*Vernunftidee*) will fail because it lacks empirical evidence. And reversely, the images of suffering which are given by the mass

media as empirical knowledge (*aesthetische Idee*) cannot be fully understood conceptually (Capurro, 2017: 170). There is no image of AIDS which is compatible with the human experience of suffering. So, there is no medialization which explains the concept of human suffering. It pretends to be deceptive knowledge.

For Capurro, a clear and distinctive explanation of human suffering and the images of it in the media are not only legitimate, but also creative, because they could open new metaphorical paths for our mind and the power of perception in searching for the meaning of our life. But the decisive factor in medialization is critical reflection on the possibilities of instrumentalization and stigmatization of human suffering. He argues that human suffering is an existential experience which is so deep and tragic that any expression of it is still not enough. Such experience is more tacit than we can say. What is needed here is to stop the stigmatization and instrumentalization of the suffering of AIDS patients on the one hand and awaken the imagination to capture the meaning of suffering on the other hand. And Capurro believes the internet is a new breakthrough for people with AIDS to talk about themselves and about their hopes that AIDS can be overcome. Through the internet every individual can pay attention to his own body and soul. Exhibitionism becomes an excess of this process. Following Kant, Capurro argues that it is not essentially about the moral prohibition but about its rudeness. Therefore, introducing self-suffering freely has its own limits (Capurro, 2017: 166). Eastern culture has a contribution in this case: everyone needs to have the virtue of *yinsi.* Everyone should be ashamed to reveal his or her human suffering because suffering could only be a concern for all but does not need to be discussed in public.

CONCLUSION AND CRITICAL REMARKS

Capurro's notion of freedom of speech in digital communication has some ethical implications. Firstly, in intercultural perspective, both Western and Eastern culture, freedom of speech is based on searching for truth. In the concept of

parrhesia, the Western culture translate freedom of speech as the way to tell the truth while the Eastern culture puts the truth of life as the foundation for the way to exercise the freedom of speech. To follow *Dao* or to practice *wuwei* is the way to put freedom of speech behind the understanding of being-in-the-world. Secondly, freedom of speech in some sense is based on the self-formation ethics which consists of two imperatives, knowing thyself and caring thyself. Such a kind of ethics suggests that everyone should manage their own life based on their understanding of themselves. In facing digital technology, self-formation ethics become the social capacity to live in an information-overloaded society. Thirdly, freedom of speech means that everyone has their right to expose themselves. According to Capurro, such freedom is needed to fight social stigmatization. In case of digital technology, he argues, everyone is conscious the internet's contribution in helping sufferers to identify themselves as sufferers.

Freedom of speech, then, has a function to develop the web of human relationships. In such an ethical framework, speaking and writing are regarded as free human activities that bring humans closer to themselves, to others, and to nature. *Parrhesia* and *wuwei* are two cultural ways of communicating by building human souls and society.

With this position in mind, Capurro revives substantive communication, which has been understood as the way to know oneself and the community. Before him, Voegelin (2000: 47) has defined it as "communication that has its purpose in the unfolding and building of personality." It is substantive because communication becomes the process in which the order of community is created and maintained. In such kinds of communication, freedom of speech as understood in Western and Eastern traditions has a function to bring people together in search of truth and wisdom.

However, as Voegelin (2000: 47) explains it, today's communication tends to be pragmatic and intoxicant. It is pragmatic because communication changes its function to be a technique to

induce in other people a state of mind to behave in accordance with the communicator's intention. Such kinds of communication purport to build an order of behavior according to the expectations of the communicator. The effectiveness of changing behavior according to the will of the communicator is the main target of pragmatic communication. This communication model becomes a highly organized business with vested interests, in which information is produced in such a way that it can be accepted unanimously. Voegelin (2000: 49) calls this phenomenon the "automatism that moves by momentum of power and profit.". This model of communication ignores the power of reason.

By damaging the capability of the personal organization of a man's life, the pragmatic communication model tends to be intoxicant since it is not necessarily true and is increasingly neutral towards morals. According to Voegelin (2000: 50), intoxicant communication belongs to the anxious, empty, and dark soul that "results in boredom and ultimately in despair.". It is a symptom of moral crisis. "A moral vacuum expands around the unquestioned automatism" (Voegelin 2000: 49). To escape these states of the soul, man develops divertissement that pervades social activities; listening to the radio, watching television, and searching the internet aiming at drowning the anxiety of this empty life. In such situations, the question arises as to: could self-formation ethics which is based on the freedom of speech and caring be legitimate? Are self-formation ethics reliable?

Capurro believes that we have a moral capacity which is based on our conscience to live according to rational moral principles. But to act rationally, a person must know themselves: who they are and in what kind of world they live. People who are confused by themselves are unable to act rationally. Pragmatic communication not only directs others to certain behaviors but also creates emotional diversions that prevent someone from asking about the substantive authenticity of their communication. In Voegelin's view, today's pluralistic society only produces irrational opinions and irrational acts of communication. He reveals that pragmatic

communication cannot help to grow personality because its base is the big lie, which destroys respect, loyalty, and prudence.

By promoting intercultural communication based on classical Greek thought and Confucianism and Taoism, Capurro indirectly agrees with Voegelin that communication deals with the human soul. A healthy state of mind depends on the *amor Dei* or living in *Dao*. He criticizes the modernism promoted by the Reformation Movement and the French Revolution that change the basis of human ethical life: we do not live anymore based on *amor Dei* but by *amor sui*. In this new paradigm, self-formation ethics are based on self-love or, in the principle of Nietzsche's *Uebermensch* autonomy, a kind of human autonomy that ignores its own existence as being-in-the-world. For Capurro, any part of self-formation ethics based on *parrhesia* has an ontological basis that is being-in-the-world-with-others.

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