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- Confucian Ideas on Communication
  William Yau-nag Ng

- Hindu Perspectives on Communication
  Keval J. Kumar

- Social Communication in Buddhist Perspective:
  The Case of Thailand
  Kirti Bunchua

- Communication Dimensions of Interreligious Dialogue
  A Research Report from St. Peter's Pontifical Institute
  Sebastian Periannan

- Texting God : SMS & Religion in the Philippines
  Anthony G. Roman

CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

In November 2004, the FABC-Office of Social Communication organized a "Bishops' Institute for Social Communication" (BISCOM) in Bali, Indonesia under the title "Interreligious Dialogue as Communication." The first four articles in this issue are papers which were presented at this occasion in the section on "Social Communication in Religions of Asia."

An extended study of the same subject will be organized by the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication, FABC-OSC and the Graduate School for Philosophy and Religion of Assumption University, Bangkok in October 2005.

All presentations of the 2004 Bali meeting will be available in autumn this year as FABC-OSC Books volume 6 with the title "Interreligious Dialogue as Communication"

CONFUCIAN IDEAS ON COMMUNICATION

William Yau-nag Ng*

1. Introduction

At first thought, one would wonder what Confucianism has to do with issues of communication, which usually relates to modern mass media such as radio, television, and computers. Probably no one would believe that Confucius who lived about 2,500 years ago would have anything relevant to say about these modern technological developments. However, broadly speaking, communication is a process and results from the exchange of information. If one employs this broad definition, Confucianism not only has a lot to do with communication, but also expresses great concern over it.[1] This paper tries to examine the underlying concept of communication as seen in Confucianism, explore the philosophical foundations of such a concept, and outline its contemporary relevance.

Before proceeding with the discussion of the Confucian idea of communication, a few words on Confucianism is necessary. First of all, it should be mentioned that Confucius is the Latin rendering of *Kong Fuzhi* (551-479 B.C.), or Master Kong. The surname of the sage was Kong and the given name was *Qiu*. He was born in Qufu, a small town in Shandong providence in northern China about 2,500 years ago. Through the centuries his teachings developed into a complex philosophical, social and political tradition which came to be known as Confucianism. This presentation will focus on the Master's ideas rather than taking the tradition as a whole.

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[1] To the best of my knowledge, there are only few modern literatures on Confucian understanding of communication. Representative works are Geroge Kuan, Zhongguo chuanbo sixiangshi (History of Chinese Communication Thought) Taibei: Zhengzhong Book Co., 2000), and his earlier work, Zhongguo chuanbo lilun (Chinese Communication Theory) (Taibei: Zhengzhong Book Co., 1994).

## 1. Communication and the Four Dimensions of Confucian Cultivation

The cornerstone of Confucian philosophy is *ren*.[2] *Ren*, is usually translated as love, humanity or benevolence. Its etymology[3] and interpretation, refers to matters concerning more than one person, usually interpreted as interpersonal relationship. In fact, the *wulun* idea of Confucius is precisely about interpersonal relationships: ruler-subject, father-son, older brother-younger brother, husband-wife, friend-friend. However, it would not be accurate to confine *ren* to these five relationships. In any genuine human relationship, love is the key element. For Confucius, that love is called *ren*, the foundation of all the five relationships he described.

Since the practice of *ren* involves the self and others, it relates to the practice of communicative action. First of all, one needs to communicate internally, with his/her authentic self in order to ignite that inner spiritual dynamic that enables the individual to go beyond or transform his/her present mode of existence. To communicate internally means to feel and know one's authentic self. *Ren* is a process of inner communication involving an exchange of information between the existential self and the authentic self. One needs to communicate and listen to the voice of the conscience so as to grasp his true nature. Mencius said: "A person who exerts his heart to the utmost knows his nature. A person who knows his nature knows Heaven. To preserve one's heart and to nourish one's nature is to serve Heaven." Thus, one needs to dig deep and communicate with his/her true nature so as to enable ethical and spiritual growth. In short, communication brings about transformation and ren can be seen as that inner communicative action that enables the process of self-transformation or self-transcendence to take place.

[2] This is such an important word in Confucian thought that translators have often felt it hard to translate without distortion. In this paper, I will leave such words as Ren and Dao in transliterated form. But to help initial understanding at least, English translations of these words commonly employed in the English-speaking academic world will be provided.

[3] The character, *ren*, composes of two separate parts. The left part means human, while the right part means two.

The individual behaves in response to ideas about himself and his environment. Thus, when people communicate ideas, they influence each other. In this sense, aside from the inner communication just mentioned, communication is a social action that generates changes in the other. In Confucian tradition, this is the so-called *jiaohua*, which literally means "teaching and transformation" (to teach and transform). Through genuine communication, therefore, society can be transformed and an entirely new world can be created. Confucius spent most of his life traveling from state to state, teaching the world about *ren*, (the internal process of self-discovery) and *li* (the external ethical regulation of social conduct) hoping to change the world of his time and align it with the way of Heaven.[4] He once remarked that the state of *Qi* could be transformed according to the standards set forth by his home state of Lu (now in modern Shandong Province), and Lu could be transformed to become the manifestation of *Dao*, the Way of Heaven.
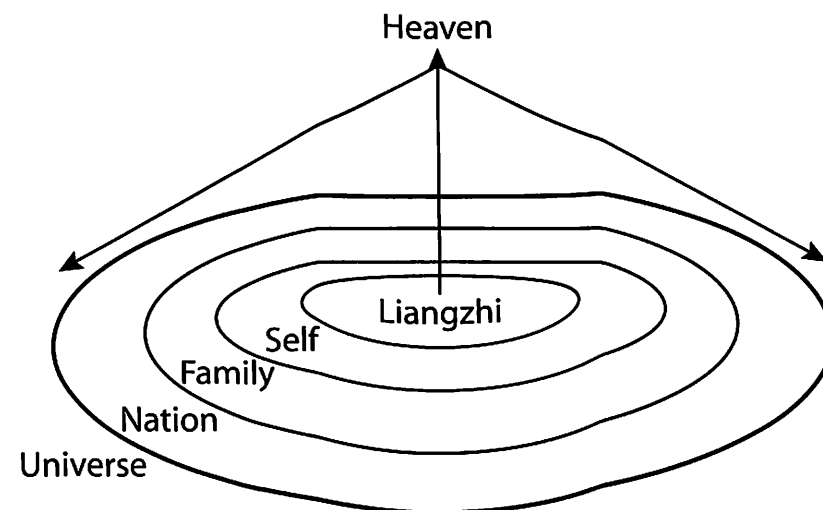
[4] The word, Li, encompasses a number of ideas including ritual, custom, propriety and manners, Li regulates one's external behaviors while ren and yi are the inner dynamics and standard of Li. See Lao Siguang, Xinbian Zhongguo zhexueshi (A Newly Complied History of Chinese Philosophy) (Taibei Sanmin Shudian, 1970, Vol. 1).

To recapitulate, communication is about transformation both of the self and of society. The origin and foundation of these transformative communications is the ideal individual, known in Confucian terms as the *junzi*, a person who is above egoism and always concerned about the other. In the book of the Great Learning, the Confucian ideal world is portrayed as a universal movement towards transformation that starts with the self, continues in the family, and culminates in society or the nation.

Confucius' life goal was "comfort the old, be faithful to friends, and cherish the young."[5] Later Confucians extended this goal to include the whole universe.[6]

In communication, particularly interpersonal communication, Confucius emphasized the importance of *cheng* (sincerity), which is defined as getting rid of self-deception. In the Doctrine of the Mean, it says that without sincerity, there would be nothing left. Confucius also commented on the use of words as tools in communication. For him, words (*ci*) are used to arrive (*da*) at understanding. But while tools are important, the content is even more important. As a classic saying puts it, "Words without content (ideas, culture, *wen*) would not go far." Content may take the form of ideas, culture or *wen*. The character *wen* as used in the Analects refers to both culture and humanity.[7] So, it would seem that Confucius meant to include culture and humanity in the content of communication.

For Confucians, communication is not only intrapersonal and interpersonal. To attain authentic self-understanding and a harmonious society, human beings need to be grounded in history and oriented towards the future. In other words, a true Confucian is one who is an

[5] Lun Yu (Confucian Analects) 5:25 in Wing-tsit Chan translated and compiled, *A Source in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p.28.

[6] For example, Neo-Confucian scholars of the Song and Ming Dynasties made cosmic interpretations of the Book of the Great Learning.

[7] Confucius once expressed his appreciation of the Duke of Zhou, who was famous for his achievement in the ritualization of life. "Glorious is the Duke of Zhou, I am willing to follow." The word *wen* thus points to achievement in culture and humanity.

active communicator of tradition, rooted in the wisdom of the past and creatively responsible for the future. Confucius saw himself as a transmitter of the Way and for this reason, he insisted on the importance of learning and studying the classics where one can discover and understand the Way of the ancient sages. As he puts it: "Most exalted is (the Sage) who is born with knowledge; but next is the man who learns through study." The point is, by learning the wisdom of the past, one understands how to deal with the present and is able to create a better future. Thus, Zhang Zai (1020-1077), a famous Neo-Confucian scholar of the Song Dynasty, described the ideal Confucian gentleman in the following terms: "To continue the learning of the past Sages, and create an age of great peace and harmony for ten thousand generations to come."

Ultimately, the Confucian gentleman attains the ultimate stage of self-cultivation by embodying the Dao, the Way of Heaven, in himself. Reflecting on his life's journey of learning, Confucius said:

At fifteen, I set my heart on learning (to be a sage). At thirty, I became firm. At forty, I had no more doubts. At fifty, I understood Heaven's Will. At sixty, my ears were attuned (to this Will). At seventy, I could follow my heart's desire without overstepping the line.[8]

To know, to embody, the will of Heaven is to master oneself and to be free from the control of desires. This, for the Confucian gentleman, is genuine freedom. As Confucius said "one must keep oneself to the good Way till death." Zhang Zai, in describing the intimate relationship between Heaven, earth and humanity, concluded that "in life I follow and serve (Heaven and earth). In death I will be at peace."[9]

To sum up, self cultivation in Confucianism consists of four communicative dimensions. First, one has to dig inside in order to communicate with the authentic self. This is the inner dimension. Second, one goes out of oneself and relate with others, family, society and country.

[8] Lun Yi (Confucian Analects) 2:4. Translation adapted from Hans Kung and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, p. 67.

[9] Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p.498.

This is the external dimension. Third, one has to communicate with the past and the future. This is the temporal dimension. Fourth, one has to communicate with Heaven. This is the transcendental dimension. These four dimensions form a comprehensive system of *ren* (love) where *ren* is communicated to inform, penetrate and fulfill every level of human existence. In this sense we can say that communication is a crucial part of Confucianism.

2. Communication with Other Faiths

Chinese scholars tend to emphasize the fact that Confucianism is peaceful and tolerant when encountering other religions.[10] Certainly, there are historical instances that disprove this general impression. One famous example was from Han Yu, the leading Chinese prose-writer in the Tang Dynasty and forerunner of Neo-Confucianism. In an essay entitled "An Inquiry on the Way," Han Yu discussed the harmful effect of Buddhism and petitioned the emperor to burn Buddhist books and compel all Buddhist monks to renounce their faith and return to the lay state.[11] However, generally speaking, Confucianism is known for its philosophy of harmony and peaceful co-existence with other systems of belief. Transmission and promotion of the Way cannot be achieved by force. It can only be achieved through tolerance and openness. In the Analects, Confucius says "to attack different teachings (*yiduan*; also translated as 'heresy') harms the Dao." According to this way of thinking, the different teachings come from the different experiences and different manifestations of the Dao (Transcendence).[12] As a famous Confucian saying says, "Different manifestations of the Dao can work together without hindering the other." Confucius saw diversity not so much as chaos that needs to be surpassed but as a source of plenitude and fulfillment.

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[10] One Famous example is Qian Mu, a very influential Chinese historian in 20th century. Qian Mu, *Zhongguo wenhuashi daolun* (Introduction to the History of Chinese Culture), (Taibei: Zhengzhongshuju, 1968), p. 122.

[11] See Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, pp. 454-456.

[12] See William Yau-nang Ng, "Tang Junyi's Idea of the Transcendence, "in Tu Wei-ming and Mary Tucher ed., Confucian Spirituality, N.Y.: Crossroad, 2004.

The Confucian way to accomplish this is through the Doctrine of the Mean or the middle way. In the middle way, biases and extremes are avoided.[13] Conflicting teachings are seen not so much as evil teachings that diverted from the middle path and went too far to the extremes. When asked what should be done with such teachings, Confucius said, "I will study and make use of them." In this way, different teachings, while they may be considered inadequate or excessive, are never all that wrong. In the classic Doctrine of the Mean, Confucius says "The superior man maintains harmony... He stands in the middle position and does not lean to one side." Consequently, Confucianism does not necessarily treat different faiths as nonsense or demonic. Rather than condemning them, the Confucian would communicate or, to use a popular word these days, dialogue with them. Condemnation brings disharmony. Only through respectful dialogue and communication can extremes be avoided and harmony achieved. In a genuine dialogue, both parties should be prepared to learn and grow. In other words, dialogue partners should be humble. The Dao is infinite and rich, but the followers of Dao are not. Even Confucius admitted that he was not good enough to be called a sage or a person of *ren*. The important thing is to be aware of one's limitations and not to be overconfident of one's position and achievements. As mentioned earlier, learning, for Confucians, is the key to transformation and in order to learn, one needs to be humble. Humility includes the willingness to communicate, and to dialogue. This, it should be emphasized, is required of all partners in dialogue. Dialogue is a two-way street, an activity of mutual enrichment.

As to the question of truth, Neo-Confucian doctrine on this matter, which has become dominant in the Confucian tradition, is basically that its manifestations are many. The Dao, the Way of Heaven is one. Other traditions, especially those claiming revelations, will surely have a problem over this. But as far as Confucians are concerned, the different traditions are merely different paths to the same mountain of truth. Perhaps through communication and dialogue, an easier and more harmonious path may be found.

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[13] See Tu Weiming, Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1989.

3. The Foundations

Two foundations are especially important in the Confucian tradition.

First, the idea of communicating with the extremes to be rooted in the Book of Change. In the Book of Change, the *yin* and the *yang* forces though contradictory in character, compliment each other. The interaction between those two opposing forces actually forms the dynamics necessary for change and transformation.

Second, the highest of the Dao is the Great Harmony according to the Book of Change. Great Harmony is characterized by the principle of keeping the differences while at the same time maintaining harmony. In this Confucian sense, one should maintain his integrity while being harmonious with others. A common Chinese saying best expresses such an attitude: "One should respect the differences and love what we are in common."

4. Contemporary Relevance

The Confucian ideas of Communication are based on the idea of *ren* (love). Confucianism believes in a Dao of love. This may serve as a very good foundation for inter-religious dialogue.

(1) "Ren" as a common bond

As mentioned above, the practice of *ren* involves an active inner spiritual pursuit of our authentic self. By encountering and communicating with his/her authentic self which, according to Mencius and the Doctrine of Mean, is a gift from Heaven, one opens him/herself to the possibility of experiencing the Dao. In the Confucian tradition, the awakening of the authentic self, or *liangzhi* (conscience) in Mencius' term, is made possible by digging deep in our own heart.[14] Such an inward

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[14] Zengzi, a Confucius disciple famous for transmitting the teaching of Confucius, reported that he, himself, engaged in in-depth reflections and contemplation three times every single day.

pursuit aims at reaching the fountain of love (*ren*) and wisdom and obtaining inner experiences with Dao. Individual experience of the Dao must be particular in time and at the same time universal in meaning. And it is precisely in the depths of our own heart and in the encounter with the hearts of others that a common bond, universal to all, can be detected. This common bond is love. Therefore, Confucian scholars like Tang Junyi proposed that *ren* should serve as good base for interacting with other religions.

(2) Complementary versus contradictory

As shown above, the four dimensions of the Confucian idea of communication form a comprehensive system where *ren* is communicated to inform, penetrate and fulfill every level of human existence. In each of these dimensions, a relational structure is required for the actualization of *ren*. In other words, there always exists an "other" before the consciousness of *ren*. In the inward dimension, the relational structure is formed with the authentic self on the one hand and the existential self on the other. In the outward dimension, we have the consciousness of *ren*, on the one hand and the family, nation and universe on the other. In the temporal dimension, one takes history and the future as the other. In the upward dimension, *ren* and the Heaven form a relational structure. To affirm a relation is to affirm the irreducibility of the "other," either as the impersonal other such Heaven, or as the personal other such as human beings. This relational structure bears important significance to the contemporary world. Every person has to learn to respect and value the existence of the other. Differences are everywhere. It is a Confucian ideal to respect and benefit from the differences. And that is why the forces of *yin* and *yang* though so drastically different, serve and fulfill the other.

Following this line of thought, it is natural to find that Confucian ideas of communication emphasize the importance of mutual respect. Confucianism sees the act of communication as a process of mutual enrichment and growth. It also reminds us to be modest when encountering different faiths. Confucius emphasized the necessity to learn extensively even to the extent that one can even learn from rival teachings. Confucius was confident of the Dao, which he understood firmly as early as the age of thirty. However, Confucius also knew that man is finite and could make mistakes easily. It is wise to seek the possibilities of learning

from the other, and that is why communication is important. In fact, encountering differences is both valuable and essential to the cultivating mind-heart.

To recapitulate, viewed from the relational structure of *ren*, differences can be understood as a source of enrichment and not conflict. Different religions can be complementary, not contradictory.

(3) Harmony versus conflict

Confucian scholars like Tang Junyi and Liu Shuhsien cherished interreligious dialogue between Confucianism and other religions and advocated the idea that Confucian strong emphasis on ethics could serve as a very good base for dialogue. The concept of Ultimate Harmony and the Neo-Confucian teaching of "The Principle is one but its manifestations are many" are used to establish their point. Harmony in the Confucian tradition is not a static state deprived of contradictions. Rather, it is a process within which contradictions eventually get transcended or settled. Contradictions, thus, can be seen as different manifestations in the development of the same Principle. For the compassionate Principle or Heaven's Will, in the Confucian tradition, no one would be excluded from *ren*. Viewed from this perspective, different faiths are related to each other as different manifestations of the Principle. And thus all should stay in harmony but not in conflict.

(4) The Irreducibility of the Other

What is more important is the affirmation of the other, the source of growth and accomplishment. Confucianism has always been portrayed as humanism. But one should be careful, not to take Confucianism as any kind of secular humanism that discards the importance of the transcendence. Rather, it is religious humanism, deeply grounded in humanity and in its openness to the transcendence. Tu Weiming stated: "Each human being has sufficient internal resources for ultimate transformation." Tu's assertion if not understood properly can be very misleading. While it is true that, according to Confucianism, every person has important internal resources, it must be noted that internal resources alone no matter how much one possesses are never enough. The other which is inseparable from the relational structure is also indispensable for one's ultimate transformation. After all, it is Heaven's Will that a

Confucian follower ultimately seeks and serves.

As a result of globalization, our world has often been referred to as a global village where people are closely connected and even united. However, our world is also a world of diversities. Different traditions and religious faiths co-exist. Their conflicts are viewed as a "clash of civilizations," some even resulted in wars and massive killing. These cruel facts, especially killing in the battlefield, reveal that we still have to learn to respect our differences and the other. Interreligious dialogue thus is extremely important. The Confucian ideas of communication, which rest upon the very idea of *ren* and flourishes in a relational structure that respects the other no matter how much different they are from us, send us important messages. We grow in love and harmony but perish in conflict and violence.

Quick-takes on Confucianism

A. What is Confucianism?

Confucianism is commonly believed to be founded by a Chinese called Confucius although some Korean scholars think that it was first developed in Korea. Confucius is the Latin rendering of Kong Fuzhi (551-479 B.C.), or Master Kong. The surname of the sage was Kong and the given name was Qiu. He was born in Qufu, a small town in the Sandong providence in northern China, about 2500 years ago. Through the centuries, his teachings developed into a complex philosophical, social and political tradition which came to be known as Confucianism.

B. Confucianism: Religion or not

Chan Wing-tsit, one of the most important Confucian scholars of the 20th century, wrote in *The Great Asian Religions*, "It is often asked whether Confucianism is a religion. It is certainly not if one thinks of religion as an organized church with holy scriptures, a clergy, and so on, for there is none of these things in the Confucian tradition. But it is unmistakably religious because, first of all, Confucius and his followers affirm the reality of a purposive and powerful Heaven. Secondly, Confucianism has promoted traditional rites such as sacrifice to Heaven and Earth, sacrifice to ancestors, and so on. Thirdly, it has exercised an influence and control on Chinese society as religion has done in other

centuries. And finally, its Classics have served as the fountain of truth as religious scriptures have done elsewhere."

Three more points can be added to Chan's comments:

1. The religion is being received and practiced differently in different places. Some take it more as an ethical system while others take it as a religion.
2. Recent development in Confucian sects like the Yiguandao Confucianism, which developed in the late 19ᵗʰ century and flourishes in Taiwan, take up elements of religions as seen in Christian Churches. In the *Yiguandao* tradition, there is a clergy. The leaders are called the *Qianren*, the forerunners. In the middle of the institution, there are "priests" called *Dianchuanshi*, master for transmitting the Classics. There are disciples under the *Dianchuanshi*. Classes and regular religious meetings are arranged for followers.
3. The answer to the question whether Confucianism is different to get for term, religion, is too ambiguous. As early as 1912 James Leuba listed 48 different definitions, adding two of his own. Maybe it could be better to classify Confucianism as wisdom or to use the Chinese word, Dao (Way).

C. Confucianism: Chinese or not

Confucianism was first founded in China but has many followers in East Asia, like Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. There are Confucian followers in Singapore and Malaysia as well. However, followers are mainly Chinese people.

End Notes

[1] To the best of my knowledge, there are only few modern literatures on Confucian understanding of communication. Representative works are Geroge Kuan, Zhongguo chuanbo sixiangshi (History of Chinese Communication Thought) (Taibei: Zhengzhong Book Co., 2000), and his earlier work, Zhongguo chuanbo lilun (Chinese Communication Theory) (Taibei: Zhengzhong Book Co., 1994).

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[5] Lun Yu (Confucian Analects) 5:25 in Wing-tsit Chan translated and compiled, A Source in Chinese Philosophy (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 28.

[6] For example, Neo-Confucian scholars of the Song and Ming Dynasties made cosmic interpretations of the Book of the Great Learning.

[7] Confucius once expressed his appreciation of the Duke of Zhou, who was famous for his achievement in the ritualization of life. "Glorious is the Duke of Zhou, I am willing to follow." The word wen thus points to achievement in culture and humanity.

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[9] Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, p. 498.

[10] One famous example is Qian Mu, a very influential Chinese historian in 20ᵗʰ century. Qian Mu, Zhongguo wenhuashi daolun (Introduction to the History of Chinese Culture), (Taibei: Zhengzhongshuju, 1968), p. 122.

[11] See Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, pp. 454-456.

[12] See William Yau-nang Ng, 'Tang Junyi's Idea of the Transcendence,' in Tu Wei-ming and Mary Tucher ed., Confucian Spirituality, N.Y.: Crossroad, 2004.

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HINDU PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNICATION

Keval J. Kumar *

The Indian/Hindu approach to knowledge is essentially pluralistic. Though it acknowledges again and again in several ancient texts that the family of mankind is *ine*, real knowledge is a quest, a search of the *atma* for the *parmatma*, the soul for the divine. Such a quest is manifold: there are many pathways to the divine, and all pathways are equally valid and meaningful and true.

In Hindu tradition, approaches to knowledge are seen to be diverse and varied, of many hues. That is primarily because of the infinite complexity and profundity of truth. It has many sides and many aspects, and it appears that no single approach can do it full justice. Each approach is thus only an aspect of the whole; it is the river that leads to the vastness of the ocean; it is not the ocean itself. Each approach is considered to be limited; none is complete in itself. So there cannot be 'a perspective' but several perspectives' of knowledge and truth.

This paper analyses the attempts of Indian and Sri Lankan scholars to trace Hindu approaches to Communication in the classical Sanskrit (Brahminical) texts on religion, philosophy, grammar, language and dramaturgy. Most of these attempts overlook the role that popular performing arts played in the evolution of the Hindu perspectives on Communication.

Sanskrit Term for 'Communication'

Perspectives on Communication are dependent in the thought processes and experiences you bring to bear on your explanations of the phenomena or the process or content of communication. So, sociologists focus on the process; phenomenologists on the experiences; scientist on the engineering and mathematics; literary scholars on the content and form; philosophers on the knowledge basis and hermeneutics of communication; political scientist on propaganda.

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While western perspectives emanate from rhetoric, the social sciences and technology ... Indian theories have their roots in popular theater, popular religion, linguistics and philosophy. Western communication theories have failed to fully describe or explain or predict the communication phenomena in Asia. For instance, certain communication behavioral patterns in Asia may not be easily explained by Western theories, such as face, seniority of age and status, different philosophical and religious backgrounds (Gottberg, 1985 quoted in Xiaoge, 2000).

It is interesting to look at the various terms for 'communication' in Sanskrit and other Indian languages. The three terms most widely used in Indian languages (those deriving directly from Sanskrit, such as Hindi and Marathi) as equivalents of Communication are: *sampreshan*, *saunyapan* and *samwaad*. The first appears to fit in with the idea of communication as one-way transmission, the traditional western approach to communication which can be traced to Aristotle's Rhetoric.

Saunyapan which relates more closely to knowledge has its roots in the philosophy of communication, while *samwaad* which means dialogue or conversation has its roots in popular everyday communication. But ancient Sanskrit text like the *Vakyapadiya* speak of communication in terms of *sadharanikarran* which literally means 'making common', rather like the latin *communis*. These varied terms suggest varied approaches to thinking about the process of communication in Hindu philosophy, linguistics, and the performing arts.

Indian and Sri Lankan Scholarship

In recent years communication scholars in India and Sri Lanka made attempts to develop theories of communication based on Indian classical text and on popular Indian culture.

Xiaoge (2000) reviewed papers presented at eight conferences conducted by AMIC of Singapore since 1985. "Western communication theories had their own limitations such as over-emphasis on quantitative methods, lack of focus and repetitiveness, weakness in studies of structure and function of communication in a societal context, and the absence of

culture as a critical factors in communication" (Xiaoge, 2000).

Asian cultures would like to stress what may be termed as "development values" in their media. These values include: desire for harmony and the avoidance of differences and conflicts, mild ways of criticism of government, and the need of the press to be more mindful of cause and consequence of their news coverage (ibid).

There were other values too such as the emphasis on the role of educator and catalyst of social and political change, adversary journalism as being incompatible with Asian societies, and cooperation with government in nation building (ibid).

'Sadharanikaran' Approach to Communication

According to Tewari, the India/Hindu approach to communication forms a part of Indian poetics; and can be traced between second century BC and first century AD in the works of Bharata. It hinges on the concept of *sadharanikaran* which is quite close in meaning to the Latin term "communis," commonness, from which 'communication' is derived.

The most important assumption in the process of *sadharanikaran* is that it can be achieved only among *sahridayas*, i.e., only those who have a capacity to accept a message. This is an innate ability acquired through culture, adaptation and learning. Thus communication is an activity among *sahridayas*. It is to be noted, says, Tewari, that the concept of *sahridaya* is not co-terminus with preposition or in favor or against. It only denotes the quality of mind or receptivity on the part of the audience. It does not speak of the quality - positive or negative - of attitude on the part of the audience. It may, however, qualify the depth or level of sensory experience that shapes the human personality.

The human psyche in terms of this theory is composed of permanent moods called *sihalbhava*. These moods are capable of arousing a corresponding state of feeling, *rasa*. There are nine permanent moods and they give rise to nine rasas or forms of aesthetic pleasure. For instance, the permanent mood *bhayanaka*, arouses the *bhayanak* (furious)

rasa, the *harsha* (joy) triggers the *hasya* (laughter) rasa, the *dina*, the *karuna* (compassion) rasa, and so on. The entire range of human emotions is encompassed in this categorization. The state of arousal of the nine permanent moods is termed *rasa utpathi*.

The *sthai bhavas* are accompanied also by many fleeting or secondary moods that are common to several dominant moods and serve the purpose of completely manifesting the permanent moods, such as *nirveda* (despondency) or *glani* (fatigue), and may help to manifest the permanent moods, like the erotic helps the pathetic. These are called *sancharis* or *vyabhichari bhavas*. In addition, there are *vibhavas* and *anubhavas*, the emotions that unite a man and woman in love. It is the climax of this relationship that *sadharanikaran* is attained.

The concept of *sadharanikaran*, one of the fundamental concepts in Indian aesthetics, also has religious implications. As in the Vedanta, objects of experience are held to be not the ultimate reality but only manifestations of that reality; so words and the expressed meaning are regarded as the mere external experience of art, and the emotional mood which a work communicates is thus the essence of reality - the highest communication endeavor indeed.

There is a certain elitism present in the concept, however. Rasa is the art of the ordinary but it can be understood only by the sahridaya and the only proof of its existence is the aswada, the taste, which only a saridaya has. He or she alone is capable of sadharanikaran.

Yadava points out that the term was first used in the 10th century by Bhattanayaka in a commentary on the Natya Shastra to explain the sutras related to rasa. Bhattanayaka stressed that the essence of communication lay in achieving commonness and oneness.

Yadava draws out two implications or resonances of the term, sahridaya, literally of one heart. He believes that the term is synonymous with 'identification' and 'simplification' - the identification of communicator with the receiver through the process of simplification. Mahatma Gandhi, for instance achieved this identification with the masses through 'simplification' of his message, the common religious symbols he

employed, and above all, the utter simplicity of his life.

At the community level, Yavada votes, the saints, Sufis and Brahmins of old propagated religious and cultural values through simplification and illustration. He sees this practice as continuing today in the conversation and traditional media of rural folk throughout the Indian sub-continent. This dimension of sadharanikaran seems to have become the common heritage of the Indian people.

Yet, the process of sadharanikaran is fundamentally 'asymmetrical', and the sharing or oneness it connotes is among sahridayas alone, unequal perhaps but one in heart. The goal of sadharnikaran, therefore, is not persuasion as much as the very enjoyment of the process of sharing. At the same time, the source is perceived as having a higher status, the receiver of message, a lower status. As Yadava puts it, the relationship is hierarchical, of 'dominion' and 'subordination'. The source is held in high esteem by the receiver of information, a relationship idealized and romanticized in the guru-chela tradition.

Yadava hypothesizes that the asymmetrical aspects of sadharanikaran helped in the blossoming of Indian civilization in earlier times through efficient communication and division of labor, but in centuries resulted in highly rigid and hierarchical closed social structures.

Dissanayake and Jayaweera

Wimal Dissanayake, a Sri Lankan scholar, draws on the Vedas, the Upanishads and non-philosophical traditions (such as Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya, a 5th century text on grammar, and Bharat Muni's Natyashastra,) to build an India model of communication. The primary focus if interest in his model is how the receiver makes sense of the stimuli he receives so as to deepen his self-awareness. In Indian tradition, he argues, 'communication is an inward search for meaning - a process leading to self-awareness, then to freedom, and finally to truth'. Thus it transcends language and meaning and is interpretation or reception-orientated, not expression-oriented like the Western models. The intrapersonal dimension is greater importance than the interpersonal in the Indian approach, for individualism and manipulation have no place in it.

Neville Jayaweera, also a Sri Lankan with a deep interest in Indian Philosophy, observes that Vedantic philosophy of 'advaita' (absolute monism) has profound implications for contemporary understanding of communication.

A Philosophical Perspective

T.B. Saral looks at communication theory from a Hindu philosophical perspective. The Hindu's concept of the universe is based on the *Virat Purush* (cosmic man) view. A natural extension of this concept is that it espouses the systems approach, the authority of Universal law, the law of Dharma. Dharma is the basic principle of the whole universe and is existing eternally. This natural law of Dharma regulates human existence and governs relations of individual beings; communication too is governed by the same law.

Saral believes that most western studies of communication are confined to the study of what may be termed "surface structure" features, such as verbal language, body language, nonverbal gestures, facial expression, etc. But it is often the 'deep structure' is shaped by the cultural and metaphysical assumption about the definition of truth reality, the place of an individual in the universe and one's relationship with other living and non-living elements of the environment, the concepts of time and space, and so on.

Western models and theories of communication are thus reflective of the biases of western thought and culture. The distinctive marks of this philosophy are categorization, classification, linear sequencing and rational logic. Indian philosophy, on the other hand, is characterized by complexity and pluralism; it is holistic and intuitive, and believes that reality is one. In Indian rhetoric, opposites are co-ordinates, contradictions are illusory, and the world is a dramatic portrayal of God playing hide-and seek with himself, trying to reassemble all the divergent parts back into their original unity.

Conclusion

The Hindu perspective on Communication has been derived from ancient Sanskrit literature, particularly from the literature on grammar, language and dramaturgy. The key text is the Natyashastra, a work that deals extensively with music, dance and acting in theater. But equally vital texts are those that analyze language such as Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiya. The epics Ramayana and Mahabharata (the latter includes the Bhagvad Gita) tell popular stories of Hinduism, and it is these too that have fashioned the Hindu perspective on Communication. The stories in the epics are part of the centuries old folk traditions in song, dance, theater, and puppetry. Mention must also be made of the Panchtatra, the original fables of Aesop and others in Western tradition. In sum, the Hindu approaches to Communication are in tune with the world-view of the infinitely pluralistic and varied understanding of life that goes by the name of Hinduism.

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SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE: THE CASE OF THAILAND

Kirti Bunchua *

Thailand's Buddhism belongs to the *Hinayana* Tradition or what is known in Thailand as Theravada Buddhism. According to this tradition, the Buddha never on his own account proclaimed his discovery of *Dhamma* (without being invited by someone). The only exception is the event called *Asalha* when he succeeded to find out the whereabouts of the *Panchavaggi* (The Group of Five), his only devotees at that time expecting to see whether his method is realized for Enlightenment. He approached them just to tell them that their expectation was not in vain. After that he forbade his followers to proclaim their own success from practicing Dhamma. For the *Bhikkus* or the Buddhist monks such a proclamation is one of the gravest transgressions of the holy life called *Parajika*. Proclaiming the appreciation of the Buddhist doctrine is considered also an act of boasting for a layman and transgression of the most important regulation of the holy life. The four *Parisats* or members of Buddhist religions have the duty to practice Dharma without arrogance, i.e. without desiring to be praised or admired by other people. The admiration should rise up by itself. The admirers may show their devotion to the practisers and may desire to have part in the merits of the practisers by facilitating or serving them. In such a case, the practisers should allow admirers the chance with charitable attitude, i.e. by allowing them to gain the merits in their practices, but at the same time they must try to avoid showing off their success. If the success manifests itself automatically without the intention of the practisers, let it go its own way without the manipulation of the practisers. The success itself of the practisers will automatically attract the curiosity of those who happen to observe the extraordinary phenomenon; some may even venture to ask for an explanation. Then and only then will the Buddhist monks be allowed to preach.

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It is, therefore, the usual practice in all the Buddhist temples in Thailand that even in the official ceremony where a monk has to preach, the ceremony itself requires a layman to request officially in *Pali*, a language of the community (though the community does not understand what he says, because it is in Pali language), inviting the officiating monk to preach the general rule for the monks. It is a rule that "An authentic master does not look for disciples; let the disciples look for the master." We see nowadays Buddhist monks in radio or television programs, but before each chanting a layman has to recite a Pali formula of invitation and before each explication of Dharma, a layman has to ask a question or propose a problem.

The Buddha Himself only once walked a long distance for several days to search for the Group of Five (*Panhvaggi*) to preach to them the First Sermon immediately after His Enlightenment. That fact is not to be interpreted that He sought disciples, but to fulfill the invitation (*aratthana*) given to Him before the Enlightenment that once He was sure to discover any truth, they liked to know it. They became His first followers on the day of the First Sermon: the full moon of the Asalha month; and on that day the Triple Gem was established. The Buddha discovered the Dharma which is spread out by the *Sangha*, the community totally committed to Buddha and Dharma. The Sangha Community was composed of Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, Samaneras and Samemeris. The new Buddha is alone or with the Sangha of not less than four members.

The Sangha has the obligation to keep all regulations set up for them by the Lord Buddha. They are to discover the best possible way to get out of their own suffering and that of all mankind. To be liberated from suffering, one has to be conscious of one's own suffering, know the cause of suffering and put the right knowledge into the right practice. A Sangha member is supposed to practice himself for his own liberation and to teach what he practices. However, as the Dhamma is of utmost value, he should not impose it to unworthy persons at an inappropriate time or (*agocara*) place. He must have a discriminating judgment before addressing Dharma to a private person. He must ensure that the person is willing to listen and such an act is not boring the surrounding people. To preach in public, one representative of the public should ask for the sermon.

There are several ways to deliberate from suffering: to learn the Dharma, to aspire for the Dharma, to practice the Dharma, and to support others practicing it. Sangha members are the special target of supporting. However, they are forbidden to ask for support. The word *bhikku* (Pali) and *bhikshu* (Sanskrit) means "begger" (not beggar), but when bhikkhus walk around in the morning with metal bowls in their hands, it does not mean that they are wandering to bother villagers. They go out to fulfill their duty to offer any person the merit of Dharma which the bhikkhus practice. They just walk on without showing any desire of obtaining anything. Onlookers may stop them only if they offer anything to the bhikkhus.

All of this shows that Buddhist monks are the official communicators of Buddhist teachings in the Theravada tradition (the *Buddhaparisat*). They have to communicate all the time by keeping the *vinaya*. They practice the Dharma waiting for interested people to approach them and ask for preaching and to show the desire to offer support, in order to advance in the liberation of suffering. The invitation from listeners is a necessary condition for Buddhist monks of the Theravada tradition.

In case a Buddhist missionary establishes a new mission, he would stay there as a witness of the presence of the Buddhist Dharma, keeping the regulations and practicing Dharma. In the morning, he may be walking through the village even though nobody knows anything about Buddhism. He just allows anyone who might have the desire to share his path to Nirvana, to approach and invite him. One day someone may have enough curiosity to visit him and ask him about his way of life. Only then will he communicate the Dharma.

In distributing books on Dharma, distributors are not seen handing out books to passersby. The most they would do is to put the books on a table with a sign that says "Free of charge." They wait for an interested passerby to pick up the book and take it along. There is no imposing in the communication of Dhamma.

The philosophy behind the religious communication of Theravada Buddhism is that the Dharma is a matter of highest value. Therefore, it

should not be communicated without discretion. Dharma is the Noble Truth, so it must be communicated only in a noble way and with a noble intention. The Dharma should not be imposed nor offered with any trick, nor with any hope for financial gain. An authentic Buddhist would not engage in business to communicate Buddhism.

We have in our Christian tradition a Latin slogan: *Verba persuadent, sed example trahunt* (Words persuade but examples attract). My conclusion is that without neglecting the communication through words, shall we not also emphasize communication by practicing the examples of the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

COMMUNICATION DIMENSIONS OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
A Research Report from St. Peter's Pontifical Institute
*Sebastian Periannan**

1. Relevance of the Research

I am glad to have been asked to carry out this research. It is only through research that we mature in our logical thinking, grow in knowledge, become educational centers of higher learning and develop knowledge societies.

"No less important than teaching is doing research, unless the teaching faculty is involved with research as well, the system will become stale and sterile," observes Jayant Nartkar an astrophysicist in his book 'The Scientific edge'.[i]

Research is a process of obtaining knowledge through technique based on which truth, validity, and reliability as "the manipulation of things, concepts or symbols for the purpose of generalizing, to extend, correct or verity knowledge whether, that knowledge aids in construction of theory or in the practice of an art."[iii] (C.R. Kothari 1990).

The report of this research aims to offer spirituality for dialogue, a heart for tolerance, an intention to serve, a goal to build harmonious relations and finally set a direction for global peace and solidarity.

2. Objectives of this Research

   i. To expound the communication dimensions of interreligious dialogue through group discussion and reflection.
  ii. To identify the content and processes of dialogue in relation to communication dimensions.

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iii. To analyze the existing situation of interreligious dialogue as communication.
iv. To propose a few suggestions and strategies for dialogue in view of integrating the means of communication for the promotion of dialogue.

3. The Significance

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical ECCLESIAM SUAM, (1964) traced four concentric circles of dialogue on the part of the Church; dialogue with the world, dialogue with members of other religions; dialogue with other Christians; and finally dialogue within the Church itself (also refer to GS, 92).

If inter-religious dialogue is communication with its roots in religion, and culture, it should seek the promotion of integrating the means of communication, leading ultimately to collaboration among religions to provide them with inspiration in a multi-religious society and common prophetic action. Modern means of communication should eventually lead to interreligious dialogue through personal witness, community participation, social relations and global peace. What makes interreligious dialogue an interesting area of communication is that religion touches the deepest layers of persons and social groups. Because of these we can say that communication among religions is a real challenge.

- Interreligious dialogue is really an inter-communication among truly religious men. They are committed to their own faith but still, being conscious of the fact that they are only at the level of seeking, they like to share in the experience of others and thereby get enriched in their own experience of God".[iii]
- We live in an age of mass communication, and information explosion. More than ever before in human history, today one is able to communicate faster, better, bigger and wider. Modern science and technology have provided us with a variety of effective media in print, radio, television, video, CD, cable, cellular technologies and Internet.
- Religious groups that remain outside the (Internet communication revolution) will become ghettos, like some Puritan communities in the 18th and 19th centuries who tried to halt the passage of time to preserve

tradition. Changes arising from computer technology are irreversible.
- The Gospel presented over television is the most effective means of bringing the message of Christ to millions of people. With television you can reach more people per dollar spent than by any other means. Every week thousands of letters are received in our offices that justify to the tremendous impact this program has for the work of God. "I love the Bible and am thoroughly convinced that it is God's word to us as old as it is. The principles are still the truth. I desperately wanted to communicate it. And I just realized the traditional sermon of a half hour monologue was not doing it. I felt that some kind of visual effect would help."[iv]
- These media should be used for effectively communicating the truth through interreligious dialogue in an integrated approach rather than an isolationist, unified and collaborative approach. The direction we take is one that recognizes the convergence between the worlds of religion and the media.

4. Methodology

74 students in their final year of theology at St. Peter's Pontifical Institute (Bangalore, India) were divided into small groups of nine. Each group chose for study and critically to evaluate one of five dimensions of communication, to see how far these media function as a vehicle of interreligious communication. The students observed the interactions of about 300 respondents during festivals and other normal times and also made a study on a few media such print media, radio programmed, TV, cinema, evangelical programs in TV, and Internet influences. The researcher and the students of the final year pf Theology class used the qualitative research method to expound the communication dimension of interreligious dialogue and to bring out the content and processes of dialogue in relation to the communication dimensions.

5. The Research Process

The data were collected over a period of three months. Students and the researcher took two months to discuss and analyze the data. The data were collected through focus group discussion, in-depth interview observation during family visits, and media exposure. In the outcome, the

students identified the existing situation of interreligious dialogue as communication.

Participants of the Research

The respondents are 200 Hindus, 40 Muslims, 50 Christians, and 10 Sikhs. They were selected at random as purposive sampling.

a. Research Question

This research is exploratory in nature and hence the research questions were:
1. What are the communication dimensions of interreligious dialogue?
2. How are the context and the process of dialogue linked with the communication dimensions?
3. What is the role of the modern means of communication in interreligious dialogue?

b. Qualitative Methods used for the research
Participants Observation
Interaction during normal life and festivals
Family and field visits
Media exposure during the period of study
Focus group discussion
In-depth interviews

c. Media Exposure Includes

Traditional Means
Signs, symbols
Dance, Drama, Stories, Skits
Festivals
Family Celebrations

Modern Means of Communication

Television	: we see it as it happens
Radio	: the talking box, reachable
Video	: it is impact, flexible
Audio cassette	: like to walk and talk
Print	: write it down, "publish or perish"
Film	: the magnificent screen and scream
Music, party, dance, drama	: I can't sit still so dance
Computer's Internet	: bits and bytes, the language of 1s and 0s will determine the future of the global village

d. We observed

Dance from Tribal religions	: Land
Devotion from Hinduism	: River
Compassion from Buddhism	: Archery
Law from Judaism	: Stone, Ten Commandments
Charity for Christianity	: Cross
Peace from Jainism	: Swastika
Discipline from Islam	: Qur'an book
Patience from Bahai	: Temple
Valour from Sikhism	: Light

e. Life line of every communication

Serve us fast	: E.g. Food
Keep it clean	: Hygiene
We need change	: Look good
What's new	: Menu
Money	: Economic factor
Turn on the music or channel	: What for FM

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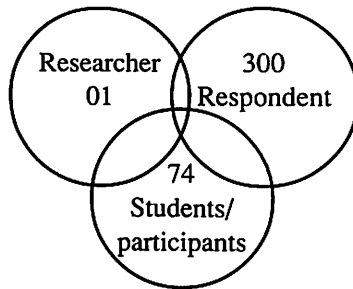|	
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e. Life line of every communication

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5.1 Findings and Discussion

This paper identified five dimensions of communication in relation to interreligious dialogue such as religio-pastoral, social, developmental, ethical, and advocacy. The presupposition or the hypothesis here is that every communication - as an act, event or process - would include all of these or one or two of these dimensions in inter-religious dialogue given the situation and the needs of the hour.

- The *Religio-Pastoral* dimension includes all that is connected to religious and pastoral communication. Almost all religions involve themselves in religious and pastoral activities through intra-personal, interpersonal, and group communication level more, which help for interreligious dialogue. It can, of course, help overcome misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the religious views of others, and facilitate better understanding of the serious points of other cultures' and peoples' religious experience.
- *Social* dimension covers all that is intercultural communications. Social dimension also includes the mass media communication for any interreligious dialogue purpose. True interreligious dialogue is not an encounter between religious systems in abstract ways. Rather, it is a meeting between human persons who share a common human nature. According to many religions, all human beings - irrespective of race, sex, color, language and education - are endowed with the dignity of their divine origin through their relation, whether they are conscious of it or not, with the Sacred.
- *Developmental* dimension embraces human and community development activities in and through communication. Every communication by nature is developmental, when it aims at harmony through participation and liberation.
- *Ethical* dimension demands equality and justice through the principles of interactivity, inter-subjectivity and conviviality towards global peace. During the past few decades, interreligious dialogue has passed through various phases and has brought people of different persuasions and cultures closer together. (1) Certain scholars have seen in this dialogue great hope for understanding anew the religious experience, even seeing a way to reach new religious consensus that could enable an agreement for globally accepted ethics. What makes it easy for us to

converse and communicate with followers of other religions is the acceptance of them as brothers and sisters with deep respect for their freedom, especially their freedom of conscience.
- *Advocacy* dimension is the result of seeking for change and human solidarity through communication. A certain degree of advocacy is ensured and assured in every communication.

Ten Rules For Advocacy With Non-Jews as an example

The Chicago Chapter of AJC, based on earlier recommendations by Rabbi A. James Rudin, Director of Interreligious Affairs, developed the following rules:

1. Be there
2. Don't try to defend the indefensible
3. Listen
4. Focus
5. Avoid preaching history and law
6. The person with the most words usually loses
7. Know your audience
8. Journalists are often ignorant-but they are usually not dumb
9. Two wrongs don't make a right
10. Don't try to change people's minds; concentrate on raising doubts

Interreligous dialogue as communication has its own nature, characteristics, content, process and outcome. Every dialogue aims at the dispelling of prejudices, promotion of mutual understanding, sharing of spiritual experience, etc. but the focus is always on the common search for Truth, for an experience of God, and for theological understanding.

One can well imagine the vast network of communications that such a project involves. At the basis are personal and interpersonal communication of respect and trust. This involves communication systems that are verbal, non-verbal and experiential. Then there is an information flow with an aim that is both positive (to inform), and negative (to remove prejudices). Information can be communicated, through formal channels like schools and social service centers, various types of media (public and private), as well as non-formal ones like presence and

participation in celebrations and ceremonies. Any sharing of views and efforts at interpretation, however popular a level, is an occasion for clarification and understanding. At still another level we have common experience. Experience, especially if it is in the context of a religious celebration, supposes some understanding of symbols and some emotional involvement. Celebrations at micro levels like the family or small groups will have very different dynamics compared with those involving masses of people. From the point of view of communication, one can distinguish nature, characteristics, content, process, and outcome.[v]

A. Analysis of the group discussion on communication dimensions of interreligious dialogue

Dialogue/ Dimension	Nature	Characteristics	Content	Process	Outcome
Religio-Pastoral	Scripture Tradition	Charity	* Sharing the Good News * Experience of God * Witness of Life	* Respect for others * Festivals * Reconciliation	Spiritual Mission
Social	Intercultural	Community Building	Art, Music, Mutual understanding	* Family visits * Success stories *Group experience	Service
Developmental	Liberative Participating	Outreach	Education Networking Cooperation	Project Activities	Harmony
Ethical	Principles	Equality & Justice	Value Formation	Awareness Programs Non-Violence	Global Peace
Advocacy	Change	Appreciation	Offering hope	Good will research	Solidarity

B. Analysis of the existing situation of the content of dialogue

Dimension	Content	In the Media	Outside Reality
Religio-Pastoral	* Sharing the Good news * Experience of God * Witness of Life	* Few cases * Few Instances * Rare	* Openness to listen * Some instances * Some cases
Social	* Art * Music * Mutual Understanding	* Enhances dialogue * Not sufficient * 20%	* Helps the dialogue * Helps at times/disturbs more * 60%
Developmental	* Education * Networking * Cooperation	* Few Programs * Lacking too much * Competition	* Literacy less than average * At grass root level
Ethical	* Value * Formation	Not efficiently carried out	Awareness is there but not reaching the dialogical level
Advocacy	Offering hope	More consumerism	Some cases

C. Analysis of the existing situation of the process of dialogue

Dimension	Content	In the Media	Outside Reality
Religio-Pastoral	* Respect for the other * Festivals * Reconciliation	* Dominated & one sided * Majority controls * Very few cases	* Caste class, ethnic * Rich Dominate * Depends on formation
Social	* Family visits * Successful stories	* Family sits and watches * Few Instance * Not known	* Slowly decreasing * Not noticed * Not known
Developmental	* Projects * Activities	* Occasional * Few cases	Corrupt * Nepotism
Ethical	* Awareness * Non-violence	* Very rare Almost nil	* Lacking * Promoted life
Advocacy	* Goodwill Research	Shown to rich and famous * Few cases	* According to one's background * Few Relevant ones

D. Broad representation of communication dimension in the media
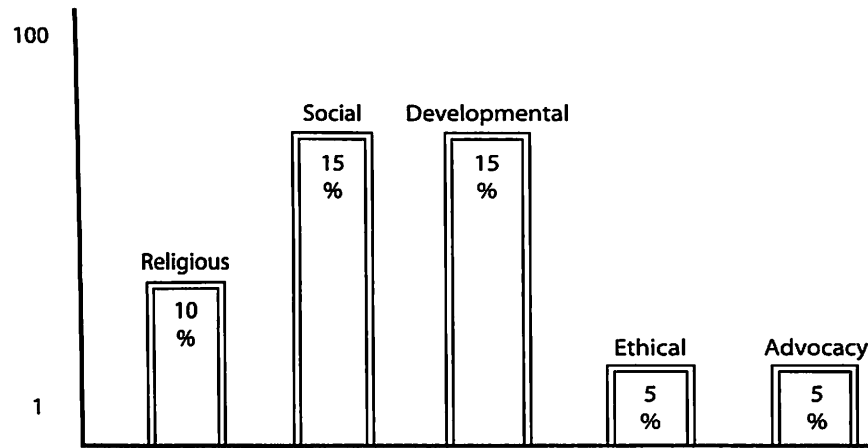
E. Main reasons for Interreligious dialogue being treated unfairly

- Media does not publicize positive aspects/ but only negative scandals --- 47%
- Sensationalism / exaggeration -- 23%
- Misrepresentation / criticize without knowledge, not treated seriously ------------------------------------- 14%
- Anti-religious or fundamentalistic ----------------------------------- 14%
- Not enough media coverage --- 07%
- Stereotyped image of people / religion ------------------------------ 03%

For cross reference, I wish to quote "What is missing from most Church analysis of the present situation, however, is any sort of consideration of the part played by changes in the social structures of mediated communication. Five years ago I surveyed ten recent theological texts addressing issues of theology and culture. Of the ten, only one made any mention of media as a significant factor in their cultural analysis" (p. 274 MR). More or less the same kind of trend could be noticed in our analysis too.

5.2 Implications

What can we do for promoting interreligious dialogue from the point of view of modern means of communications? At the level of information the media can certainly be of help. Negatively we should avoid, not only anything that might hurt other believers, but also stereotypes that reflect and create prejudices, generalizations etc. Positively, a lot of information about other religions could be provided. Presenting Gospel message through different communication media, in a process that does not wound the other religion in itself will be a form of interreligious dialogue. Since, their aim and goal is to promote a better society and a good moral life, we can also integrate their message with ours, especially in communicating through social communications. One of us preferred Jesus' parable the most, since it carries all the social issues such as God's love for sinners, love of neighbors, the stifling effect of religion upon human concerns, unjustified prided, exclusivism of the pious, God's concern for the poor in preference to the rich.

The nature of media is to communicate goodness and values of life, but it presently does it only partially. Today, we live in an age of information and media communication. So, information is inspiration, power and wealth. Today, media companies are large profit-seeking corporations. Therefore, naturally no regard is given to human values and ethics. At this juncture, genuine lovers of ethical values are called for, to take necessary steps to curtail things that damage society. The knowledge that we have gained through dialogue, life experience, and intuition through the basic principles of interreligious dialogue call us to a new kind of catechetical approach. No more we can remain in one-way communication (Bullet Style: Sender-Receiver). Rather, a multi-dialogue is the need of the hour.

Interreligious dialogue gives a call to attack the common interreligious monster i.e., the negative side of technological development that promotes materialistic culture, mammon worship and satanic civilization. So, basically we should give a spiritualistic worldview among the youth. They should be enlightened by their own religion to create an egalitarian society and to have open-mindedness to other religions and even-mindedness for all religious traditions. This will uproot fanaticism

and would create a world of peace. Openness to other religions means, we should stop evaluating other religions basing on *a priori* theological presuppositions, in other words, prejudices. On the contrary, we should have facts ascertained through direct and lived experience of other religions.

Tolerance and respect for other religions will in no way endanger our conviction about our own religion. Every religion has at least a ray of truth. We should not consider people of other religion as ignorant and sitting in the shadows of death. Sensitivity in the use of language not only expresses a mentality but also reinforces that mentality in others. Here, one has to be sensitive about the language s/he uses. Both at the intra-religious and interreligious levels, expressions like "pagans," "infidels," or "souls to be saved" should be avoided.

5.3 Recommendations from the key findings

A. Exchange of views, gifts and success stories
*   When we strive for love and peace of our neighbor we can make use of great icons and their success stories, provided they serve our purpose.
*   Exchanging gifts and sweets during festival times.
*   Helping other religious people in their family celebrations. Materially, also we can cultivate the feeling of support, relationship and unity among us.

B. Service to the poor and needy
*   Women empowerment programs through media
*   Rehabilitation programs, small industry programs
*   Helping out the marginalized caught in the great deal of globalization.
*   The goal of Interreligious dialogue in itself should remove human suffering.
*   The very act of proclaiming the Good News and pastoral counseling, which heal their wounds

C. Inculturation

Inculturation was the main point of discussion. Some were also advocating Gospel enactment through local cultural media.

*   Use the stories of other religions to educate children in the moral teachings
*   To teach Bible in the Asian context without losing its originality
*   Some inspired even saying the scripture of one religion will unfold the other. For example, the mystical dimension of John's Gospel becomes clearer when it is read in relation with *Bhagavad Gita*. Books of prophets can unearth the explosive elements of Upanishad literature. So we felt an immediate need for developing Interreligious Hermeneutics to disclose the deeper dimensions of scripture and symbols which will transform us.

In communication itself, the process is as important as the media and the content.

D. Non-Formal methods may be more effective in creating and changing attitudes

*   The question-answer type of catechism should be changed and replaced by human experience, theater forum, role-play, interview, panel forum, press conferences, case study, demonstration, brain storming and reaction teams, which could infuse knowledge better.
*   We need to promote discussion between representatives of various religions on national moral and spiritual issues. Such discussion could be promoted, not only over TV and radio, but also in public forums and schools. Contemporary techniques make possible public participation even in TV and radio debates.
*   Christians are expected to fulfill one more role i.e., prophetic role. They are expected to be bold enough to clarify their stand against evil forces in the society. They should prove that they are always for justice and truth and not for corruption and destruction in society.
*   The experiences of the suffering, the exploited, the dejected and rejected, as well as the outcasts could be expressed through pints and dramas. By this, we can extinguish the sparkle of enmity in the minds created by fanatics against humanity.

- To present interreligious unity in dance form as Kalai Kaviri College of Fine Arts (Tiruchirappalli, India) does.
- To strive to create a common inter-faith museum, multi-religious art exhibitions, dramas and street-plays with people from different religions as actors and participants. Christians could use messages and stories of other religions suitable to their ministry. Some ways of meditation could be found helpful.
- In the field of music, composition of interreligous dialogue songs is an urgent necessity in which common religious sentiments could be expressed.
- Visiting families in parishes, not only Christians, and participating in their joys and sorrows, and in their celebrations is highly recommended. While visiting patients in hospitals, visiting also the sick members of other religions is estimable.
- We need to allow people to speak up, not only leaders, and encourage them to make decisions. Appreciate their faith and belief as well as highlight ethical and social concerns. At the same time, we should also proclaim and exalt our rich faith. If possible, discussion of particular issues of concern could be done.
- It is also recommended to go for a parish interreligious dialogue group. Members could come together often and share their opinion on political, social and environmental matters. Newsletters, e-news and the mass media may also be employed.
- Nowadays, media plays an important role in formation and people are addicted to it, e.g., derails, film etc. We can make use of this media to conduct serials, dramas, bible quiz, family prayer and information-exchange regarding Church documents, so that parents may receive support, education, and encouragement to impart to their children. As a result, children may become interested and involve themselves in Church activities under the guidance of ministers.
- Common seminars will help towards mutual understanding of different religions. Something that could be considered important is to accept our own faults and be ready to apologize for past mistakes.
- Meaningful dialogue is possible only between partners who are convinced of and firmly rooted in their respective traditions. Otherwise, dialogue will lead to reductionism, relativism and secularism.
- We need to establish educational institutions where faith and values

of all religions are taught. The education of the heart is the heart of education. Set up a festival day in which people of all religions participate. Heads and members of all religions are to come together to discuss the needs of society. Picnics and excursions together with members of different religions to different religious spots will enhance religious tolerance and dialogue.

- An artistic way of presenting the message of the Bible will be more effective in today's multi-religious context. For example, Bible skits, dramas, movies, broadcasting of Bible serials, etc. are effective cultural activities to communicate the message of Jesus. More important is that we should not degrade any religion in our activities. Rather, we must be able to find the truth and positive elements of other religions that we can integrate into ours. Openness towards other religions, tolerance and respect for other religions are urgent needs.
- We can take initiative to form different organizations and name them as ARYM (All Religion Youth Movement), or ARWM (All Religion Women Movement). Through these organizations, one could easily mingle with people of other religions.
- We need to recognize the wide range of goals family members have for media. We have to balance guidelines with discussions on art, aesthetics and dynamics of media selection.
- There should be more cooperation in charity projects that are always our way of living, our life witness to others. It is useless walking to preach unless we preach while we walk. The only media that can attract others is the media of life.

It is up to us how to use the means of communication responsibly. Today, interreligious dialogue is a must for the Church in India. Throwing these few reflections for our consideration and immediate action, I conclude with the words of Pope John Paul II, in his address to the Catholic Indian Bishops, "Interreligious dialogue too is a serious part of our apostolic ministry. The Lord calls you, especially in the particular circumstance in which you are placed, to do everything possible to promote this dialogue according to the commitment of the Church".[vi]

End Notes

[i] N. Gopal Raj, *Universities and Scientific Research*, The Hindu, July 8, 2004.

[ii] Kothari, C.R., *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, New Delhi: Eastern Wiley Ltd., 1990.

[iii] Pushparajan, A., *Communication of the Gospel in the Context of Interreligious Dialogue*, Indian Theological Studies, Vol. XXII, 1985, pp. 152-171.

[iv] John P. Ferre, *The Media of Popular Piety*; (ed)., Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage, *Mediating Religion - Conversation in Medai, Religion and Culture*, T&T Clark Ltd., MPG Books, 2003, pp 83-92.

[v] Michael Amalados, *Interreligious Dialogue and Communication*, Communicatio Socialis Yearbook, Vol. IX, 1990, pp. 119-124 & 153-161. Also see, Jacques Dupuis, SJ, *Interreligious Dialogue, a Challenge to Christian Identity*, Swedish Missiological Themes, 92, 1 (2004), pp. 21-39.

[vi] Pope address to the Catholic Bishops of India at New Delhi, No. 4 AAS 78, m 1996, p.747.

TEXTING GOD :
SMS & RELIGION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Anthony G. Roman *

Introduction

No digital technology has probably caught the imagination of Filipinos more than the cellular phone. Five years since SMS-capable (short messaging system) units appeared in the market in 1999, the use of cellphone spread more than did other media like personal computers.

"The Philippines is now the texting capital of the world. Meryll Lynch reported that for the first quarter of 2001, there were approximately 7.2 million cellphone subscribers in the Philippines: 2.9 million (40.6%) of them were held by Globe Telecom, 3.4 million (48.5%0 by Smart Communications and 788,000 (10.9) by Pilipinas Telephone Corp. (Smart's sister company). For this period, the average SMS transmission was about 65.4 million a day. In 2002, Nokia estimates that there are around 10 million cellphones in the Philippines, transmitting about 100 million text messages a day." (Pertierra et al, 2002, p.88)

"The Philippines isn't called SMS capital of the world for nothing. Ever since the beginning of SMS, it has become a vital part in the Filipino lifestyle. The SMS also helped overthrow the corrupt Estrada government in 2001. By 2005 the major telecommunications companies expect that the number of mobile phones/subscribers will rise to 49 million, almost 60%·of the population."
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki Communications in the Philippines)

Among the published writings on cellphone and its social impact is one by social anthropologist Raul Pertierra and his colleagues (2002). The book "Txt-ing Selves, Cellphones and Modernity" reported the results of a survey of some 700 cellphone users from all over the country.

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In it are stories of varied cellphone uses from the pragmatic – how it aids business and professional work – to the pursuit of social, legal, and political causes. What is revealing in this 2002 study is the effect of the technology on the "self" – how certain people are empowered by it and how low self-esteem apparently got the necessary boost through cellphone use (pp. 63-86). This paper tries to examine yet another use of the cellphone, that is, the spread of Christian faith or what the Catholic Church calls "evangelization" not by voice calls but by texting.

The Philippines is known to have the largest Catholic population in Asia – second to East Timor. Eighty percent of its 77 million population pledges allegiance to the Holy See in the Vatican. With the many SMS services offered to Filipinos including religious services, it is interesting to know how young Catholics in the country use their cellphones. Are religious SMS services used and if at all, how far are they being used? Or do young Filipinos show a leaning towards alternative, secular SMS services?

For this paper, a survey was conducted with 482 students of University of Santo Tomas, a Catholic university in the capital Manila. A questionnaire was administered from September-December 2004 to 186 male (38% of the sample) and 296 female students (62%) whose age ranges from 15 to 24 years old. Interviews were also conducted. The sample is a purposive sample therefore, the statistics given in the analysis are indicative rather than conclusive.

The results, however, are quite revealing and might help pastoral ministry with the young. It was found, for example, that only one third of the sample subscribe to religious SMS services. One third of the students additionally subscribe to "mobile chat services" – the mobile version of Internet chatrooms where strangers meet and discover friends and romantic matches. But a full third of chat subscribers, or one-tenth of the sample, apparently find more than just romantic matches but sexual partners as well.

In the survey it appears that young Filipinos are in need of *relating* with other people. Relating goes much further than mere *connectivity* provided by cellphones. The study points to mutual sharing

and openness as having positive consequences for ministry than mere sending of Biblical and inspirational quotes to young people.

The one-way sending of quotes, however, should continue as it is helpful for evangelizing work. But complementing this with some form of interpersonal exchange will have a greater impact on young people's lives. Connection, relation, openness and dialogue are the building blocks of *community*, and community after all is what it means to be "church."

Cellphone and the Self

Communication scholar, Rich Ling (2004), describes the relationship of teens with their cellphones as providing security, allowing "anytime-anywhere-for-whatever-reason type of access," and bounding tightly together their respective social networks. "Its use as a type of lifeline and its use in coordination of everyday life are nothing if not functional and instrumental" (p. 85). The university survey confirms this, even suggesting that the cellphone has become an extension of the self.

All of the respondents were found to have cellphones. Eight out of ten have owned a cellphone for more than two years, and have changed their units at least twice within that period. Practical uses of the technology given include "Linking to family" (100%) meaning that young people these days are in better contact with their parents. Conversely, parents now have a better way of tracking down the activities of their youngsters.

Seven out of ten (70%) respondents cited the convenient use of the unit's alarm clock in keeping appointments and beating deadlines. While cellphones help them "meet new friends" (68%), they also bring relative ease to meeting the demands of academic life. A majority of the respondents said that cellphones are a "necessity." More than half of the young people surveyed said their cellphones are "a part of me" (54%), and a good "companion" (52%). This means today cellphones are no longer an accessory but something like clothing. Leaving home without it is unthinkable. "You feel naked without a cellphone," an informant said.

Pertierra and his colleagues (2002) gave two reasons why it is necessary for Filipinos to own a cellphone. One reason has to do with the

inadequate landline telephone facilities especially in remote parts of the country. Another reason, and this has more relevance to this study because the sample population is right in the capital city, is the need for *mobile communication*. Unlike stationary landline installations, cellphones offer the ease of anytime, anywhere communication.

A third reason is the need for a companion in an increasingly individualistic world. Filipinos seek a kind of "grounding" amid the hustle and bustle of the modernizing world. That certain grounding is sought in being constantly connected with parents, relatives and friends using the cellphone.

"Cellphones do not provide any viable answers to the problems of modernity but they give us the means to share our anxieties, uncertainties, trivialities and even banalities with others. They help us navigate and make sense of the virtual, real and imaginary worlds that we inhabit." (Pertierra, et al, 2002, p. 151)

Communications Professor, Paul Levinson (2004), refers to humans becoming *mobile hearths* in the wake of modern media like cellphone. Mobile hearths are able to receive and produce messages defying both time and distance. "The result of all these capacities instantly at hand is that the contents of our minds, including ideas, impulses, strategies, become a fingertip away from implementation. In a world of *omni*-communication, thoughts and ideas are easier to enact." (pp. 52-53)

SMS: A New Way of Communication

Mobile phone users in the country, especially young people, are generally hooked into texting. In the university survey, only 8 percent of the students expressed disliking for the cellphone's SMS feature. Forty-four percent take a neutral stance, being neither affected positively nor negatively by texting. But close to half of the sample population (48%) say they actually "enjoy" exchanging text messages.

Figure 1:
Do you enjoy texting?

48% 8% 44%

- I don't like texting
- Texting is "just fine"
- I enjoy texting
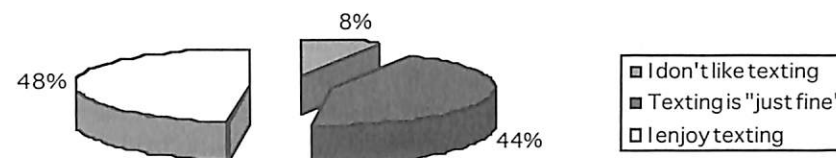
In early 2000, academicians discussed how SMS might influence the proper introduction of young people to the English language. The way messages are encoded into the tiny device, in most cases ignoring proper syntax and spelling, was seen as revolutionary if not highly irregular.

The practice involves truncating letters so that meaning is deciphered on the basis of sounds produced pronouncing the remaining letters of supposed words. A text message with the letters "wer r u nw," for example, asks the recipient of his or her whereabouts ("where are you now"). The text "mt u @ d ofc 6pm" gives specific details of a planned meeting between the communicating parties ("meet you at the office 6 pm"). Morning and afternoon greetings are simply encoded "G'am," "gud am," "G'pm" or "gud pm." "Smileys" are often included to compensate for the lack of means of showing emotions. Information technology experts call these "emoticons" or icons that represent emotions. Thus, a smile can be encoded as ":-)" or the German umlaut for the letter "u."

Some people, especially older groups and those that are adept in American English, insist on the correct spelling of words. But they lose the advantage of encoding as much information as needed, not to mention the economy of lesser punches in the cellphone keypad.

Communication scholar Walter Ong sees this age of computers and cellphones as part of the "secondary orality" stage in the development communication technology where the dominant "sensorium" or the "material practices of communication in each culture" involves sight and sound, voice, image and music. (O'Leary in Dawson and Cowan, 2004, pp. 38-41) This stage dates back to the onset of printing technology and has the aspects of both orality ("primary orality" of preliterate cultures which principally uses sound) and literacy. In a computer-dominated world like ours, these two elements "are combined into a new, hybrid form of communication that, in the words of one networker,

'is both talking and writing yet isn't completely either one. It's talking by writing. It's writing because you type it on a keyboard and people read it. But because of the ephemeral nature of luminescent letters on a screen, and because it has such a quick – sometimes instant – turn-around, it's more like talking' (Coate, 1992)" (ibid.)

Cellphone as Inspiration

In the 2002 nation-wide survey by Pertierra, eight out of ten respondents (79.7%) said the arrival of a text message "gives pleasure." In the university survey, thirty percent of the students say the arrival of a text message "makes me feel important," and a third (33%) admits to being "inspired" by it. While the latter response may conjure up romantic connotations, we cannot entirely discount its religious dimension. In fact, many of pre-typed messages, so-called "forwarded messages," have strong religious bases, or themselves inspired by some religious thought. Even simple morning greetings are loaded with references to the Divine as the following examples show:

<Example 1>	<Example 2>	<Example 3>
7 RULES 2 BE HAPPY:	Without "JESUS	Frenshp s
1>never hate.	CHRIST", days are	Imposible 2 kip
2>don't worry.	"moanday" "tearsday"	w/in urself…
3>live simple.	"wasteday" "thirstday"	It will always
4>expect a little.	"fightday" "shatterday"	xtend as far as
5>give a lot.	& "sinday" so allow Him	it can reach 2
6>always smile.	to be w/"U" everyday.. !	touch harts…
7>have Christ n ur heartGod bless	GOD BLESS U	Exactly d way u
		touchd myn…
		tnx 4 d
		frendshp…

The 2002 Filipino study also revealed that nearly half (45.9%) of the total number of forwarded messages received daily are "inspirational," and half (24%) fall under a so-called "informative" category. Only 16 percent of the messages are labeled "humorous." These often come with sexual references regarded as funny and during national political exercises, satirical treatments of prominent political figures.

Faith via SMS

The late Pope John Paul II, staunch promoter of modern media use for evangelization, delivered his 2004 Midnight Mass and Christmas Day messages via cellphones in Italy. This was made possible through collaboration with the Italian state-broadcaster and two popular cellphone operators in the country, *Vodafone* and *Telecom Italia Mobile*. Although the service was enabled for third generation cellphones only, it shows the utility of the medium for faith-based communications. (Curnow, Robyn: "Dial-a-Prayer, upgraded" in *International Herald Tribune*, January 17, 2005, p. 12)

In England, a non-denominational Church catering to the gay and lesbian community has used text messaging to extend care and support for its clientele. The project involves two-way communication where texters actually interact with a pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church in Manchester. (ibid.)

Islamic groups also use wireless technology to maintain contacts with their followers. In Britain, the Islamic Prayer Alert Service sends out more than 70,000 messages a month to remind Muslim subscribers of the times for daily prayers and quotations from the Qu'ran. (ibid.) (For more information about SMS and Religion around the world, visit *<http://www.textually.org/textually/archives/cat_sms_and_religion.htm>)*

In the Philippines, cellphones are used for a wide range of purposes from high-profile politics, propelling a change in government in 2001 and a failed coup attempt in 2002, to the rather low-key Catholic education and evangelization. Religious texts sometimes take a high-profile status when universal concerns are pushed forward. Whenever John Paul II's health was endangered, forwarded messages

circulated requesting prayers for his recovery. Text messages also flooded during the Pope's final hours calling for prayers and invoking Divine intervention. Requests to light candles in churches and in homes were also announced via radio, TV and text messaging.

Text greetings have become a custom among Filipinos. They get messages across easily, and texting is considerably cheaper than voice calls. Here are few sample text messages circulated last Christmas and Easter:

<Example 4>	<Example 5>	<Example 6>
This CHRISTMAS, I wish u	D Risen Lord is	J-E-S-U-S-
not	NOT a relic of a	Can't b
Just smiles but	past 2 b	spelled
Laughter, not	cherishd. He is a	w/out -U-
Just happiness but Pure	living presence 2	Bcause -U-
Joy;	xperience &	are the reason y
Not just wealth but	share. Let's live	He gave up
Heaven's	&proclaim His	Hs Life on
Treasures; & not just	msge of Peace 2	d CRoSS.
silence	all always	AS He Loves me,
But God's Peace!	&evrywher!	He Loves -U-
		too!! HAPPY
		EASTER!!

One wonders where such forwarded messages come from, and who instigates them. To this day, no one knows exactly. Some informants allege that mobile phone companies themselves send these out to few subscribers for re-circulation. Such messages include "chain texts," prayer requests in exchange for miracles or to avert some dooms-day prediction, to keep people hooked on their keypads and spend money credits.

<Example 7>	<Example 8>
Sr Reodica predicts	2day is Mama Mary's feast
Intensity 9 erthquake	day. Pray 1 our father
On apr14 @ 5pm.	3 hail marys
Pls pray	1 glory be. Pass
2 save us from	on to 5 frens &
dis trial.	xpect a miracle
Pass on!!!	2nyt. Don't ignore!!

Text manuals, however, can be easily found in bookstores and anyone with a hint of piety and time to spare could devise a relevant greeting and send to friends. A good return rate is always assured, sometimes with impressive and touching thoughts ready for re-circulation. On Palm Sunday 2005 with no manual at hand the greeting below (Example 9) was sent to ten of the author's friends. On the very same day, seven replies were received. Three were messages of a similar nature; four were notes of thanks.

<Example 9>
JESUS enters r
Own temples
2day. Lets
pray: 'Lord,
come w/ d whip
2 cleans me of
everythn datdispleases u
AMEN'

One criticism about cellphone use is the relative high cost of maintaining a unit. Young people especially, like buying accessories to enhance the look of their phones. Users, however, generally complain of the expensive call and text rates mobile phone companies charge. Those on fixed monthly rate subscription plans are fairly outnumbered by pre-paid card users because the latter is thought to be more economical. Pre-paid cards are sold at roughly 5 US$ or 9 US$ denominations. A text message roughly costs 0.05 US$ per send, while voice calls cost about 0.15 US$ per minute.

With all the benefits of anytime-anywhere communications, twenty six percent of the university students still said maintaining cellphones is expensive. Connectivity comes with a price, and even though "texting" is cheaper than voice calls, these students restrain themselves in order to save for more important messages. Nevertheless, mobile phone companies are aware of Filipinos' penchant for texting; they devised many schemes to keep subscribers stuck on their keypads. And religion is one of the applications thought to bring in good business.

In 2001, a multinational firm specializing in wireless technology pioneered a catechism project through SMS, which has gained support from Church authorities in the Philippines. The project evolved in three stages. At first, it was a "religious chatroom" accessible through a four-digit access code. The service was soon discontinued because some texters joined seeking sexual gratification rather than moral or religious education. It was likened to Internet chatrooms where visitors play on chance to meet romantic or sexual partners online.

By mid-2002, the same project took on counseling as its service. Again, it was short-lived because texters with questionable motives and pathological cases came in. By the end of that year to this day, the service simply sends Biblical quotations to subscribers. In addition to a main "Quote" service, two key figures in the Philippine-church were employed each having their own key-word access with the same four-digit code and short reflections for their own subscribers. The four-digit code became a one-time subscription pass to receive quotes on a daily basis, for which standard texting rates apply. Interactivity was changed into what is referred as "push technology" where messages are sent from a single source to subscribers with little mechanism for feedback. An insider says that feedback is possible, but whatever is received goes directly to the server and not to the priest-writers of the reflections. Often, feedback is used for marketing purposes alone and not to establish further contact with subscribers.

Mobile phone service providers and some religious congregations later followed suit and competed head-on offering different kinds of service. A few replicate the sending of Biblical quotes while others attempted more elaborate practices like mobile versions of two of the most cherished Catholic prayers – the Rosary, and Way of the Cross. Only one service provides counseling service "SEEK 2346" by the Jesuits in the Philippines. (See Appendix A)

The university survey aimed to find out if the students are aware of these religious SMS services, and whether they subscribe to them. The results show that about four out of ten (43%) are aware of at least one existing service, the most popular being "Quote 2978." Interestingly, however, half of that or two out of ten (20%) of the students actually

subscribe to it. And in total, a little over third of the entire sample (38%) subscribes to faith-based texting services.

Table 1: **Religious SMS Service –**
Awareness and Subscription

Service	Aware of	Subscribe to
Quote 2978	43%	20%
Mobile Rosary	18%	6%
Reflect Txt	20%	6%
AMEN 2971	12%	4%
Mobile Way of the Cross	12%	3%
Reflect MMS	7%	3%
SEEK 2346	11%	2%
SEEK 29766	4%	2%
Reuter 2978	4%	1%
Soc 2978	2%	1%

Figure 2:
Do you subscribe to religious SMS services?

Those who knew of "Quote 2978" and other religious SMS, but are not active subscribers, must have learned about the service through word-of-mouth or through advertising. One of the priests writing reflections maintains a column in a major daily newspaper. The students may have aborted their subscription for one of the reasons given below. (Table 2) These are the top-six reasons for disliking religious SMS services. Among other reasons, the students are not so appreciative of "one-way" communication where quotes are simply sent to them (12%).

A small number (5%) also said "cellphone is *not* for religion." Although the total percentage is given here, male and female responses were separately tabulated and found to actually have no difference. Male and female students share the same views about religious SMS services.

Table 2: **"What I *don't* like about religious SMS services …"**

Expensive	18%
Passive	13%
Too "catholic"	13%
Logos (downloadable graphics as accessory)	12%
Boring	12%
One-way form of communication	**12%**

Subscribers of religious SMS, meanwhile, gave their reasons for liking the service. In addition to the list in Table 3, the students also said they like religious wallpapers (16%), similar to logos, which they can save and display on their cellphone monitors. Ringtones with religious flavor are another favorite (16%), which again can be saved and used as melody for incoming calls or texts. A few of the students (13%) cited the fact that religious messages are not only inspiring, they give some form of "entertainment" as well (13%).

Table 3: **"What I like about religious SMS services …"**

Inspiring	**36%**
Prayer guides	28%
Relaxing	25%
Deepens faith	21%
Logos	18%

SEX and SMS

Young people in general are said to be getting too much pornography in this age of Internet and other new media. Indeed, lewd material has infiltrated the cellphone either in text form or as graphic

image. Third generation cellphones are able to run short video clips from porn flicks and those produced at home. In 2004, a few TV artists got involved in sex video scams which the local entertainment media feasted upon. Those two-minute or so video clips circulated among cellphone users and have reached few informants of this research.

But the majority of the university students who took part in the survey (59%) maintain that they do *not* enjoy trading illicit material via MMS ("multimedia system" where the content is a combination of alphanumeric characters, JPEG images and the like). There are a few likely reasons to explain this. Among them, is the fact that third generation cellphones or "MMS-capable" cellphones have not saturated the Philippine-market just yet. A little over half of the respondents (53%) are using MMS-capable cellphones and 40% have mobile access to the Internet. A stronger influence for not liking pornographic images is perhaps the Catholic environment of the students. This could be a piece of good news but there is another finding in the survey that might be disturbing to pastors and religious leaders.

The two major mobile phone service providers in the country have so-called "mobile chat" services accessible through numeric codes ("2323" for Globe subscribers and "888" for Smart subscribers). Like Internet chatrooms, mobile chatrooms allow subscribers to forge relationships even illicit relationships with strangers. "Cyber sex" is a reality not only in the Internet but in cellphones as well. And in few cases, "sex on phone" ("SOP" or sex talk) and "sex on text" ("SOT") consummate in actual physical contact following the parties' first meeting, referred to by young people as "eyeballing."

The survey did show that three out of ten (34%) university students, a figure almost equal to subscribers of religious SMS services (38%), participate in mobile chat services. The reasons for "liking" secular chatrooms listed in Table 4 suggest that young Filipinos are seeking some form of diversion from everyday routine. One reason, however, seeks to gratify the need to relate with others and integrate better in the society in which they live ("Helps me win new friends," 35%).

Table 4: **"What I like about mobile chat services ..."**

Entertaining	39%
Eases boredom	36%
Helps to win new friends	**35%**
Acquaints me with people with same interests like mine	30%
Relaxes me, and Helps me win acquaintances	24%

Students with no interest in mobile chat services say it is "expensive." They also do not like the fact that some chatters, owing to the anonymity afforded by the technology, can by all means lie about their true personality and intentions. Very often, vulgar and overly sexual language is used in chat sessions lacking the decency and courtesy that would go with voice or even face-to-face communication. Thirty-one percent say they would not want to engage in that kind of conversation. And a good number of them (29%) say that mobile chatting is a "waste of time."

Table 5: **"What I *don't* like about mobile chat services ..."**

Expensive	43%
Lies communicated	36%
Vulgar language	31%
Waste of time	29%
Vulgar nicknames	18%

Almost all mobile chat subscribers have met or "eyeballed" with strangers, the survey found, and a majority of them actually derived some pleasure from the experience. Some have been able to strike friendships with chatmates and have turned into regular textmates. A "chatmate" is that person in the mobile chatroom. When cellphone numbers are exchanged between the chatters and the texting continues outside the chatrooms that is when a chatmate becomes a textmate.

The content of the exchanges then changes from safe topics like the weather, politics, or "NASL" ("name, age, sex and location") to more intimate ones like "STATS" (posed as a question for the receiver to describe his/her looks and bodily statistics), and "TRIP" (another question about the person's sexual preferences). The survey also found that one of out ten in the sample (11%) had physical sexual encounters with a chatmate.

This may be an insignificant figure. Sex may also be taken as a natural process teens undergo to develop a healthier, more holistic life's view. But considering Church teachings on pre-marital sex and the sanctity of the body and marriage, this statistic could be alarming for parents, the Church, the school and the young people themselves. What can we make out of this finding? How can we further interpret it? The other survey results could prove a point.

SMS and Relationships

Beside secular chatrooms, the students also avail of other services offered by mobile phone service providers. More than half in the sample (57%) participate in radio and TV surveys using their cellphones. They consider this a worthwhile activity because some sort benefit is at stake. Nearly half of the respondents (47%) also participate in promotions aired over radio and television, again because of the chance to gain something in exchange for the effort. This shows that young people are willing to trade both time and money when some form of gratification is foreseen.

The study also shows that the young people's search for emotional boost is sought through the cellphone and SMS. When asked to rank different categories of forwarded messages according to preference, the top five choices were "Friendship," "Love," "Jokes," "Life and living," and "Feast Day greetings." The first two choices underline a certain need among young people today, which remain constant across both genders in the study. Young Filipino men and women seek relationships beyond familial boundaries. They need to able to *relate* with others, perhaps in a romantic way as Ben-ze'ev suggests in "Love Online: Emotions on the Internet" where he says, "a sizeable proportion of SMS users choose SMS for asking someone out on a date" (2004, p.16). But

there are others, perhaps more in the Philippines as Pertierra affirms, seeking relationships that could bring a sense of direction, belonging-ness and integration in their lives.

Ling (2004) cites several past studies that confirm such need among young people. He says: "The experience with other peers is essential. On the one hand, children's relationships to adults provide a sense of an ordered social reality. At the same time, the peer group provides them with the sense that they can modify social interactions. Thus, these relationships provide mutual meaning." (Yonniss, 1980, etc.)

Table 6: **Favorite categories of forwarded messages**

Friendship	89%
Love	85%
Personal jokes	62%
Life and living	56%
Feast Day greetings	48%

Table 7: **Most disliked categories of forwarded messages**

Advocacy	86%
Promotions (of products and services)	85%
Showbiz (Entertainment news)	82%
Political	71%
Sex	66%

The results in Table 7 are consistent among male and female respondents except in one area. Male students ranked "Promotions (of products and services)" as their most disliked category, which confirms an age-old notion that females are slightly more inclined to shop and to be on the look out for new products and services in the market.

The point in all this discussion is that while mobile phones lend themselves to better and increased *connectivity*, certainly for one-way communication from distant and at times anonymous senders, receivers in

the other end are seeking a *connection*. Connectivity and connection have been distinguished quite clearly by theology professor John P. Jewell as one that involves technical means (connectivity); in this case, the cellphone. The other (connection) has something to do with relation and relationship, the building blocks of community (2004, pp. 15-25).

Jewell, a pastoral worker and an information technology expert, made such distinction to shed light to the use of new media, particularly the Internet, in Church ministry. Articles have been written about the technology as if it is the final solution to all that hinders the task of proclamation. Its utility is found in its ability to deliver messages far beyond the reaches of the pulpit or the limited broadcasts of electronic media. Jewell proposes that pastors regard the Internet, and other new media like the cellphone, as bringing to fore new ways of communication and not exclusively as *the* only means to communicate lest he warns of the danger of *imposing* the technology instead of *integrating* it in ministry. Rather than exhausting ways of doing pastoral and ministerial work online, it could be beneficial to think of new ways of being religious and expressing faith. (ibid.)

The cellular phone proves to be an effective conduit of Biblical and inspirational texts. In the Philippines, catechism has found a special niche in the texting market. But fostering relational exchanges rather than one-way transmission of religious texts may have a better impact and could elevate the whole enterprise of religion propagation to another more significant level.

Lay leaders have expressed concern over the youth's increasing patronage to Internet chatrooms like <www.friendster.com>, <www.adultfinder.com>, Yahoo! Messenger, and other match-finding websites. Indeed, a growing number of Filipino youngsters are getting hooked to these services opening doors to sexual adventures or mis-adventures. Mobile phone giant Globe Telecom has recently introduced a mobile version of <www.friendster.com> and Yahoo! Messenger with exactly the same dynamics as its root online versions. As a consequence, the Church is called upon to devise new and creative ways of communicating with its most valued sector, the young.

Counseling and help sites such as <metoyou.com> and <homestead.com/quietroom/CGC.html> in Singapore, as well as <befrienders.org.my> in Kuala Lumpur are models where appropriate, if not similar, mobile versions can be derived from. (See Table 8) A group of young Christian webmasters in Europe gathered in a forum in Cluj, northern Romania in late 2004 and planned an online forum that is open for young people's questions about their faith. This is in recognition of the need for building relationships online as more and more young Europeans are going online. Jacob's Ladder website at <www.dejacobsladders.nl> is not all-positive about the Christian faith but nonetheless, it remains open for interaction and dialogue especially among young people troubled with their faith and life in general.

Table 8: **Sample Help Sites**

Metoyou, Singapore	http://metoyou.org.sg
Child Guidance Clinic, Singapore	www.homestead.com/ quietroom/CGC.html
Samaritans of Singapore	www.samaritans.org.sg
Befrienders Kuala Lumpur	www.befrienders.org.my
Samaritans of Thailand	www.geocities.com/ samaritansthai
Befrienders International	www.befrienders.org

(Source: "Readers' Digest," April 2005, p. 45)

Conclusion

The late Pope John Paul II said the "new culture of communication" is marked by new languages, new techniques and new psychology." Therefore, he said "it is not enough to use modern means of communication to communicate the Gospel message" rather pastors and Church leaders should find ways to "integrate that message into the new culture created by modern means of communication." (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 37c)

The cellular phone goes side by side with the Internet as the new icons of modernity. It is used to forge and maintain relationships, and not

simply to send and receive messages. It might serve the purpose to re-think existing religious SMS services to cater to specific user needs especially that of young people.

But while Church experts are grinding their creative mills on the next religious SMS service it might be good to look for ways to improve Church services *offline* as well. People might get so enticed to go to Church after an inspiring text message, only to be disappointed with a different scenario inside the hallowed grounds.

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Appendix A – SAMPLE RELIGIOUS SMS SERVICES *

Service	Description	Provider	Access
Quote 2978	"Daily Inspirational Quotes" – Spiritual readings, Bible verses and prayer exercises	Private company, Globe Telecom and Manila Archdiocese	Send "QUOTE" to 2978
Mobile Rosary	The Mobile Rosary helps count the beads by providing a visual rosary to follow, moving onto the next bead whenever "Amen" appears and is clicked on the phone. The program also provides passages and images that help the subscribers reflect on the meaning of each mystery.	Smart Communications (also available with Talk n' Text and Addict Mobile subscriptions)	Visit Smart WAP site on the handset, scroll down to select Java Applications and click on Spiritual. The Mobile Rosary and Mobile Way of the Cross is one of the downloadable programs.
Reflect TXT	"REFLECTXT" Daily Reflections is a subscription service that allows the subscriber to download and receive reflections and images on different themes from the Mass on that day.	Smart Communications (also available with Talk n' Text and Addict Mobile subscriptions)	Send "REFLECTXT" or "REFLECTXT NOW" to 352
Amen 2971	Spiritual readings, Bible verses and prayer exercises	Private company, Globe Telecom and Manila Archdiocese	Send "AMEN" to 2971

Service	Description	Provider	Access
Mobile Way of the Cross	The Mobile Way of the Cross guides the subscriber through the prayers while presenting appropriate images and passages to help the subscriber meditate on the meaning of each station.	Smart Communications (also available with Talk n' Text and Addict Mobile subscriptions)	Visit Smart WAP site on the handset, scroll down to select Java Applications and click on Spiritual. The Mobile Way of the Cross is one of the downloadable programs.

* Not an exhaustive list.

Service	Description	Provider	Access
Reflect MMS	"REFLECTMMS" Daily Reflections is a subscription service that allows the subscriber to download and receive reflections and images on different themes from the Mass on that day.	Smart Communications (also available with Talk n' Text and Addict Mobile subscriptions)	Send "REFLECT MMS" or "REFLECT MMS NOW" to 352
Seek 2346	Seek 2346 offers a variety of services from daily reflections, bible passages and prayer offerings to a wide selection of logos, ringtones, polytones, colored wallpapers, and picture messages. To subscribe, simply text the keyword to 2346: GOOD NEWS — For daily relections in English SAGLIT — For daily reflections in Tagalog	Jesuit Communications	Send "SEEK" to 2346 to access Main Menu

Service	Description		Provider	Access
	BIBLE	For scriptural daily reflections		
	INALDAW	For daily reflections in Ilocano		
	BAGTING	For daily reflections in Cebuano		
	For the following services, text the keyword and your message then send to 2346:			
	PRAY	For prayer requests		
	FEEDBACK	For feedback and counseling		
Seek 29766	Main menu of available seek services. Other keywords are: PRAY- for prayer request; GM- for God Matters; DL-Downloads INVYT, REG, FDBK, and INFO Example, text GM and send to 29766		Globe Telecom	Send "SEEK" to 29766
Reuter 2978	FR REUTER'S PASTORAL TEXT: Personal thoughts and reflections from Fr James B. Reuter, SJ		Private company, Globe Telecoms and Manila Archdiocese	Send "REUTER" to 2978
Soc 2978	BISHOP SOC'S PASTORAL TEXT: Personal thoughts and news from Balanga Diocese Bishop and former Manila Auxiliary Bishop, Socrates Villegas		Private company, Globe Telecom and Manila Archdiocese	Send "SOC" to 2978

Sources:

1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/3663283.stm
2. http://www.jesuits.ph/New%20Web/seek.html
3. http://www.globehandyphone.com.ph/
4. http://www.smart.com.ph/SMART/Value+Added+Services Advanced+VAS/

BOOK NOTES

Dawson, Lorne L. and Cowan, Douglas E. (Eds.) *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet.* NY: Routledge, 2004. pp.279. ISBN 0-415-9702209.

This book of 17 exploratory essays provides a framework for understanding the relation between two important resources of our time - Religion and the Internet. The essays introduce readers to the possibilities and vastness of religious experience online. They are grouped into four parts:

Part one explores online religious communication and community, and includes a reprint of Stephen D. O'Leary's essay on "Cyberspace as Sacred Space." O'Leary's essay was the first study to do three things: (1) undertake serious academic study of religion online; (2) analyze the nature and consequences of performing rituals online; and (3) attempt to understand this new phenomenon in a broader context, and that is Walter Ong's theory of the impact of previous communication technologies on human culture (p.12).

Part two considers how centuries-old religious traditions have adapted to the Internet phenomenon with contributions about mainstream Christian traditions, and Islam followers' online use of Qu'ran. Part three explores new religious movements emerging on the Internet, e.g. Neopagan groups, their manner of recruiting members, and ways of spreading their doctrine. Part four describes examples of how offline and online religious practices meet - how, for example, online pilgrims "simulate a sacred journey for educational, economic and spiritual purposes" (p.13).

"Subtle transformations" in faith expression are underway brought about by the new medium and the evidences presented in this book prompt people to think of new ways of being religious, rather than simply concocting ways of using the Internet for ministry.

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Jewell, John P. *Wired for Ministry. How the Internet, Visual Media, and Other New Technologies Can Serve Your Church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004. pp. 189. ISBN 1-58743-075-4.

How can the Church maximize use of the Internet? Author John Jewell expounds three basic themes (forming the three parts of the book) to answer this question: First, we should have a clear understanding of the difference between tools, which enable connection between people, and the actual connecting, which leads to community. *Connectivity* has to do with technological tools and resources, while *connection* has to do with relationship and community building, a fundamental task of Christian ministry.

Second, we have to understand the difference between the *technological methods* by which the Good News is delivered, and *genuine communication* in which the Good News is heard and embraced. And third, we should be able to distinguish between ministry and technology, and between digital capabilities and discipleship. Without a clear distinction of these concepts the danger, Jewell warns, is that technology is *imposed* on rather than *integrated* in ministry.

His analysis brings the conclusion that: (1) we need to be aware of the pitfalls of the new technologies in the life of the Christian community; (2) we need to learn how new technologies can facilitate and enrich ministry; and (3) we need to carefully strategize how to integrate technology in ministry (p.25).

John P. Jewell is director of instructional technology and distance learning at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (Dubuque, Iowa).

McCloud, Sean. *Making the American Religious Fringe: Exotics, Subversives & Journalists, 1955-1993.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004. pp. 269. ISBN 0-8078-5496-4.

This book is about the characteristics given to religious "fringe" groups by magazines like *Time, Newsweek, Life, The Saturday Evening Post, Ebony, Christian Today, US News and World Report*, and other news

and special interest magazines. While alternative voices exist, the author observes a persistent distinction between mainstream religions and religious fringe groups in the United States. Mainstream religions are generally regarded as "moderate, tolerant, ecumenical, rational and implicitly white, middle class and upper middle class," while fringe religions are seen as "fanatical, bigoted, parochial, emotional and implicitly ethnic and lower class" (p.7).

McCloud cites two "continuities" in religious journalism practice. First is that journalists, in the guise of objective reporting, are assuming the role of *heresiographers*, distinguishing between mainstream and suspect religion, emotional versus rational religion, exotic versus familiar, normal and abnormal piety. In the process, journalists offer a "spiritual apologetics for the dominant social order" (p.4). Second is the use of images, words and symbols to "reproduce and legitimize inequalities of race, groups, activities and beliefs." McCloud's analysis helps towards understanding the role of magazines in shaping perceptions about religions in the United States.

Sean McCloud is assistant professor of religion and modern culture at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

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