

## The brand does not show this: omissions and corporate communication distortions in the light of the imaginary

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**Leonardo Torres<sup>i</sup>**

© <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2675-2775>

**Rafael Rodrigues de Souza<sup>i</sup>**

© <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9074-8546>

<sup>i</sup>(Universidade Paulista, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, São Paulo - SP, Brazil).

### Abstract

We propose a symbolic investigation of two publications posted on Instagram by Heineken and Carrefour. This choice was made because they represent the idea of “political correctness”. The objective is to analyze these communications from an imaginary theories perspective, as suggested by M. Contrera, G. Durand, C. Jung, and others, as this action allows the identification of hidden aspects in the publications and the perception of what information is there, however, in addition to the obviousness of commercial interests that aim to reinforce the brand’s good public reputation. Our conclusions suggest that it is possible to change this biased perception by building a critical mass sufficiently qualified to recognize these mechanisms that lead to communication one-sidedness.

**Keywords:** Imaginary. Symbolic image. Instagram. Mythical representations. Mythology.

## Introduction

Companies, brands, or even journalistic content aim to build an idea of reality in the consumer public, an example of what Isidoro Blikstein (2003) and Cremilda Medina (2008) argue from a semiotic point of view. On the other hand, it is necessary to enter the field of the imaginary to understand an image – be it textual, technical, or infographic – in its endogenous representations.

It is assumed that the imaginary is everywhere, whether in exogenous or endogenous images and that it has a character that transcends a causal understanding (DURAND, 1993), assuming that each and every communication also contains a “non-communication”, given the plural dimension of the symbols involved.

Due to the immateriality and descriptive imprecision of symbolic elements, which are always an unachievable abstraction (DURAND, 1993), we used two publications published by companies as investigative references, both on Instagram, from Heineken and Carrefour. For this investigation, we paid attention to the homologies among the publications, the events, and the mythical representations, as suggested by Mircea Eliade (1972) and Durand (1993) when they explain that myths are ways of understanding reality. When this is observed in relation to brands, we notice a long-known polarization: companies emphasize positive aspects of the brand to the detriment of others that are negative but which are indirectly contained in communication.

Given this typical polarization, the central question of this article is: what mythical patterns are contained in the selected corpus, and if there are these patterns, would it be possible to understand them in a less polarized way?

The hypothesis is that the analysis of the media image from the imaginary perspective allows the identification of these hidden aspects in publications, and we defend the proposal that if the individual uses this analysis as a resource, they will find an effective means of symbolic understanding of the image. However, there still seems to be an anesthetization of the majority of the population, who are unable to understand such concealments.

The science of the imaginary, which also benefits from Jungian theories to be understood, one of the analytical biases applied here is fertile ground enough to understand how communications that are based on the idea of “political correctness” inevitably emphasize some aspects positive while revealing his dark and manipulative character. The good reputation sought by companies almost always comes up against antagonistic actions, which can be identified based on the message addressed to the public as representing “political correctness”.

## Distortions and omissions

Companies, through their brands, seek to bias their communications in order to produce in their consumers an idea of discursive legitimacy and transmission of values, similar to what

is done by traditional media (GREGOLIN, 2007). Especially in communications carried out on social media, strategies are created that keep the customer interacting with the brand, liking, commenting, and sharing the content (O DILEMA DAS REDES, 2020).

The issue is that discursive content, whether from the brand or the media, is not the result of an absolute and unequivocal truth. There is a kind of ideology behind these communications that intends to serve the interests of those who communicate, also associated with a certain market logic, so that the product is something “salable”, applying a cut to the communication that transmits only “positive values” of that (CONTRERA, REINERT, FIGUEIREDO, 2004).

Figure 1, for example, is a publication from the brewing company Heineken, in which it celebrates “The day without meat”. What is propagated in the traditional media is that meatless day was a movement that was born in the United States in 1985, stating that a diet entirely based on vegetables would help reduce deaths resulting from meat consumption, in addition to preservation of the environment (JOVEN PAN, 2021; TERRA, 2021; GREENPEACE, 2019; SVB, 2014). It is not the place of this article to discuss this vegetarian/vegan proposition regarding meat consumption, but rather to examine how media interests can make a brand approach issues that are distant from the social problems that itself can cause in order to obtain profits through added value to the brand. More specifically, why would a brewery that manufactures an alcoholic product engage in a relatively new movement as if there were no social problems related to the abusive consumption of alcohol, its main product, as evidenced by several contemporary studies easily accessible in academic portals content (LOPES *et al.*, 2015; FREIRE, CASTRO, PETROIANU, 2020; MARTINEZ *et al.*, 2019). Notably, it is worth the digression: Brazil is a country that has a tradition of cattle farming<sup>1</sup> and meat consumption, often eaten together with beer. What kind of legitimacy is there in Heineken’s speech when it stands in favor of a meatout day? What seems to be observed here is the company’s concern with transmitting an image of being socially engaged, aiming to create a perception of reality among their consumer public:

This is why we cannot think of any possible human reality without culture and the processes of social communication (shared images) playing a central role in the formation of that reality, or, at least, in the way in which men conceive it and interact with them (CONTRERA, 2002, p. 39, our translation).

The perceived reality, as pointed out by Malena Contrera, is a discursive organization of the company or brand, in which some aspects are neglected while others are exacerbated, intending to build a collective agreement that that is something “good”, therefore, “this company must be good.” The power and acceptance of these discourses end up being accepted as reality

<sup>1</sup> According to the Department of Agriculture of the State of Paraná, Brazil has the second largest herd in the world and is the largest cattle exporter (2018). Available at: [https://www.agricultura.pr.gov.br/sites/default/arquivos\\_restritos/files/documento/201909/bovino\\_corte\\_2019\\_v1.pdf](https://www.agricultura.pr.gov.br/sites/default/arquivos_restritos/files/documento/201909/bovino_corte_2019_v1.pdf). Accessed on: Jun 01, 2021.

and, consequently, as truth – like the phenomenon of flat earthism. These are speeches that “cross” individuals because, as exemplified in the Heineken publication, they point to a logic of: “What harm is there in defending a meat-free day if it is good?”. The acceptance of this premise by a portion of the population, those who reject meat consumption, will be natural. For meat consumers, it tends to be an affront.

Based on Durand (1993), it is worth recognizing the latent mythical aspects of the image of communication processes as a way of recognizing the phenomenon completely, with more integrality, revealing its poles, paradoxes, and, mainly, the movement of the imaginary established there. These, as they are not immediately verifiable by consciousness or by rationality but experienced by it, require us to resort to homologies (structural similarities) found in the *corpus* and mythical images.

### *Zeus and Heineken*

From the perspective of the brewery, of praising the “meat out day” and hiding the social problems of alcoholism, we can resort to the Greek mythical image of Zeus, a very audacious god who uses his cunning and power to obtain several benefits for himself, representing the search for omnipotence and power (BRANDÃO, 2015). Regarding these aspects, Zeus is:

God of light, he is the sovereign father of gods and men (Homer); [...] Zeus is the ether, Zeus is the land, Zeus is the sky. Yes, Zeus is all that is above all (Aeschylus, Heliads, fragment 70, translation in SECG, 81). Casting lightning, it symbolizes the spirit and enlightenment of human intelligence, illuminating thought and intuition sent by divinity; he is the source of truth. [...] Modern psychology has revealed in certain leadership attitudes what we can call the Zeus complex<sup>2</sup>. It is a tendency to monopolize authority and destroy everything that may appear in others to be a manifestation of autonomy, be it the most reasonable and promising. This complex betrays the roots of an evident feeling of intellectual and moral inferiority and the need for social compensation through authoritarian explosions, as well as the fear of not seeing their rights and dignity respected as they deserve. [...] These attitudes show the persistent strength of traditional mythology that opposes new companies, of loyal and fruitful communication between departments and people associated with the same work, of in-depth training, which itself results in a contradiction and unwise decisions. (GHEERBRANT and CHEVALIER, 2015, p. 971-972, our translation).

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2 Complex is a Jungian concept in which certain psychic structures, which have a strong emotional charge, generally incompatible with the dominant attitude of consciousness, can be activated from intra and/or extra psychic situations; Complexes even have the ability to take away individuals' autonomy, as if they “were” the individual themselves (cf. JUNG, 2013).

Even though modern psychology brings the idea that the complex tends towards the personal, we can resort to cultural complexes<sup>3</sup> or even understand that the company, as a group of these individuals, ends up acting collectively in accordance with these standards. This demonstrates that some companies are not entirely concerned with social responsibility, and as a result, they end up tending towards monopoly, authoritarianism, and a lack of depth in corporate decisions and attitudes. Apparently, this is what happened with the beer company Heineken, which advocates a “meatout day” and creates polarization among consumers, ignoring the social problems of alcoholism.

**Figure 1** – Heineken post about “Meatout Day”



Source: Heineken Brasil official Instagram account (2021)

This “meat out day” attitude at the brewery is also very similar to the various mythical passages of Zeus, in which he disguised himself as a human or animal in order to have

<sup>3</sup> Cultural complexes refer to a proposition that there are complexes that are common in certain cultures, and that, therefore, “occupy” the collective psyche of individuals participating in this culture.

relationships with different mortals or goddesses with whom he fell in love. Zeus concealed his image, conquered those he wanted to conquer, had relationships, and remained in his position of omnipotence, almost always getting what he wanted (BRANDÃO, 2015). From Zeus's perspective, there was a gain, as he achieved what he wanted, neglecting his dark side, which, ultimately, was an exercise of domination and power: "By re-presenting the beginnings, the myth throws us against a powerful force creative, since, always linked to the origins, the myth reconnects us with the possibility of creative human action, through metaphor" (CONTRERA, 1996, p. 46, our translation). It is more or less the same with the company: it positions itself positively in favor of an issue, inevitably creates polarization around it, and preserves the public perception that it is "an environmentally friendly company", even if some disagree. Companies' communication strategies create this mythical re-presentation, because due to their archetypal force, therefore inevitable (MAGALDI FILHO, 2014), they create an affective experience in the individual, even if they do not exactly know how to explain what is happening to them consciously.

Not only does the brewing company have homology with the figure of Zeus, but all electronic communication and technology have structures very similar to the god of thunder:

The irony is that our monotheistic and patriarchal plot, after passing through the supremacy of reason and *cogito*, leads us to recreate the gods of thunder and lightning, the celestial and immaterial gods, in electronic technology, which, in modernity, imprisoned lightning of Zeus in the brilliance of the machine. This symbolic operation attributes a magical value to technology, the magical value that was attributed to the hierophanic appearance of the celestial god. Thus, modern technology, due to its ability to reproduce exogenous images indefinitely, occupies the place of Zeus, for example, the great reproducer, lord of lightning. However, as in almost every contemporary reinterpretation of the myth, this re-editing does not consider the symbolic complexity of the original mythical core (CONTRERA, 2017, p. 90-93, our translation).

### *Carrefour and Sisyphus*

On November 19, 2020, a Black man was beaten until his death by employees of the company Carrefour inside one of its stores in Porto Alegre-RS (JORNAL NACIONAL, 2020). There was a legitimate social uproar over issues of racial prejudice, putting pressure on the company to take a stance on what happened. On November 26, 2020, 7 days after the murder, Carrefour released a brief statement on its official Instagram account, stating that it had created a diversity and inclusion committee to address racial issues within the company better (Figure 2).

This is not about delegitimizing Carrefour's action, but something that was mentioned, neither by the company nor by the media outlets, at least the most relevant ones, were the issues of precarious work, as examples of studies such as those by Christophe Dejours (2006) and Jeffrey Pfeffer (2019). It is known that one of the employees responsible for the crime was a military police officer, and he was enrolled in this job as a security guard to supplement his compensation probably. It is also known that the company responsible for security at Carrefour is an outsourced company. Furthermore, it is known, finally, that outsourcing in Brazil aims to reduce costs on the part of the contractor - despite common business discourse arguing that what is not the company's core business<sup>4</sup> should always be outsourced, not being related to costs – which implies choosing the contractor based on a cost factor. This reduced cost will inevitably affect the salaries of the contractor's employees, who will probably offer technical and psychological preparation that is less than necessary to work in a stressful activity such as that of a security guard. This speech is not intended to exempt those responsible for the crime they committed but rather to investigate what, like what was said about Heineken, is propagated versus what is omitted. In this case, there seems to be no clear polarization, as the collective discourse points to blaming the criminals, while a smaller portion (or with less voice) argues that they did it in self-defense.

According to Hall:

The discourse also produces a place for the individual (that is, the reader or viewer, who is also 'subject to' discourse) where their specific meanings and understandings make sense. It is not inevitable, in this sense, that all individuals in a given period become subjects of a particular discourse, carriers of their power/knowledge (HALL, 2016, p. 100, our translation).

This “knowledge” acquired by the viewer follows the trending discourse, that is, the one that is massively propagated, and this is what the brand intends to transmit to the viewer/consumer. This is explained by Torres (2021), when he argues that the media produces a psychic contagion and, therefore, the individual starts to reproduce positions and ideologies that he previously did not even know he had (if he actually had them), such as the anti-vaccine movement in Brazil, with several people opposing it, without having any scientific depth on the topic<sup>5</sup>. In the example of Carrefour, massive communications around racial issues mask issues that also lack a fundamental debate, which is the psychological suffering at work resulting from this increasingly present precariousness (KAMPER, 1998; LE BRETON, 2018; PFEFFER, 2019); even if it is disguised by colorful offices with a ball pit.

4 Core Business = main business. It refers to the most important and central activity in the company.

5 VivaBem UOL. Pesquisadores analisam avanço de grupos antivacina em plena pandemia (2020). Available at: <https://www.uol.com.br/vivabem/noticias/redacao/2020/12/22/pesquisadores-analisam-avanco-de-grupos-antivacina-em-plena-pandemia.htm>. Accessed on: May. 27, 2021.



This flood of exogenous images, obsessively disseminated, seems like an orchestrated movement that aims to inhibit endogenous images, which are those that give life to the inner world and allow individuals to exercise their reflective capacity (BAITELLO JR., 2012). By widely propagating, after the serious incident, its commitment to racial issues, Carrefour ends up diverting the spectator's attention, intoxicating them with exogenous images produced by the traditional media that replicate what was communicated and by the company itself. This distances him from his endogenous images, which inevitably have human values such as empathy (WAAL, 2010), which apply to racial and labor issues. In summary, Contrera (2017) points out that this phenomenon is censorship, not through exclusion, but through excess. This demonstrates an exaggerated perversion of communicators in current times.

Thinking about censorship and excess, we can choose Sisyphus as a homology of the events at Carrefour. In this myth, King Sisyphus is condemned to push a rock up a hill, and when it is close to the end, it escapes him, causing him to repeat the movement for all eternity. "Sisyphus, the most cunning and unscrupulous of mortals [...]. The myth of Sisyphus is divided into several episodes, each of which reflects a ruse of this incorrigible deceiver, who the Iliad, [...], calls the smartest of mortals" (BRANDÃO, 2014, p. 572, our translation). The author also points out that Sisyphus deceived Thanatos (Death) twice: the first time, the cunning king imprisoned Thanatos, and the second time, Sisyphus asks his wife not to pay him funeral condolences so that she could deceive Hades and ask for "his permission to return quickly, in order to severely punish his companion" (BRANDÃO, 2014, p. 572, our translation).

Carrying the stone conveys the idea of infinite repetition in the work model (KAST, 2017) and excess work. That is, what is emphasized by the media is debated, but the basis of the problem, which appears to be labor-based, remains. Nevertheless, it seems to us that another evident homology, in this case, is that the company uses its communication to deceive Thanatos: deceiving the population of all the tragedies that occurred in supermarket branches.

For example, in the case of Figure 2, Carrefour addresses an important and necessary topic, which is structural racism, but publicly ignores historical aspects linked to labor relations, as is the case with two other events involving the brand, one involving a security guard who cruelly killed a dog<sup>6</sup> and another belonging to an employee not qualified to operate a forklift, who did so at the company's request and suffered a fatal accident<sup>7</sup>, reinforcing our perception that there is a repetitive structural problem in the field of work in homology to the Sisyphus myth and widely discussed from a symbolic perspective by Rafael R. de Souza (2022).

The production of reality is not an objective factor; it is also psychic (HILLMAN, 1993), so "manufacturing" the more convenient reality is in the interest of whoever produces it, just

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6 G1 SP. Segurança do Carrefour que aparece em vídeo com barra espantando cão que morreu alega que não quis ferir animal (2018). Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/sp/sao-paulo/noticia/2018/12/08/seguranca-do-carrefour-que-aparece-em-video-com-barras-espantando-cao-que-morreu-alega-que-nao-quis-ferir-animal.ghtml>. Accessed on: Jun. 10, 2021.

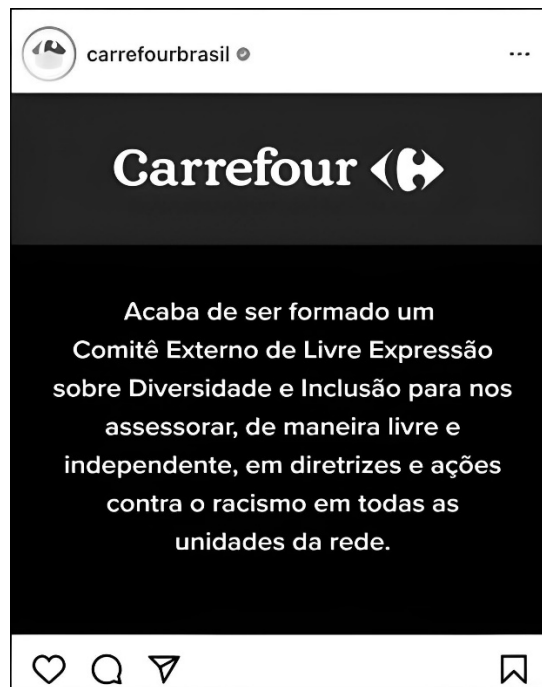
7 UOL. SP: Funcionário morto no Carrefour estava em desvio de função, diz família (2021). Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/cotidiano/ultimas-noticias/2021/04/27/funcionario-carrefour-morto-desvio-funcao-empilhadeira-sp.htm>. Accessed on: Jun. 10, 2021.



as Sisyphus did. Moreover, when one enters the field of the imaginary, especially through the profusion of media content, a symbolic source is awakened in the subject (DURAND, 1993), which in the psychology of the masses creates a herd movement, causing an emergence of a supposed agreement of what is “right” and what is “wrong”, as well as the German people who at some point in history supported Hitler’s ideas, understanding that this was right (JUNG, 1990).

This phenomenon is not only sociological but also psychic. It is as if there was an effort to take public opinion to a specific space, in which it is deceived, so that other areas, which also need to be exposed, remain in the shadow of the event. Brand communication represents a type of content advertising (CONTRERA, REINERT, FIGUEIREDO, 2004) in a movement that intends, in the long term, to propagate an image of the company as one that cares about what it should care about, exactly in this way, redundant, or obsessive way<sup>8</sup>.

**Figure 2** – Carrefour post about the creation of a committee to combat racism



Source: Carrefour official Instagram account (2020)

<sup>8</sup> We cannot forget the disasters caused by the collapse of the Vale [an important Brazilian mineral extraction company] company’s tailings dams in Mariana and Brumadinho, which resembles, on a larger scale, the homology of Sisyphus.

## The symbol in communication

According to Jung (1990), there are social contexts in which a collective dark pattern is installed. Considering this premise in the imaginary of the examples mentioned, it is as if the emphasis on positive actions with public support were enough to mask the true dark aspect contained in these events and not those that are polarizing in the collective consciousness. Companies aim to create meanings that overlap the polarities of the symbol in a movement that hides its negative aspect. As Durand (1993, p. 12, our translation) explains: “The symbol is, therefore, a representation that makes a secret meaning appear; it is the epiphany of a mystery”.

The imaginary precedes consciousness, and its composition is a framework that inhabits some space prior to its understanding through cognition, as Jung (2012, p. 277) argues:

Nothing that the human spirit produces is outside the psychic environment. Even the craziest idea must correspond to something existing in the psyche. We cannot assume that certain minds contain elements that do not exist at all in others (our translation).

The psyche has a symbolic repertoire that is roughly explained metaphorically by myths, which are also archetypal representations of humanity’s psychic universe (JUNG, 2012). According to Eliade (1972), myths can be understood in a plural form. Because they have a human and timeless character, these mythical representations are unconsciously experienced in communication processes (CONTRERA, 1996) by consumers and brands in a symbiotic way. A brand’s communication aims to transmit values to its customers, which will represent a lifestyle and not just the product’s functionalities. This may also be associated with the idea of “political correctness”. This communication in the unconscious field takes place through the strength of the symbol contained there:

All symbolism is, therefore, a kind of gnosis, that is, a process of mediation through concrete and experimental knowledge. As a certain gnosis, the symbol is a ‘beatifying knowledge’, a ‘saving knowledge’ that, previously, does not need a social intermediary, that is, sacramental or ecclesiastical (DURAND, 1993, p. 31, our translation).

The symbol has a power of psychic mobilization that is contagious and intoxicating. When one least notices it, through contagion (TORRES, 2021), people are defending the positions of their preferred brands without being aware of the true polarities contained therein.

The ultimate objective of a company or brand is to create loyalty among its admirers so that they become, in practice, consumers. The ultimate goal is to maximize profits, regardless of whether this requires resorting to the use of communications that border on populist discourses

in the political field. The choice of what a brand communicates will invariably have at its ideological core the prospect of maintaining or increasing revenue and the longevity of its good reputation.

Would it be possible to see a speech from Carrefour, for example, that was aimed at committing to combat racism and, at the same time, would review its internal labor policies, requalifying people with decent wages and appropriate training? The discourse on combating racism finds an echo in the public, as well as in the business community, as it has strong and necessary social representation. However, the labor issues it is as if they were not the subject of analysis by companies, leaving this to the academic world to do. Nevertheless, the market “god” is shrewd enough to appropriate discursive strategies, distorting prerogatives to place brands on the side of “good”.

The issue of psychological suffering at work is an example. Since the time of Charles Chaplin<sup>9</sup>, people have been talking about work stress (1930s). However, when this perception went beyond the limits of factories and occupied the covers of business magazines (SOUZA, 2022) in the 21st century, the market promptly tried to side with the person who supposedly produces the “cure” without assuming that he was actually the producer of suffering (DEJOURS, 2006). In possession of the “healing power”, the company starts to integrate into its benefits package practices that aim at psychological well-being, using the strategies that seem to be the most “popular” (SOUZA, 2022).

Another example is the expropriation of the Buddhist religion by some companies, as Cunha, Bergmann, and Rodrigues (2020) point out, linking the meditative practices of Buddhism to improving individual productivity; religiosity has its purpose reduced to excellence in professional performance. We question whether the actions of companies or brands are focused on humans by humans or what positive effect they will have on public opinion. Regarding Buddhism, of those who declare themselves to be practitioners, the vast majority belong to social classes A and B in Brazil (NERI, 2011). Would there be any elitism in this choice? Why not use practices from Afro-Brazilian religions? What does the market, or brands, genuinely know about spiritual practices? Is there any evidence that Buddhist religious practices are more effective than *Candomblé* religious practices, for example, in creating more productive employees? These are tough questions to answer, but they exemplify the unilateral nature of what a brand or company wants to convey.

## The symbol as an integrator of polarities

Investigating factual data without exploring all its possibilities is a reduction of the symbol involved. For this to happen collectively, it is necessary to reach a level of critical mass

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9 Reference to the film “Modern Times”, starring Charles Chaplin and released in 1936.

capable enough to understand the intentions and perversions that are part of the totality of a symbol. For the individual to understand themselves in the face of this complexity requires a significant effort of conscience:

The phenomenon of consciousness is, at the same time, extremely subjective, as it carries very strongly within itself the affective presence of the individual self, and extremely objective, as it strives to consider, objectively, not only the external environment (the world) but also the subjective self. Let us use other words: the self considers itself both as a subject and as an object of knowledge and considers the environment objective, implying its own subjective existence in it (MORIN, 1975, p. 139, our translation).

The self-involved in the communicational context, phenomenologically, is at the same time the creative agent of critical consciousness and the one that is invaded by images of the unconscious (JUNG, 2012). The communication agent, whether the company or the media, through a simple word trick, immediately associates the news as something “good”. The way out of not being hostage to a game of words is the development of critical mass, as defended by Torres (2021), so that consciously, brands, companies, and affected people do not deny the true symbolic polarities contained in communications, even when not expressly stated.

Jung (2013) teaches that the symbol has an essential role in the psyche, as it has an integrative character when there is a conflict between consciousness and unconsciousness. He called it the transcendent function. Bringing this notion to brand narratives is essential not to create a collectivity that is hostage to the emotional mobilization that exogenous images cause in consciousness:

Based on their speeches, the media represents and organizes ways of reading and interpreting everyday facts, mobilizing states of mind and, not infrequently, seeking to explain the aggravations of everyday existence – which is increasingly associated with risk and intemperance. of destiny – just like self-help manuals (OLIVEIRA and COELHO, 2018, p. 24, our translation).

This mobilization of spirits in the media occurs because it uses representations present in the collective unconscious (imaginary). According to Contrera (1996), the media presents itself following mythical patterns; therefore, just as is done when understanding a myth, it is necessary not to deny its opposite. Hermes, for example, is an opportunistic, self-serving, manipulative god, but he is also versatile, flexible, and conciliatory (BRANDÃO, 2015). The polarities contained in a myth are re-presented through the strategic positioning of brands. It is

impossible to exclude the polarity of a myth since it is also the representation of a symbol, just as it is impossible to exclude the polarities of the communication processes of brands.

According to Contrera (2002), communication cultures are part of the construction of perceived reality. Nevertheless, it cannot, or should not, rob individuals of the possibility of symbolic integration based on communication processes. Omissions and/or distortions in communications serve the purposes of reputation and values that the brand wants to transmit to those who guarantee its maintenance.

For Jung (2015, p. 10):

We so often see people overlook events or experiences without realizing what actually happened to them. Because they don't realize that they have a feeling reaction. Most of the time they only feel what we call affection, an emotion [...] (our translation).

The challenge is to create a critical mass of people capable of not overlooking events without entering the archetypal universe of images, which are effectively the "real", as they precede what imposes itself on consciousness (JUNG, 2012), following the example of what Torres (2021, p. 226) explains about what is common and what is mass:

[...] there is a confusion between this common and the mass, despite being diametrically opposed. The media society seeks mainly electronic media and its network technology for images, references, being, pleasure, living, feeding the mediasphere, and generating more mass, neglecting the common. In this bias, all individuals in media society become similar and consequently unilateral industrialized (our translation).

It can be inferred that corporate or brand communications are also part of this media culture and, therefore, are co-creators of these unilateral, industrialized, and mass individuals, as Torres (2021) defined. Only with a critical contingent, with reflective capacity, aware of their weaknesses in the face of symbolic representations, can we think about the communicational positions of brands that are ethical and committed to considering the dark and unknown universe that omissions and distortions inhabit, even when this is not done intentionally and consciously.

## **Final considerations**

Given the imprecision in understanding a symbol and how they are represented in business communications, it is essential to broaden the perspective to understand the different possible meanings included in these actions. The imaginary considers that exogenous images are products of a previous universe, endogenous images; therefore, the crossing that

a communication process has in the consciousness of individuals is not only understood via cognition but also through a network of affections and emotions.

When using communication strategies that position public opinion of a given fact in a single, non-dialectical sense, it is as if there were masking, omission, or distortion of other elements contained therein. Given the strength of mass media outlets, whether traditional or social, a body of people is created who will be in favor and occasionally another group who will be against. Nevertheless, this simple polarization does not encompass the entirety of a symbol, which can indirectly reveal a character of domination and manipulation of public opinion, which can only be transformed with the construction of a critical mass sufficiently capable of recognizing these mechanisms.

This brief reflection is expected to contribute to the investigative advances of imaginary theories in the field of communication processes of companies and brands, as well as their effects on the collective consciousness.

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## About the authors

### *Leonardo Torres*

Jungian Analyst. Ph.D. in Communication and Media Culture from Universidade Paulista de São Paulo. He was a CAPES PROSUP fellow. He also has a Master's degree in Communication from the same university. During his Master's degree, he was awarded a CAPES PROSUP scholarship - exclusive dedication. He was a student representative in the doctorate. Postgraduate in Analytical Psychology from the Jungian Institute of Education and Research. He has a postgraduate degree in Psychosomatics from the same institute. He has a degree in Social Communication with an emphasis on Advertising from Faculdades Dom Bosco in Rio de Janeiro. He produced events such as TEDxAEDB, IX ABCiber Symposium, and VI ComCult. He researches the technical and technological imaginary, technosacrality, and its relationships in society and culture. He also researches Psychic and Imaginary Contagion. He is a member of the Media and Imaginary Research Group. Furthermore, he is/was a postgraduate and undergraduate teacher at universities in the city of São Paulo. He is a member, presenter, and one of the creators of the Delirium podcast, one of the most relevant in the area of Analytical Psychology in Brazil. Email: leosouzatorres@gmail.com.

### *Rafael Rodrigues de Souza*

Jungian Analyst. Master's degree in Communication and Media Culture from Universidade Paulista de São Paulo (UNIP/SP). He was a CAPES PROSUP scholarship holder. He has a lato-sensu postgraduate degree in Analytical Psychology from the Jungian Institute of Education and Research (FACIS/IJEP), in Psychosomatics from the same institute (FAPCOM/IJEP), and Business Administration from EAESP/SP (Fundacao Getulio Vargas). He is a psychologist, co-author of the book *Pessoa e profissional: a distinção que a vida não faz*

(2017) and author of the book *Trabalho, sofrimento e autorrealização: uma leitura simbólica e crítica do drama contemporâneo* (2022). Jungian Analyst Member and professor of the lato-sensu postgraduate course in Analytical Psychology at the Jungian Institute of Education and Research. He practices clinically and provides clinical supervision in his private office in the city of São Paulo (Brazil), as well as online. He is a member, presenter, and one of the creators of the Delirium podcast, one of the most relevant in the area of Analytical Psychology in Brazil. Email: r.rafaelsouza83@gmail.com.

### **Authors' contribution**

All authors actively participated in all stages of preparing the manuscript.

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The authors declare that the data supporting the research are available in a public repository, with or without DOI.

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