

Penser la Trivialité. Volume 1: la vie triviale des êtres culturels

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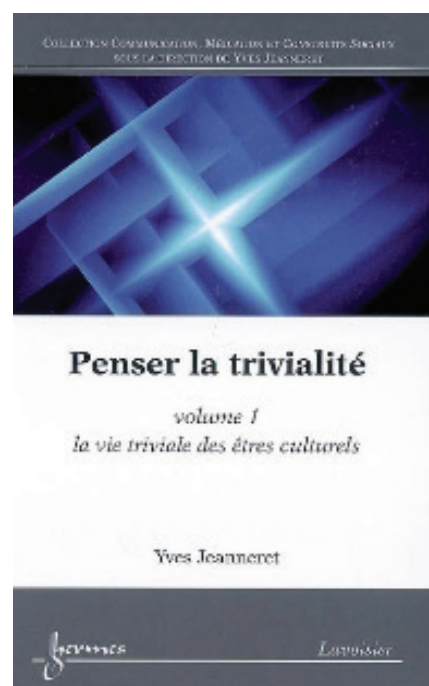
DOI: 10.3395/reciis.v3i3.296en

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Yves Jeanneret is an Information Sciences and Communications professor at *Université d'Avignon et des Pays de Vaucluse*, where he is also a member of the Culture and Communication Research Lab. With a Classics Languages academic background from *Ecole Nationale Supérieure (ENA)*, his research is on circulation of knowledge and cultural objects in society, scope in which writing and media transformations take place. Throughout his career, Jeanneret has analyzed manners and expressions of trivial culture, that is, the modes of circulating knowledge in society, how it becomes an object of rewriting, appropriation and controversy. This matter concerns the propagation and recognition of works published, vulgarization and communication of scientific knowledge, as well as the production of certain political categories by media discourses, emphasizing the conviction that information and communication sciences, as well as the other human sciences, need to resort to history, "because the present cannot be understood without examining the past". Highlighting ideologies and communication modes, the author analyzed in *Y-a-t-il (vraiment) de Technologies de l'information?* Published in 2000 and 2007 (1st and 2nd edition, respectively), issues raised by the relations between objects, texts and practices.

Penser la trivialité. La vie triviale des êtres culturels is the first volume of a greater project and is structured in five chapters, each one a unique reflection on the specific issues shaped by the author, on what was called triviality, a descriptive category. Beyond a depreciative meaning attributed to the term, Jeanneret uses it according to etymology, which comes from latin *trivium*, meaning crossing.



**Éditions Hermès-Lavoisier:
Paris; 2008**

ISBN 978-2-7462-1878-9

It is about throwing light on *cultural beings* – ideas and objects – which are seized and transformed in social practices. Among the objects privileged by his analysis, there are texts and their representations, whose circulation “among people’s hands and spirits”, enriches and transforms crossing social spaces. In this journey, beings become cultural. Triviality, according to the author, “consists in representing the circulation of ideas and objects as a kind of progressive march of cultural beings through crossing in social life” (p.14).

The trivial destiny of these objects and ideas is shaped by society’s appropriation, when they carry values conferred by their cultural status. Therefore, it is a trait that characterizes all cultural exchange phenomena, “even if it is expressed specifically in certain areas” (p.15). Careful with the use of categories, Jeanneret defines them thoroughly. Culture is understood as an activity that works out its resources thanks to communication and the latter is also an activity that is not limited to transmitting social aspects, originating them.

A detour from the famous assertion by Lavoisier, three mutually defined hypotheses drive the structure of the book: *Everything operates* since people work the matter, build objects and conceive techniques so as to shape culture; (2) *Everything is created* from object appropriation processes, opening new symbolic spaces and other meanings and links; (3) *Everything is transformed*, since the reconstruction of objects and their shapes is what makes culture.

This is the horizon situating triviality and cultural beings concepts, to be analyzed in the communication acts, in which one presumes the other. Communication is not treated as instrument nor belittled throughout the work, it is actually understood as the creation of resources and situations which men need to carry out, opposing them as producers of meaning. Communication is a “process that is present in every domain of social activity” (p.20).

The issues discussed in the five chapters that compose the book consist in reflections gathered among researches carried out by the author in his own course of work, but not exclusively. Jeanneret recovers the works of doctoral students, not only because they are deeply constructed, but also because they were essential to define structuring questions discussed in each part of the work.

The first chapter entitled *Propagate, transmit and reproduce, three representations of the circulation of ideas*, deals with the circulation of ideas based on three trends: Gabriel Tarde’s basic social philosophy, from which the author discusses the *propagation* concept; midiology analyzed based on *Cahiers de Médiologie* allows working with the *transmission* concept and verifying to what extent it dialogues with triviality; and semiotics feed discussions with the concept of *reproduction*.

Transcribe and transform, the disciplines of archive constitutes the second chapter, in which the author analyzes matters centered on objects, gestures and techniques in which the cultural beings are inscribed - in transcription

processes and conservation and transformation - constituting the materiality of memory in construction. The concept of archive becomes important here, mainly in discussions that regard the trivial concept, reflected in the historic dynamics of practices and in the world of objects. Michel Foucault’s archeology assists the discussion of inscription and rewriting as elements that contribute to contemplate triviality and knowledge and power relations that are presupposed.

Polychrest cultural beings, social poetics in tension is the name of the third chapter of the book. This chapter deals with the social circulation of cultural productions and their transformations using a neologism, as well as the multiple uses of objects and their instability in the cultural scope, according to a socio-anthropologic analysis. Three theoretical positions drive analysis and discussion on the communicational approach of cultural beings, based on Daniel Dubuisson’s perspective (poetic point of view), articulating heterogeneity and textuality; Michel de Certeau (polemology point of view), highlighting the divergence and discontinuity of cultural practices, to affirm a creative conflict quality; Roland Barthes (semiotic point of view), the superdeterminism of signifying modes, while emphasizing the “impossibility to strictly circumscribe space and time in communication” (p.87).

The cybernetics of imperfect, mediatizing objects and communication processes is the fourth chapter in which the heterogeneous and discontinuous communication processes are discussed, which are mediatized by objects and devices, a central issue in a theoretical reflection on triviality. The “cybernetics of the imperfect”, expression borrowed from Bruno Ollivier, refers to processes which are never right. The tensions between the logistic and semiotic approaches are recaptured in this chapter to discuss the interaction mediatized by the objects.

The fifth and last chapter called *The symbolic, the popular and the public, triviality as a value* returns to the central issue that entitles the book. From these three structuring categories, Jeanneret discusses the constructions of the norms that rule the trivial and that lead to its valorization or stigmatization, since the communication practices produce representations both in the imaginary and normative levels. The concept of patrimony or patrimonialization is discussed according to a communicational approach, because “the discourse on the value of triviality does reside in the social identity of patrimony, as a current ideology, but is also an ingredient of patrimonialization itself (p.189). It is the symbolic representation as a value. Popular is analyzed based on the following concepts: publicization, vulgarization and diffusion. The public dialogue, with the conception of triviality, based on the idea of making objects visible, presupposes a plurality of meanings.

When finishing his journey on the trivial life of cultural objects, a trip back to “classic” issues of social sciences, the author remembers that the triviality concept is an attempt to rewrite the information-communication issue, among others possible. He proposes seven methodology principles to raise discussion, as

a conclusion or a new beginning. It is a work that demands complex reading, since it is dense and edgy, and which invites us to discuss and introduce trivial as a concept to be revisited by researchers interested in questioning scientific communication, the history of books and reading, archives and museums as institutions of knowledge and places for rewriting practices and collective enunciation.

The book presents relevant questions in the field of information and communication for researchers and students, constituting a theoretical-epistemological contribution to Information science and communication in Brazil. The author promises a new and more empiric volume on triviality economies. The political dimension of the forms of domination on the social circuit of cultural beings will constitute the central issue. 