Chapter IV

New Episthemologies in a Changing Media Environment

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Abstract

This chapter draws the landscape of the passage from modernity to information society. This is a passage referring to our idea of the universe, the way we're thinking, the modalities with which we make sense of the world. Describing them, it is also possible to understand the main challenges for education: a shift from linear to complex methodologies, the need to provide students with abilities for searching and evaluating information, and the development of a new episthemology with its cultural codes and its languages. If school doesn't individualize new tools for interpreting youngsters' behaviours, it shall not be able to understand its new role in this changing society: to work at digital literacy thinking of it as a knowledge literacy.

Introduction:
New Strategies for Knowledge Building

It is well-known that, even if in a not always conceptually articulated way, our world has become a building yard in these last years, a place of work in progress whose effects are unpredictable from many sides. There is a general feeling that traditional ways of meaning man and nature, organizations and values, lifestyles and history, knowledge and behaviour models, individuality and collectivity are going out of tune.

The concept of space expands until it coincides with the network of communication flows, which wrap the operators of various systems in a thick web and connect them to other near or remote systems.

Conceptualized as a woof and as a net, the present constitutes the very cognitive root from which the *thought of complexity* springs. *Complexity* does not mean complication or difficulty. Complexity—term of great importance in the contemporary reflection—refers back to the Latin *complexus*, from the verb *complecti*, to weave, to intertwine (the whole and together) many times, that is, "co-knotting." It is what happens in any emergency when the plot, the outcome of that intertwining, visibly turns out it is not reducible to the element that has been intertwined, as well as the web is not reducible to the thread of which it is interwoven. This means that we live in a context made of a spread relationship and that a lot of the events happen just because a relationship exists between and among things, as stated by an abundant scientific literature.

Substantially, we are observing a falling of barriers and an acceleration of exchanges among practices and domains for a long time unrelated: the developments of a particular knowledge are often influenced by developments of knowledge for a long time considered distant. And this leads to the emergence of woofs of universes that do not find any space in the presence of isolationist paradigms. The immanent complexity of things can not express itself according to predetermined and unilateral positions. Indeed, it springs from the intertwining between regularity and aleatoriness, laws and chaos, the causal and the casual... In our case, this implies that nothing of what has been elaborated in the past has to be rejected: many of the constructions that had guided acts and behaviours for centuries are still precious; and they are not in the same way of antiques, but in the "economic" dimension of knowledge tools, as vital and irreplaceable.

These are some barely visible features given as a background for the following discourse. Hence the convincement, however not arbitrary, that the current transformative phase entails a revision of cognitive equipments put into action in order to grasp the sense and the possibilities that it offers. It is a question of necessities which can not be detached from the capability to answer by institutions committed with educational task.

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