

FROM THE THEME EDITORS

ON PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION

Burcu Canar (BC): Professor Chang, preparing an issue on philosophy of communication is a unique experience for me in many ways, and I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to you for all your support and guidance. Instead of introducing the Philosophy of Communication Issue by summarizing what is inside the journal, we have decided to share our experiences and ideas on being the theme editors of Moment Journal and that is how this dialogue has come out. If you wish, we could begin by telling how we have decided to work together for this issue and why we especially study on philosophy of communication.

Briankle G. Chang (BGC): It has been wonderful working on this special issue, which is of great interest to me and, I am sure, to you as well. So my thanks to you and all the friends and colleagues associated with Moment for the good will and help with this special issue.

I am interested in what can be called “philosophy of communication” for a very simple reason, which goes back a while. As a double major in journalism and philosophy in college, I was troubled by the readings assigned in the communication classes. These readings appeared to me as boring as they are superficial and, if I may say so, stupid and perhaps wrong. It was certainly possible—but I did not know it at the time—that the readings were badly chosen and should not be taken as representative of the field as a whole. In any event, I thought then and still think now that we ought to subject words or

ideas such as “communication” and “media” to a conceptual analysis, so that we are clear about what we say and do. And the only way I know how to do that—then and now as well—is to treat them as philosophers do to their concepts. It is simply my belief that ideas or words, like “communication,” “media,” not to mention all the big ones in philosophy, must undergo an identifiable concept formation before they can be constituted as objects of inquiry. In a way, as I said, my interest in philosophy of communication comes from my wish to be clear about what I think, read, and write as an academic. Scholars of various stripes study media and communication left and right, and I am sympathetic to their enthusiasm and applaud their efforts. However, when I read the literature, I often wonder what those researchers have in mind when they use the words “media” and “communication.”

So you can easily see the affinity in our respective interests as scholars of communication. And so the opportunity to work on this special issue of Moment is most precious. Needless to say, I was heartened by your interest in and commitment to approaching communication philosophically, whatever “being philosophical” may mean.

A few words about my approach may be in order. As we learn from the Greek thinkers, it is only in and through communication that communication can be thematized as a concept. This is my starting point. And from that point on, what philosophizing communication means to me is to follow and examine the philosophical tradition (largely Western I admit in my case) and see how this concept of communication is understood therein and how it may be articulated explicitly in light of all the changes in history. Personally, I find modern thinkers such as Heidegger, Derrida, and many structuralists useful to my project. In this regard, I can see myself adopting a language-centered perspective from which to think about communicative phenomena. Perhaps your interests in modernist writers such as Joyce stem from the same orientation.

BC: “Philosophy of Communication” reflects how I understand the concept of communication. I would like to write down what I think in detail on philosophy of communication in my forthcoming book which is also based on my research project, *The Case of Ulysses: A Comparative Analysis on How to Study Philosophy of Communication* that is both held in the USA and in Turkey between 2016-2017. During my research project, I realized the fact that, philosophy of communication is still more like an obscure area in

philosophy and communication disciplines*. Searching how philosophy of communication is grasped in academia in different countries has given me a good insight into creating a field of “new ways of thinking” regarding communication studies. I would like to share my opinions with those who especially study on philosophy of communication and try to create a network for discussing what we do and what else we can do in this field of study. For me, meeting you during my research project and having a chance to work with you for this thematic issue are one of the first steps to realize this goal real.

Defining philosophy of communication has always been difficult for me since making definitions is not what I understand from studying a field. I am here to reveal *my own sense of* philosophy of communication not because it is going to be “the best” but because it is going to be “the different”. I am also totally aware of the fact that “this time is going to be different” will sound more like a cliché but what could I do? I could only say you’ll see how *The Case of Ulysses* will be different for now.

Trusting ourselves is what we need to change habits and prejudices against creativity in academia. Critical thinking must be a creative thinking. It is essential to have your own ideas as an academic and for me, one must have a peculiar way of understanding and writing philosophy of communication. James Joyce’s *Ulysses* actually opened my eyes when I first read it years ago and I realized the fact that there is nothing I could not do in writing. This novel attracted my attention not because everybody said it’s unreadable. The knowledge on Joyce is built on unreadability. But when I read it by myself without the guidance of Joyce readers, I could see that it’s actually readable. I took it as a call *to write!* Writing has always been not a method of expressing thoughts but the thought itself for me. Philosophers such as Derrida, Deleuze and Nietzsche and authors such as Joyce, Beckett, Kafka, Blanchot and Sartre who shed light on *the difference of writing* show me the fact that there is not one way of understanding (writing). If I had to choose an expression to tell what my philosophy of communication is, I could say it is a creation in/on writing.

So it’s time to talk about this issue. There were quite a lot of interest and submissions, and I am really thankful to referees for their very careful and detailed evaluations in the reviewing process. Out of fifteen thematic and non-thematic

* The article that is based on the field notes of my research project that is held in the USA is published in *Moment Journal*. For more information about *The Case of Ulysses*, see Canar, B. (2017). On the Remains of Guesses: Searching for a Philosophy of Communication in Academia. *Moment: Journal of Cultural Studies, Faculty of Communication, Hacettepe University*, 4 (1): 85-112.

submissions, only five thematic manuscripts are accepted for the publication. When I look through the thematic articles, this section begins with Garnett Butchart's *echo* and ends with Arus Yumul's *silence*. So, before the words begin, we have a beautiful harmony with the sound and the silence. Butchart's exploration on *sound* and *listening* is thought-provoking since he "raises communication as a question of listening". For me, this article could be considered as a kind of starting point of thinking "philosophical" communication.

Yumul's *Silence as a means of communication in the poetry of Dan Pagis* reveals what silence means for Pagis. This silence is, in Yumul's words, "expressive and speaks louder and deeper than words do". Yumul's reading of Pagis's poem, *Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway-Car* not only underlines Adorno's statement that "there can be no poetry after Auschwitz" but this reading can also be considered as an attempt to take philosophy of communication in terms of literature.

BGC: Literary writing is understandably a source of inspiration when thinking about communication and media. Every great writer, even ones not so great, can be read as a philosopher of communication, depending on the questions we bring to bear on their texts. So to me it is the questions we raise beforehand that make or fail to make the things interesting or not. Joyce is not J. K. Rowling, but either one can do wonderful things for a reader just as the other. But I can certainly see where you are coming from with regard to Joyce.

One can hear no sound, unless there is silence. For the same reason, silence is always heard, though through the disappearance or becoming absence of sounds. Sound is the other of silence, and vice versa. This seems self-evident. The question that is interesting to me is this: what is sound aiming at when it comes forth, when it is heard? What does sound want when it releases itself? More than a few thinkers have written about sound as an object of thought. What I gather from them is that sound as such is manifestation, a coming into presence. It sounds (good); it gives, *es gibt, cella donne, il y a*. The essay by Garnet Butchart addresses this issue, and it remains an issue that we shall continue to think about. Silence is always deafening. As long as we have a body, pure silence is not possible; our body makes sounds and it hears itself. In any event, the first sound we hear comes from our own body, which is part of ourselves as of an (m)other. How could sound not be expressive then?

The relationship between poetry and music is too complex and difficult issue for me to address. I am not able to comment on how writing, or writing poetry, succeeds or

fails to bear witness to human experiences. Personally, I don't have any view on the relations among poetry, the limits of language, and experiences. All I can say, keeping the theme of our special issue in mind, is that communication must take place and has taken place. All is its aftermath—*la cindre même*.

BC: Philippe Theopanidis' article on François Laruelle deserves to be noticed too since Laruelle is not a well-known philosopher in Turkey. I believe this article has a crucial importance in terms of introducing Laruelle's way of thinking philosophy of communication. In addition, "non-philosophy" is probably one of the most useful concepts of thinking philosophy of communication differently.

BGC: F. Laruelle is an important and under-recognized philosopher. To me and I think to many others as well, his writings are quite abstract, strictly meta-philosophical, bordering on trying to say what speech recognizes to be its limits. Perhaps for this very reason, he has interesting things to say about communication, which works, according to him, as a grand trope of philosophical discourses. His metaphysical, rather anti-metaphysical, notion of the One is key to his non-philosophy. I am not well versed enough to consider the implications or ramifications of this concept, but I do think it is important in enabling us to approach materialism anew. Theophanidis' contribution is one of the few pieces I know of that introduce Laruelle as a philosopher of communication. I expect that as people have the time to digest Laruelle's writings, he will be proven useful for any attempt at reading philosophy as such as "message."

BC: Thinking the sound, the silence or non-philosophy actually give clues about only three of the articles in this issue, but we have two more contributions, Umut Yener Kara's article *Time and Space in Video Games: A Sketch*, and Çiğdem Yasemin Ünlü's article *Field-Based Turn in Rhetoric and Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, which are worthy of notice.

Taking time and space in video games philosophically is challenging and one can find many approaches regarding this subject. What is more challenging and deserves to be noticed is that Kara is not taking this subject from a particular approach while he is presenting his understanding with the help of German media theorist Friedrich Kittler. The writing style of the article is also different from the classic style of writing an academic article.

Ünlü's article, which is on the basic characteristics of participatory critical rhetoric approach, comprehensively introduces what is "new" rhetoric in the literature to readers, and I think, in this sense, this article is quite informative.

BGC: Yes, about video games. They are all the rage of late for all sorts of reasons and for all sorts of people. Unfortunately, I am of the old generation; sadly or not I have never played any video game in my life. So I am totally ignorant of any “game” that can be played simply by sitting in front of a screen. I know a little about the work by scholars who approach video games from a rhetorical point of view. I think a “rhetorical approach” is one that can be applied to all sorts of phenomena, as long as these phenomena can be read as “texts,” as Ricoeur showed quite some time ago. Rhetoric, language games, video games, performatives, play—they are all related, perhaps fundamentally of the same. They are all games, but games can be deadly serious.

Kittler seems to be gaining popularity in the English-speaking world and beyond, although some of his writings appeared in English more than 30 year ago. His materialist approach to communication and media is spot on, and he is good at it I think because of his background in classics and German Romanticism in particular. What I manage to learn from Kittler and his followers is not so much the historical analyses of media forms, like telephone, cinema, or whatever, as the possibility that all media are “linguistic” in nature.

BC: I think I also belong to the old generation since I have never played video games, either. I only know how to play. On the other hand, I really like to read studies on the concept of play and the concept of game. And unlike his popularity in the English-speaking world, Kittler is rather a new name for me.

Although I consider philosophy of communication neither in terms of “philosophy of language” nor rhetoric studies, I think, rhetoric studies and philosophy of language studies are tremendously valuable. I can say that these fields still seem to be significant references to increase the variety of studies on philosophy of communication.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Ronald C. Arnett and Johan Siebers for sharing their thoughts on philosophy of communication. Both Arnett and Siebers are well-known distinguished thinkers in this field and their sincere interests and kind supports to *Moment Journal* are absolutely precious contributions for us.

We are thankful to Srinivas Lankala, Gökçe Özsu, Mutlu Binark and Tezcan Durna for their remarkable manuscripts to this issue. We would also like to thank Adrienn

Jelinek and *Polity Books* for their supports. Jelinek's help for sending Byung-Chul Han's latest book for the book review in such a short time is definitely unforgettable.

Last but not least, we are grateful to the editorial team of *Moment Journal*. Editorial Assistants Emre Canpolat, Gökçe Baydar Çavdar and Özge Özdemir have generously given their time and shared their experiences for this issue. Web editor, Erkin Gökçer Erdem was always ready to solve technical problems in the editorial process. *Moment Journal* owes a lot to his nice design.

Our language editors Ezgi Sertalp, Beren Kandemir, Gülay Acar and Ozan Çavdar did an incredible job in such a short time. We believe their meticulous support will make this issue also worthy of notice.

We would also like to thank Mutlu Binark, the editor of *Moment Journal*, and associate editors Emek Çaylı Rahte and Hatice Şule Gelibolu. With their kind help, everything becomes easier.

That's all from the theme editors, enjoy the issue! Have a nice reading...

Burcu Canar

Briankle G. Chang