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There is no Outside of Communication- metacommunication at the light of Derrida's graphematic structure of communication

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Abstract:

By claiming a general graphematic structure of every communication, Derrida builds a critique to traditional notions of unified or stable meaning, attacking the paradigm that sees in communication a phonocentric and self-sufficient attempt to seize meaning in an adequately, clear and understandable way from one point to the other.

Anything functioning as means of communication must possess, in its iterability, the structure of writing. Indeed, communication is a kind of writing. In consequence, it may be examined according to the central notions of *Différance*, Supplement or Dissemination. The graphematic turn, in effect, opens the path to exam communication according to a de-centered paradigm.

This chapter explores this assumption having in mind the relations between communication and metacommunication. We argue communication is always escaping us. It is permanently traveling along different paths of meaning happening between the lines. So, there is not beginning and no end. Anything more than communication would just be more communication. Metacommunication is, thus, the endless cycle of communication's self-differentiation. It supplements communication and it is also supplemented by it.

Keywords: Communication Theory; Derrida; MetaCommunication; Moebius Strip; Supplement;

“Do I understand this sentence? Do I understand it just as I should if I heard it in the course of a narrative? If it were set down in isolation I should say, I don’t know what it’s about. But all the same I should know how this sentence might perhaps be used; I could myself invent a context for it. (A multitude of familiar paths lead off from these words in every direction)”.
(Wittgenstein, 1958: 142)

“Différance, the irreducible absence of intention or attendance to the performative utterance, the most “event-ridden” utterance there is, is what authorizes me, taking account of the predicates just recalled, to posit the general graphematic structure of every “communication”. By no means do I draw the conclusion that there is no relative specificity of effects of consciousness, or of effects of speech (as opposed to writing in the traditional sense), that there is no performative effect, no effect of ordinary language, no effect of presence or of discursive event (speech act). It is simply that those effects do not exclude what is generally opposed to them, term by term; on the contrary, they presuppose it, in an asymmetrical way, as the general space of their possibility” (Derrida, 1988: 18-19)

Introduction

In 1971, Derrida delivered a speech entitled *“Signature, Event, Context”* (Derrida, 1988: 1-23) at a conference in Montreal on the theme of communication. One can trace in this short lecture some major arguments of his masterpiece *“Of Grammatology”* (Derrida, 1997). Indeed, its purpose is to demonstrate “why a context is never absolutely determinable or, better, in what way its determination is never assured or saturated” (Derrida, 1988: 3). From this claim, Derrida argues the conventional (linguistic and non-linguistic) concept of “context” is theoretically inadequate, stressing that to conceive the context we need to proceed to a generalization and displacement of writing.

And although Derrida wants to explore the densities and complexities of writing and context, he is dealing with a powerful communication framework. He begins with a very important question, one that communication theory is, since long, debating: “Is it *certain* that to the word communication corresponds a concept that is *unique, univocal, rigorously controllable, and transmittable*: in a word, communicable? In accordance with a strange figure of discourse, one must, first of all, ask oneself whether or not the word “communication” communicates a determinate content, an identifiable meaning, or a describable value” (Derrida, 1988: 1). In other words, does the notion of “communication” contains a clearly transmissible content? Is communication a mere vehicle, a means of transport or transitional medium of meaning? If so, how this entails a conception of unified meaning?

This is a very awkward question to make since we all learn that to communicate is to “get someone to understand your thoughts or feelings or to give information about (something) to someone” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online). It seems that communication is a kind of transitive dislocation, a sort of translation of thoughts through a material medium. Communication would, then, be a transfer of sense or a symbolic organization of different possible meanings (from literal to metaphorically and hermeneutical meaning). So, in *“Signature, Event, Context”* Derrida is bringing back common assumptions. However, just like deconstruction itself, Derrida is playing with them applying a kind of torsion to the very concept. Communication is here interrogated by communication itself.

This cross-examination uncovers not just the representational character of communication (Derrida, 1988: 5), as also its infinite allocation of meaning. This is patent on the dictionary apparatus where one word remits to other words; meaning can only be communicated through the use of other words (meanings). So, by emphasizing the “perpetual cycle of meaning” to use Leslie Hill’s expression (Hill, 2007: 24), Derrida is suggesting a crucial aspect of communication: communication supposes more communication; ultimately, metacommunication is a somewhat intrinsic part of every communicative act. Derrida is not saying meaning is impossible. Instead he claims one meaning should not unequivocally dominate another. Communication, thus, has no beginning or ending.

In fact, it seems there is an impossibility to properly begin (Hill, 2007: 25). “Where to begin?” is the latent enquiry on this lecture. If there is no beginning, there is no authorised and authoritative beginning. There is no alternative than to begin exactly on the specific and singular context on us. All speaking or writing is situated in a given context, even if it is an essential aspect of the context that cannot be absolutely determined (Hill, 2007: 25).

By claiming these assumptions, “*Signature, Event, Context*” brings us a critique of traditional conception of communication. It attacks the paradigm that sees in communication “a self-sufficient endeavour of a phonocentric and logocentric nature to transfer meaning in an adequately understandable way from one point to the other, from the sender to the receiver” (deBeer, 2007: 160). Conventionally, in western metaphysics, writing is the vehicle of communication to transfer meanings, intentions or thoughts. They could be unambiguously translated and carried through.

However, Derrida disputes the claim saying, meaning or understanding are adequate for themselves. He questions the metaphysical plenitude (Derrida, 1981: 121) where intentional movement tends towards its fulfilment. In working upon the notion of “context” Derrida is also incorporating a shattered comprehension of the communicative phenomenon. There is no saturated context where the gulf between intentions and expressions would be vanished. If we rescind clarity of meaning and fullness of understanding, then, we have to deal with writing, speech and communication as a risky activity (deBeer, 2007: 162). There is always more in communication and at the same time less in communication than the intended signification.

What Derrida intuits although he does not develop it in “*Signature, Event, Context*” are the consequences to communication theory of a critique of communication based on traditional assumptions. In other words, Derrida features an enlarged and generalized idea of communication on the belief that it is always escaping us. It is permanently traveling along different paths of meaning; it happens between the lines. There is no commencement and no dissolution. Ultimately, communication may be approached without firm oppositions, and fundamentally with no compliance to a unique, univocal, rigorously controllable communication.

We will try to develop these derridean insights considering the relation between communication and metacommunication. We believe Derrida’s work may be invaluable in the assessment of a perspective that do not reduce communication to ergodic processes dealing with reducing randomness and statistical regularity (Shannon and Weaver, 1964: 12). Against the perspective that ponders meaning as certainty and closed redundancy (Shannon and Weaver, 1964), we will discuss communication as lack and absence. In this regard, we will be asking what is the nature of metacommunication: is it a substitute or is it an addition, an appendage to communication? Is metacommunication something more than communication? Is it an alter-communication, the other of communication?

We start by detailing Derrida’s contributions to a theory of communication. Next, we take on *différance* and the graphematic structure of communication. Then, we address metacommunication as a kind of supplement. From there, we discuss the possibility of a communication *ad infinitum* and hopefully a new understanding of communication will be highlighted. In point of fact, what Derrida may be teaching us is that communication happens as a deferral and sliding process.

Without doubt, Derrida's thought has been widely influential in many disciplines (even if it has been different things to different domains). In Mathematics, undecidability has been a significant idea, and the concepts of "deferring" and "differing" has been key to psychological theories of memory (Deutscher, 2005: 101). Bringing Derrida to communication theory is not just a must-do task. It is also imperative to evaluate the implications of Supplement, *Différance* or Iterability to the very idea of communication. But this does not mean to uncritically apply these notions. As Derrida has repeatedly warned, his texts are not a supply of ready-made concepts but an activity resistant to any such reductive strategy (Norris, 1982: 24). Just like communication is an irreducible activity, so the uses we give to Derrida's conceptual tools should be approached with precaution.

***Différance*- the endlessly deferred meaning**

Reading Derrida's extensive work one will note a far-reaching conclusion: the hypothesis of idealization, based on clarity of meaning and fullness of understanding, is clearly devaluated (deBeer, 2007: 162). There is no adequacy of meaning to itself (Derrida, 1981: 67). Although the mark is repeatable, it cannot ever be repeated completely. There is always change, dislocation, alteration. No speech act or utterance can ever be complete or fully adequate. And no utterance can ever be totally present to itself (deBeer, 2007: 163). Derrida argues that the essential absence of transparency and presence forbids any saturation of context (Derrida, 1981: 118). Context suffers from uncertainty. There are only contexts without an absolute anchoring. "And this is the possibility on which I want to insist: the possibility of disengagement and citational graft which belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written, and which constitutes every mark in writing before and outside of every horizon of semio-linguistic communication; in writing, which is to say in the possibility of its functioning being cut off, at a certain point, from its "original" desire-to-say-what-one-means and from its participation in a saturable and constraining context. Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the current sense of this opposition), in a small or large unit, can be cited" put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. This does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring" (Derrida, 1988: 12). Contexts are crucial but cannot be exhaustively described. They are intrinsically incomplete.

Here Derrida is questioning the metaphysical premises of western thought and its insistence on Being as presence. On the contrary, Derrida's broad concept of writing emphasizes the very absence, privileging difference, dissimulation, distance. As it is known, Derrida is claiming that language is always inscribed in a networks of dense relays and differential traces which can never be grasped by the individual speaker. Writing is, in fact, the precondition of language and must be conceived as prior to speech (cf. Derrida, 1997). It threatens logocentrism that associates truth with self-presence. Writing, and consequently communication, entails a free-play dimension, or an element of undecidability.

Writing is the endless displacement of meaning (Norris, 1982: 28), ever beyond a self-authenticating activity, or a self-present meaning. Distance and differences are not corruptions or adulterations of presence, nor is writing a second-rate activity trying to overcome the distance by making use of it (as a writer puts his thoughts on paper). Rather, Derrida attempts to show that the very opposition between presence versus absence or immediacy and representation is a very serious illusion since speech is already structured by difference and writing as much as writing is. Language is already constituted by the very distances and differences it seeks to overcome (Derrida, 1982: 175). "To mean is automatically not to be. As soon there is difference there is difference" (Johnson, 1981 a: ix).

The famous notion¹ of “*différance*” denotes this lag inherent to any signifying act. It means simultaneously “to differ” and “to defer”. Derrida demonstrates that *différance* inhabits the very core of language and communication. The presence and immediacy are integrally formed by an internal difference to themselves. “*Différance* is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each so-called ‘present’ element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of a past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not: that is, not even to a past or a future as a modified present” (Derrida, 1982: 13). Having these premises in mind, Derrida will assign to the science of writing called *grammatology* the task of studying the effects of *différance* which western metaphysics has steadily repressed in its quest for Presence and Truth.

Derrida postulates *différance* not as simple and plain difference between two purported identities (black and white, good and bad) but to refer to the alternative gradations and progressions of differences. *Différance* as the passage of infinite, ceaseless differentiation. It is “the unresolved deferral of identity one might have ascribed to a particular term (...). Meaning endlessly differs and any original presence of meaning is endlessly deferred” (Deutscher, 2005: 31). Derrida is saying there is a kind of intrinsic movement of differentiation, a kind of *self-difference* or a *difference to itself* (Glendinning, 2011: 62). Overcoming the problems of Saussure’s *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, Derrida (1982: 1- 27) argues that what makes something what it is and not another thing is not merely a matter of differential relations to other things within a structure of general differentiation; but, above all, the structure of differentiations in the thing itself. In this regard, a kind of *non-self-differentiation* (Glendinning, 2011: 62) is intrinsic to every constructed identity. Just like there is the same in the same, there is also the *other of the same*². There is, thus, an *otherness of every identity* or, in other words, a split identity. Nothing is ever one, but at minimum two. “For any trace, mark or inscription to be what it is, there has to be at least two of them. No single beginning or origin is ever available as such” (Hill, 2007: 16).

Derrida contends a vigorous movement of differing and deferring. *Différance* indicates a movement that it is neither active nor passive but something prior to that (binary) opposition. We will try to describe the consequences of this movement of self-differentiation to the general concept of communication.

The General Graphematic Structure of Communication

Against the hypothesis of idealization and saturation of contexts, Derrida posits what he calls as a “general graphematic structure of every communication” (Derrida, 1988: 19). This means opposing the traditional view where writing is seen as sub-species of communication. “As writing, communication, if we retain that word, is not the means of transference of meaning, the exchange of intentions and meanings, discourse and the “communication of consciousnesses”” (Derrida, 1988: 20).

What is of special concern regarding communication is that *différance* does not presuppose a theory of language nor a theory of literature. It is implied on the mobile and differential articulations that characterize signification. What Derrida calls “writing” - the use of a mark that can do without the presence of a certain sender or addressee - can be applied in a broader sense, since the possibility of this absence is part of the structure of any sign in general, linguistic or

¹ *Différance* is declared to be neither a word nor a concept, not even a name. It “is” what makes presence possible while at the same time making to differ from itself (Derrida, 1982: 7)

² Paul Ricoeur’s *Oneself as Another* will resume (through an hermeneutical dimension) the work upon these categories. Recall, for instance, *ipse* and *idem* identities.

not, human or not. In other words, breaking away with the here and now of a determinable producer is integral part of the conditions of possibility of any means of communication in general. That's why Derrida speaks of "writing before the letter" (Derrida, 1997: 75) or a writing that makes the written letter possible. According to him, language must be seen as possibility founded on the general possibility of writing.

Communication itself may be regarded as a kind of writing. Anything functioning as means of communication must possess, in its iterability, the structure of writing and the traditional conception of the sign supposes a generalized writing (Glendinning, 2011: 73). "My communication must be repeatable-iterable-in the absolute absence of the receiver or of any empirically determinable collectivity of receivers. Such iterability-(iter, again, probably comes from *itara*, other in Sanskrit, and everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity) structures the mark of writing itself, no matter what particular type of writing is involved (whether pictographical, hieroglyphic, ideographic, phonetic, alphabetic, to cite the old categories). A writing that is not structurally readable-iterable-beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing" (Derrida, 1988: 7). Derrida is arguing that iterability is not a feature of written language alone but of all language (spoken and written) and a feature of every communication. Because it is repeated, the sign can be detached from its context. In each iterability, the mark is always re-marked, marked a second time, remarked upon, and putted to a distance. This has to do with the impossibility of exhaust or full-saturations of contexts. They are necessarily incomplete. And iterability only adds to this unfinished dimension. Any communication "suffers" from this intrinsic relation to absence. It is a form of writing that is ever displacing itself, always in differentiation to itself, each repetition adding a layer that cannot be restrained. It is already in internal movement.

So, let's ponder communication as a general form of writing, i.e, as a graphematic structure. Indeed, communication is a grapheme. How can we theoretically approach the phenomenon of communication if we consider it as a special graph?

The graphematic structure of communication (Derrida, 1988: 19) points to the fact that, according Derrida, we can assume communication as writing. As a result, the structural constitution allocated to writing is also the structural framework of communication. Hence, not only it is possible as also it is urgent to conceive the idea of communication as having a differential movement. That is to say that communication process differentiates itself in each point that make it up. It is not an exact, certain and stable unity of meaning but also inscription, mark.

Consequently, and second, we have to dislocate communication from a simple transposition between persons and taking it as complex sign activity. If contents are not just passages to a material form via diverse media, this is to say communication may not possess a steady identity. In each communicative movement, there is an important differentiation drive due precisely to its intrinsic iterability. From Derrida, we take communication not so much as an activity intended to reclaim the presence, but one preoccupied with absence. Communication deals not with the same, but with the other of the same, it has a split character. While having always to suppress the distance, this distance and deferral is continually returning with each iterability.

We would say that communication is never one activity of meaning but several happening at the same time. There is no beginning or end. Presence is bound to absence, a discontinuity, a shifting.

This, once more, puts in check traditional views on understanding. In the traditional, transitive paradigm, understanding is reachable through entropy (noise) reduction. It would be sufficient to transmit clearly. But in the graphematic paradigm Derrida is calling our attention to the fact comprehension (while travelling along a general writing) has to face a dense grid of relays and differential traces. If it aims to be a communication, signification is already transformed in the moment it occurs. It has in it a *différance* preventing the simple identification of signifier and signified. Comprehension, is thus, not at reach but at an irreducible distance. It is as if the transitive paradigm could be metaphorically based on the notion of a dictionary (each word is

leading to a dead end of signification) while in the graphematic paradigm, there is no such thing as a dictionary. Comprehension is necessarily under construction. It opens more than it closes. So, while the derridean graphematic perspective on communication impels us to consider the discrepancies, the lack and defer, one could well ask what the role of metacommunication is. If comprehension is being manufactured by the logic of communication's external and, more importantly, internal differences, how to conceive metacommunication seen as a second communication? Can we even tell what the first and second "communication" is? Is it an appendage, an innocent addition? If *différance* entails new dispatches, new differences and distances, how metacommunication is even possible? How to perceive this communication-related deferral? Is metacommunication something we continually cast upon a previous communication recognizing the insurmountable distance of every communication to meaning?

The MetaCommunication Supplement

Metacommunication is not always intentional. But is a pretty common human activity³. One that obviously cannot be fully separated from communication. Communication Theory should, then, include a theory on this other-communication we call metacommunication. Indeed, virtually every communication contains metacommunication messages that frame, modify and adapt the message. In a book that tried to build a model of psychiatry through the idea of communication as a social matrix, Ruesch and Bateson first introduced the term "metacommunication" to name the entirely new order of "communication about communication" (1951: 209). They viewed communication (a bit like Derrida himself) as self-sustaining, self-organizing system where given the impossibility of attaining an objective communication, one could only deal with "communication about communication" (Ruesch and Bateson, 1951: 209).

In order to answer the questions exposed in the last section, we suggest metacommunication should be approached as a kind of supplement. Once more, Derrida's considerations are of invaluable relevance. Nevertheless, supplement is here carefully employed: it does not denote the deconstructive turn present in *Of Grammatology* (Derrida, 1997) where a term functions against its own explicit assertions. But we refer to supplement in the sense that metacommunication is always part of a larger text. It inscribes in itself another message - a beyond message. A book's title is also a supplement. In the supplement, there is something before it (something that it supplementing) and something after it (something that should be supplemented) (Royle, 2003: 48).

So, the supplement broaches the question about the borders of communication. In other words, it is at once what is added in order to enrich it and, at the same time, an extra, a surplus. Derrida explains how the supplement is a plenitude inspiring other plenitude and also a notion that makes up for something missing. "Compensatory and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which takes-(the)-place [tient-lieu]. As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up of itself, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself" (Derrida, 1997: 144).

This is not the time to discuss how Derrida explores this strange but necessary cohabitation (Derrida, 1997: 144) through its own reading of Rousseau. Suffice is to say the supplement is like a virus. It infects everything (Derrida, 1997: 157). Like the supplement, metacommunication is also everywhere: communication about communication about communication about communication about communication...Metacommunication pastes itself on communication, it

³ Some examples of metacommunicative activity include the Kinesic behavior including gestures and facial expressions; Proxemics and all the non-verbal communication. And explicit talk : for example, after saying something: "Just Kidding";

is not possible to turn communication discrete. It is a process under construction. Just like the supplement. "There is no present before it, it is not preceding by anything but itself that is to say by another supplement. The supplement is always the supplement of a supplement. One wishes to go back from the supplement to the source: one must recognize that there is a supplement at the source" (Derrida, 1997: 303-304). Metacommunication is simultaneously supplementary and essential, it augments and modifies. It is a surplus but also a plenitude. More importantly to communication theory, the derridean supplement provides us a way to think about metalanguage (Royle, 2003: 58). Just like literary criticism are, in some respects, supplementary to the literary work, the logic of supplement is contained on metacommunication. As point of fact, metacommunication is something frustrating since it is both necessary and impossible. We cannot communicate without metacommunicate but there no metacommunication as a discrete language. It is simultaneously part of and not part of communication. Every turn of the head, every wink, every uttered word is only what it is, identical to itself and unique as so far it is repeatable, that is to say, as so far iterability make it not absolutely identical to itself. "What is not what it is, identical and identical to itself, unique, unless it adds itself the possibility of being repeated as such" (Derrida, 1981a: 168). The supplement may be useful to tackle the mutual relation of presence and absence in communication and metacommunication. There is an operation in-between the two. One cannot be thought without the other. Each communication act adds to itself as metacommunication. The supplement is the other name to *différance* (Derrida, 1997: 150), an operation of deffering retarding presence. Communication about communication about communication.

Metacommunication is a metalanguage, an other- communication. We are here suggesting that it is both an addition and a substitute, a necessary replacing and also something that is an integral part of communication. It is as if metacommunication was the deferral process Derrida describes in the *différance* and in the supplement. Metacommunication is communication in difference to itself. A self-difference inhabiting the very process of communication. If we take in consideration the graphematic structure of communication, we can see in metacommunication an entrenched communication: a communication in internal differentiation process that exists as a supplement. Not an unpretentious addition, not a simple substitution but an order that supplements and is supplemented. A general and heterogeneous communication.

Maybe Derrida would say metacommunication is a parasitic, though constitutive, form of communication. We do not know for sure. Maybe metacommunication is indeed a parasite to communication. But this parasitism would have to do with a logic of contamination, of a virulence that Derrida associates with dissemination: communication as a general text is always providing further connections, correlations and contexts. Dissemination means disclosing the contingency of meaning. It does not dissolve it but states the under construction nature of meaning. Metacommunication is impregnated with the heterogeneity of different writings. Communication is the self-differentiating process contained in that heterogeneity.

Communication, like dissemination, is without return. An archaeology of communication is not possible. We are indefinitely referred to endless connections and articulations. A disseminated communication destroys the hegemonic centre of a traditional, transitive model of communication. It takes communication to intertextuality, to the plurality of filiations (and metacommunications) that it carries within itself. Metacommunication resonate; it is a play of meanings just like the graphematic structure of communication contends a fertile dispersal.

One could say the perspective on metacommunication as a supplement reveals that anything more than communication would be more communication. Anything more than communication would just be one other-communication, a metacommunication. The supplement of communication proposes the elimination of the very idea of a transitive model. Communication develops in metacommunication that is in itself an evolving communication. Communication is nowhere to be seen. Yet, as a writing having a graphematic structure, it is everywhere. It is more than a commodity available to be disposed. It has, in itself, a scattered "organicity" that differs

and defers, and refers to another writing. Communication is not a site or an object we use (in the sake of market), it is the very symbolic core of human existence.

This is the sense of the enigma of communication: nothing that can be appropriated, concluded or finished. Metacommunication is, thus, the unfinished nature of every communication. Communication is only conceivable, in this graphematic proposal, as a relational presence, a basis of supplements that it constantly defers. Communication is a *moving towards* something, not in the way one tries to capture something, but in the way communication is continuously in deferral. It is in successive metacommunication, little borders that keep communication in perpetual reframing (dislocation).

Infinite Communication.

Communication *Ad Infinitum*

Anything more than communication would be metacommunication. This idea is not a new one as we can find it in the core of the Palo Alto School. More specifically, in Watzlawick *at all's* "*Pragmatics of Human Communication*" (1967). In that classical book, the authors draw attention to the circularity of communication patterns, ie. they focus on the chains of feedback loops (Watzlawick *at all's*, 1967: 27). But above all, they discuss something akin to the metacommunicative supplement: the impossibility of not communicating (Watzlawick *at all's*, 1967: 29-32). Anything more than communication would be more communication since one cannot not communicate. The belief that all behaviour is communication is, in theoretical terms, far away from the assertion that communication is a kind of writing or general text of indecisive disseminations. Nevertheless, both underscore how communication is something we cannot escape. No matter what one tries, there is always more communication, *metacommunication*, *re-communication*.

Because communication is provided with a graphematic structure, it could be envisioned as a broad text, a texture of life. Our very relation to reality functions within this graphematic weaving. Derrida boldly asserts that *Il'n'y a pas de hors-texte*, "there is nothing outside the text" (Derrida, 1997: 158). If communication is a writing, then, maybe there is nothing outside communication. Since communication engenders more communication, if it is impossible not to communicate, if communication is a text in the infinitely deferring movement of differentiation (Deutscher, 2005: 33), maybe we are condemned to always keep feeding the fundamental dissemination Derrida talks about. A communication *ad infinitum*. We cannot transpose, overcome or reduce communication. Metacommunication *is not* and *also is* communication. It is as if communication became a line on the horizon, unreachable, inaccessible, and unapproachable.

Metacommunication rises from within communication. Like text, communication is infinite spacing, delay and relation. To say there is no outside to text is to say there will always be differentiation and supplementation. We advocate the same could be said about communication. Since it has a general graphematic structure, and since one cannot escape communication, there is no outside of communication. *Communication breeds communication; it re-communicates or it metacommunicates*. There is always a residue that brings ever more communications. Communication does not enclose us. It forms our own environment, our own text. It cannot be seized or transgressed. It cannot be passed over. There is no outer. Every trace bring with it more communication. The play of supplements in metacommunication forms our own texture of life. Between one trace and the next we encounter repetition and difference, that is to say, an inexorable contamination. There is a rest to communication and metacommunication as a supplement functions as a remainder. Just like Derrida alerts us that iterability and deferred proliferation are inseparable, communication generates more communication.

While there no outside, there is no inside to communication (cf. Derrida, 1981 a: 133), a sort of essence or absolute content to be transposed or moved between two black-boxes through a vehicle or media. So, how to conceive the reiterated character of all communication?

A beginning of response can be provided by the Moebius strip discovered, in 1858, by the German mathematicians August Ferdinand Möbius and Johann Benedict Listing. The Moebius strip is a surface with only one side having the mathematical property of being non-orientable. It has no inside or outside since the outside relates to the inside and vice-versa. The surface becomes, then, infinite: in theory, an object could travel across the strip indefinitely since there is no beginning and no end. Exterior and interior interpenetrate mutually.

As we have seen, the graphematical perspective on communication introduces countless deferral. Communication *becomes* metacommunication and vice-versa. Being supplemented and supplementing⁴ it. A dynamic communication is interpenetrated by the infinite process of more communication. Again, *It is impossible to escape communication*. It leaks. It becomes. Just like the Moebius strip, communication and metacommunication intermingle. They form one side that has no interior or exterior. One does not precedes the other.

But communication is self-differentiation to metacommunication. Metacommunication is taken *ad infinitum* as communication; as supplement, metacommunication is integrated in the communication structure. If we want, in metacommunication the outside is taken inside (it is not just a communication but it is also a potential communication) just as the inside is taken outside (communication is not metacommunication but also a potential metacommunication).

We are describing communication and metacommunication as being of a recursive type. There is no more appropriated metaphor to describe communication in the graphematical perspective. There is nothing outside text; there is nothing outside communication; just more and more communication, metacommunicated and (differed) re-communicated.

Communication differs and defers. It has no commencement nor expiration. It is infinite. We come for a second time to the assertion: *anything more than communication would be more communication*.

Conclusion

In this chapter we briefly presented some principles contained in Derrida's monumental work and argued that a graphematic perspective on communication brings major questions to communication theory. We have explored how Derrida's graphematic method to communication would be approached and how a cogitation on metacommunication could possibly be integrated in it.

Following Derrida, communication is already a form of writing. As such, it can eventually be examined according to the central notions of *Différance*, Supplement or Dissemination. This chapter tried to bring to the fore communication seen not just the vehicle, not just a manifestation, but a loosely defined phenomenon in perpetual difference and deferral to itself. Communication is dissemination, spreading, *sema*. Communication never arrives nor departures. It is an endless cycle of self-differentiation. Metacommunication is relevant in this respect. As a kind of supplement, it is, at the same time, something less and something more than communication. It supplements communication and it is also supplemented by it. That's why, communication is dissemination and propagation. It has no defined nor definitive boundaries. It is not limited to verbal messages but, being of a semiotic character, it appears in many channels, combinations and contexts.

Communication is infinite. And this unbounded nature points to the fact enunciated above that anything more the communication would be more communication. Ray Birdwhistell, the

⁴ "(the pharmakon is neither remedy nor poison, neither good nor evil, neither the inside nor the outside, neither speech nor writing; the supplement is neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence, etc)" (Derrida, 1981: 42-43).

American anthropologist, has intuited the deferral movement associated with communication. He realized communication cannot be seized (as traditional theories and transitive models vindicated). In fact, as a loose semiotic activity that is always asking for more communication. It is without surprise that he was the founder of a form of metacommunicational study field: kinesics. In a small paper, he identified communication not as an object but a very process: "*an individual does not communicate; he engages in or becomes part of communication. He may move or make noises...but he does not communicate (...)* In other words, *he does not generate communication; he participates in it*" (Birdwhistell, 1959: 104). This means the phenomenon of communication cannot be understood as a simple, transitive model of action and reaction. It has to be understood at a transactional, relational level, as referral (not transfer) forwarding itself, propelling and reiterating the holistic process. Communication is always supplemented by metacommunication that is itself supplemented.

The general graphematic structure of communication introduces this constant gliding. As graph, communication seeks out, not individual speakers, but more communication. We are just part of the text just as communication is part of a general writing. He cannot not communicate and metacommunication (explicitly or implicitly) confirms it. There is no communication outside the text, no communication outside communication. Every time we communicate we are already displacing communication. Metacommunication is, thus, dislocated communication.

In sum, a communicational turn to the graph means a critique to mathematical and informational models of communication and to a discrete conception of the term. On the contrary, it invites us to take a continuous holistic perspective on communication, its disconnections and ruptures but also its attachments and combinations. Metacommunication is, in this sense, not a substitute nor an addenda, it is a supplement or a heterogenous communication, something that excludes totalization. Metacommunication is not intended to suppress a deficiency or something lacking. *Metacommunication is self-differentiating communication.*

Answering the questions made in this chapter, it is because metacommunication is not obsessed with presence or absence (of meaning) that it is not a second or spare communication. Contrarily, metacommunication is communication's rest; it does not destroy its uniqueness but it takes communication to a plurality of filiations.

In communication there is the graph. And, then, there is the unsurmountable distance to meaning. There is metacommunication. And we cannot go around communication. We participate in it. It is something that *is always behind and beyond us*. Infinite Communication. In deferral. And in dissemination. Metacommunication is not more communication. It is the otherness of communication: the same as another. Anything more than communication would be more communication.

There is no outside of communication.

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