

THE COMMUNICATION MEMBRANES

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Abstract

The impulse which initializes this study is to find an ontological approach to better understand and explain the actual configuration of human communication as a multi-field and as a multi-structure complex universe. Its subsidiary zetetic reason is used to define a new extended perspective that includes the convergence of both the current communication complexity (Communication-as-a-Universe) and the functional theorization accredited by the “Communication-as-a-Field” (Robert T. Craig). Therefore, we discovered that the solution is the conceptualization of a new ideational configuration as the emergence of a new membrane. Communication-as-a-Universe Membrane is highlighted as an evolutionary continuation of the old “Communication-as-a-Field” Membrane.

Keywords: Communication, membrane, Communication – as – a – Field Membrane, Communication-as-a-Universe Membrane

Introduction

The Concept of Membrane

We understand that “membrane” is an elastic, coherent, dynamic, and vibrant discursive ideational configuration. This concept modulates the trans-paradigmatic thinking of a scientific community; thus membrane indicates more than a paradigm shift. Membrane reveals a substantial and radical change of the line of thought in a universe of study and also retains a high level ideational configuration on which the thinking of a period of time depends on it as a whole. Therefore, all areas of sciences study membranes; for example, they can be found in General Communication Science, Theoretical Physics, Astrophysics, Physical Cosmology, Astronomy etc. In astronomy, the ideational configuration of geocentrism membrane has been used and replaced by the heliocentric membrane. In Physical Cosmology, there are micro-organization modalities of matter in convergent and divergent membranes just like membranes that led to the Big Bang.

Two Membranes and Two Matrix-Standard Reference Systems

The idea of “field theory” belongs to Kurt Lewin in the 1950’s (Lewin, 1951), and only since 1988-1989 was communication conceived “as-a-field“. Among specialists who have approached the communication-as-a-field at a discourse or meta-discourse level, we include: J. M. Wieman, R. P. Hawkins, S. Pingree (1988), S. King Sanderson (1989), M. R. Levy & M. Gurevitch (1993), P. A. Argenti (1996), R. T. Craig (1999), K. N. Cessna (2000), C. Russill (2005), D. McQuail (2006), W. Donsbach (2006), B. Dervin (2006), R. T. Craig (2001a, 2008, 2009), R. T Craig & H. L. Muller (2007), S. Batosin („champ“ - field) (Bratosin, 2007, pp. 1, 6, 7, 9), K. N. Cessna & L. R. Frey (2009), D. C. Balaban & M.-C. Abrudan (2011), M. Bergman (2012), F. Cooren (2012), M. A. Tudor („champ“ - field) (Tudor, 2013, p. 24).

K. N. Cessna, Brenda Dervin, M. Song, K. Nordenstreng and Wolfgang Donsbach were among those who understood that stirring the moment comes from the irradiative idea of “communication-as-a-field” membrane. In 2000, K. N. Cessna speaks about “field of communication” (Cessna, 2000, p. 169), and in 2009 shows: “the study of communication was expanded to include many areas and topics that were unknown to the founders of the field – interpersonal and family communication, group and organizational communication, health and aging communication, communication media and technology, to name only few” (Cessna & Frey, 2009, p. XXIX).

In the disseminated work at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, May 27th-31st 2004, B. Dervin and M. Song stated the importance of communication-as-a-field idea and investigated its historical origins, as well as some of its strengths and weaknesses (Dervin & Song, 2004).

In 2005, at the Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA), New York, May 28, 2005, Wolfgang Donsbach noted the following about "the identity of communication research": Thesis 1: Communication as a research field has seen the greatest growth of probably all academic fields over the last 30 years" (Donsbach, 2006, p. 437).

Furthermore, K. Nordenstreng writes about field theme in two articles (2004, 2007). First, he observes that “the field was expanded and diversified” (Nordenstreng, 2004, p. 8); and that “in its expansion, the field became more and more diversified” (Nordenstreng, 2007, p. 211). In his remarkable study on the “identity of communication”, Wolfgang Donsbach mentions in thesis 2, that “field increasingly suffers from epistemological erosion” (Donsbach, 2006, p. 446). Therefore, these are some of the

ideational nuclei where the “field as a field” deterioration and its metamorphosis in the “universe” were found.

The one who definitively legitimizes the idea of “field“, and brings it to be generally accepted is Professor Robert T. Craig (1999, 2001a, 2007, 2008, 2009). He established an ontological standard revealing the ideational outlooks that cross and make the communication field accessible. Therefore, the grid includes the initial seven traditions and four potential traditions: “feminist tradition”, “aesthetic tradition”, “economic tradition”, “spiritual tradition” (Craig, 1999, p. 151). Then, following C. Russill’s suggestion (Russill, 2005), another tradition is cumulated. We have called this grid the “Traditions Matrix-Standard - R. T. Craig“, while the dynamic, coherent and elastic ideational configuration irradiating in and related to the “field“ image is known as the “Communication-as-a-Field Membrane”. In his study “Communication theory as a field” (1999), Robert T. Craig stated that “seven major traditions” installed in the present “field of communication theory” are: rhetorical, semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, socio-psychological, socio-cultural and critical (Craig, 1999). The opinion is iterated in the book written by R. T. Craig & H. L. Muller (2007), “Theorizing Communication: Readings across Traditions”, and in the article “Communication as a Field and Discipline” (Craig, 2008). At the core of the article is the intention to join the communication theories into a meta-model, on the flow of the “seven major traditions”. It was ascertained that what would be named “The Traditions Matrix-Standard - R. T. Craig”, the “seven major traditions” from the “communication theory as a field”, can be updated. In reality, there are 8 traditions; thus since Chris Russill’s proposal in 2005, R. T. Craig amounted to 8 the number of major traditions. Therefore, there are memorable articles with polemic overtones written by David Myers (2001), Chris Russill (2005) and J. M. Martinez (2008), some of correction or add up, which R. T. Craig answered severely in some ways (2001b, 2007, 2009).

The Craig Matrix-Standard was handed over during the great works of Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss (2011, tenth edition) and E. A. Griffin (2011, eighth edition); and in the fundamental encyclopedias, W. Donsbach (2008), S. W. Littlejohn and K. A. Foss (2009), and W. F. Eadie (2009). Based on many exceptions (for example, Wolfgang Donsbach), the R. T. Craig standard did not integrally find resonance at high zetetic level in Europe (Coşoveanu, 2002; Păun, 2013; Manolea, 2013).

The ontological organization given by R. T. Craig is a reference point for starting, and it has “contributed to the gradual formation of a certain broad consciousness of communication theory as a field” (Craig, 2007, p. 7), and it is salutary for a domain not tidy enough. It was believed that in the last 30 years, the communication reality has become trenchantly more complex.

In accordance with this, there has been a fundamental transformation: thus the “field” of communication has become the “universe” of communication.

D. C. Barnlund is the first specialist that predicts the development of communication as “universe of communication” (Barnlund, 1962).

The communication world changed definitely and around the year 2000, there was a mild paradigm change and a new “Communication-as-a-Multi-field (Multi-space)-and-Multi-structure-Universe” epistemic object took shape. Since ontology remained fixed within communication-as-a-field frames, it has been currently experiencing a “relaxed” shortage of communication ontology (Vlăduțescu, 2002; Vlăduțescu, 2006; Vlăduțescu, 2009). Thus, the problem is that the communication-as-an-universe reality cannot be conceived within the communication-as-a-field lexicon. In the attempt to build a new ontology on the foundations of the old ontology, it has been found that communication-as-a-field actually had a stronger implicit ontology than the explicit ontology founded by S. Deetz, G. J. Shepherd, C. R. Berger, R. T. Craig, J. K. Burgoon, S. W. Littlejohn, etc. At a more in-depth examination, we will understand that communication-as-a-field worked without a clear and dedicated ontology (Vlăduțescu, 2004).

The specialists in communication identify the "claim components" within theories/sciences: J. A. Anderson (1996) takes into account ontology, epistemology, praxeology and axiology; S. W. Littlejohn and K. A. Foss (2008) refer to ontology, epistemology, axiology; C. Fuentes Navarro (1999) relates to gnoseology, teleology praxeology and ethics; R. L. Heath and J. Bryant (2000) remember ontology, epistemology, methodology and history; and R. T. Craig (2013) speaks about epistemology, ontology, axiology, praxeology.

These organization lines of the communication phenomenology are considered as the "branches of philosophy". Our remark is that these organizational lines are not external vectors, but internal vectors. Thus, we refer to these as organizational vectors axes. Our thesis shows that the Communication-as-an-Universe can be organized along 15 axes, and hence we refer to the organization grid as the Communication Axes Matrix-Standard. Furthermore, we differentiated four hard axes which are defining for the communication domain: communication ontology - A1, communication epistemology - A2, communication methodology - A3, and communication axiology - A4. At the same time, we retained the other 11 axes as qualifying, differentiating axes and soft axes: communication history - A5, communication psychology - A6, communication sociology - A7, communication anthropology - A8, communication hermeneutics-A9, communication praxeology - A10, communication ethics- A11, communication logics - A12, communication ecology - A13, communication philosophy - A14, and communication law - A15.

Practically, the communication axes are specialties of the communication discipline which are majorly taught in universities.

We will report the Axes Communication Matrix-Standard to The Traditions Matrix-Standard - R. T. Craig, and would find that the seven traditions (Craig, 1999), plus the four potential traditions (Craig & Muller, 2007) are a relevant reference for Communication-as-a-Field; hence we now live in a world of Communication-as-a-Universe.

Within communication, we can talk about 15 fields of communication. Robert T. Craig bespoke the entire communication as only one field and the theory of communication “as a dialogical-dialectical field” (Craig, 1999, p. 199). We established the fact that communication is not only a field, a space, or a multi-faced object but a multi-space and multi-structure universe.

Communication is a patchy and heterogeneous universe: a multi-space and a multi-structure (Vlăduțescu, 2013a; Vlăduțescu, 2013b). Each field of this universe is crystallized around an axis and appears as an area with a certain systemic location, with a particular orientation, with a certain internal coherence of the structure. In the centre of the field, there is the axis, and the universe is as strong as its axes. Thus, it is not the axis which belongs to the field, but the field is the one which belongs to the axis (Vlăduțescu, 2004; Gîfu & Cristea, 2011; Bușu, 2013; Vlăduțescu & Ciupercă, 2013).

In addition, we considered that the 15 components branches should be considered as axes of communication, trails, paths of constructive-cognitive-cogitative and applicable-practical theoretical crystallization of communication. Thus, the axes are also pillars of the discipline of communication.

Conclusion

The existence of two ideational membranes is profiled for communication: “communication – as – a - field” membrane and “communication-as-a-multi-field and multi-structure-universe” membrane. “Communication-as-a-field” thinking is the one with which institutional communication discipline starts (1945-1950).

From 1970-2000, the metamorphosis of “communication-as-a-field” membrane takes place in a well-outlined membrane in the first decade of the third millennium: “communication-as-a-multi-field and multi-structure-universe” membrane.

The first membrane which is the basic one, sustains profound thinking of communication as a field. In communicational inferences, in theoretical researches and in communication practice applications, the unifying idea of “field” vibrates. Therefore, this denotes the unity, continuity and the relatively predictable repetition of communicational phenomena.

“Communication-as-a-field” patterns share similarities that enable analogical thinking and algorithm application.

Yet, the huge variability in the ideational set, in the ideation of “communication-as-a- universe” membrane, minimizes the algorithm computation possibilities and determines the heuristic procedures of high refinement.

The two communication membranes delimit two communication worlds; thus, a world is the one of algorithm computational thinking in “field”. The second one is a world of computational heuristic thinking in “universe” with some nucleus of algorithm computational “field” thinking. In conclusion, “communication-as-a-field” membrane represents Isaac Newton’s classical mechanics, while “communication-as-a-universe” membrane has similarities to Albert Einstein’s relativity theory.

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