



ECREA

European Communication Research and Education Association
PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION
SECTION

OBJECTIVES

PRELIMINARY REMARK

The following Document represents a Draft of the Objectives for a prospective Philosophy of Communication Section of ECREA. The Objectives remain provisional until formal Approval by the Executive Board of ECREA has been obtained.

Final Inception of the Objectives is bound to an Approval by Vote at the first Business Meeting of the prospective Section.

The establishment of this Section is informed by the belief that the Philosophy of Communication is a particularly salient area of inquiry today, given the increased understanding of the fundamental role communication plays in almost all aspects of life, and increasingly, of science, and the social changes brought about by an increasingly globalised 'communication society'. These developments require the exploration of the relations between communication theory and traditional areas of philosophy, such as metaphysics and ontology, philosophy of language, epistemology, social and political philosophy and ethics. There are many examples of thinkers who have paid explicit attention to the emerging field of the philosophy of communication, from Empedocles and Aristotle to Leibniz, Dewey, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Luhmann and Habermas (to name a few), but a forum for the systematic discussion of topics in this field has been lacking up until now in Europe, as has the systematic discussion of the philosophy of communication itself. Thinkers have had occasion to refer to communication in their theory formation, but have done so often in an ad hoc manner, highlighting specific aspects of communication but neglecting others, and have often proceeded in relative isolation. Even the opposing seminal accounts of Luhmann and Habermas of the nature and social role of communication have scarcely been examined from the point of view of their relative merits for a general philosophical understanding of communication and a communicative understanding of philosophy.

Not only is there a need for philosophical reflection on communication from the perspective of communication science and scholarship, but there is also such a need from the perspective of philosophy itself, which will benefit from a structural and explicit inclusion of insights relating to (human) communication. Moreover, a philosophical reflection on communication may set free practices and insights which may help mitigate structures of oppression in self, culture and society and foster an open, critical debate.

The philosophy of communication encompasses a variety of concerns including reflective, theoretical, analytical, normative and historical questions relating to communication as a phenomenon, a dialectical process, a social reality, a form of expression, a theoretical construct or last but not at least a paradox. What distinguishes Philosophy of Communication from other approaches is the foundational dimension

embodied by the Section. Philosophy of Communication is concerned with questions regarding theory formation and methodology in communication scholarship, and with fundamental questions regarding the place of communication in human existence. It is therefore a reflexive practice. The philosophy of communication tries to reclaim a place for independent theory because theory has more and more become "practice's handmaiden" (Adorno). Theory can only continue to benefit practice if it regains the distance necessary for reflection, criticism and the discovery of relevant truth, without withdrawing into an isolated sphere of its own.

Communication is challenging in its performance, exploration, description and explanation. It is this challenge which encourages specialists and researchers from several disciplines to go beyond the boundaries of their academic disciplines in the expectation of experiencing an *open discourse* that emerges from divergent interests: from the relation of self and society to the interplay of communication and culture, politics and economics, to mediology and mediality, to semantics and semiotics, to neurobiology of cognition and mind, to the phenomenology of human interaction, to knowledge and epistemology of science, to information and noise, to dialogue and uncertainty, to the normativity of communicative action, the nature of rationality, the rhetoric of philosophy and the philosophy of rhetoric.

The Philosophy of Communication Section of ECREA sets out to provide an open forum for fundamental reflection and research. The Section's general aims are: 1) the rediscovery and strengthening of theoretical reasoning and critical philosophical reflection in communication studies; 2) the exploration of the role communication plays in scientific self-understanding; 3) the intensification of trans-disciplinary collaboration with respect to the variety of concerns, arguments, positions and scientific or philosophical self-conceptions; and 4) a commitment to eschew dogmatism. As a distinct field, the philosophy of communication is only now beginning to emerge. The Section explicitly aims to foster the development of researchers and research programs and to assist young scholars from across the EU in entering the field.

The Section promotes exchange, research, education and debate. Its members emphatically encourage diversity in thought and expertise. The Philosophy of Communication Section appeals to academics and professionals at large to play an active role in furthering a culture of critical debate. From the field of anthropology to thermo-dynamics, from evolutionary biology to sociology, from chaos-theory to epistemology, from literary theory, aesthetics and criticism to psychology and political economy, the Section welcomes challenging questions, findings and approaches of a sufficiently fundamental nature that question existing orthodoxies and encourage us to reassess our beliefs.

As part of ECREA, the Philosophy of Communication Section in particular sets out to consolidate a European forum for the philosophy of communication. Guided by the ideal of a free, rational, diverse, engaged and socially just Europe, the Section is explicitly oriented to reflect the cultural variety and the variety of traditions in the history of thought, scholarship and science. The Section recognises the development of a common European agency as highly desirable for the furthering of the activities that go under the name "philosophy of communication". The Section's policy aims to develop, coordinate and implement an infrastructure for joint fundamental research, communication, discussion and the support of young scholars.