

## EDITORIAL

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doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00282.x

Failure *and* success: One cannot come to be without the other; one comes to be always by becoming the other. Inasmuch as failure constitutes the internal horizon of success, a success is always haunted by the coming of failure, whose arrival never fails to (re-)open the possibility of an immanent reversal. In fact as well as in principle, failure cannot exist without success, and success does not fail to bring with it what will ruin it, for each unsettles itself in turn only to become an other, its own other. Indeed, nothing succeeds like a failure and nothing begins to fail if it were not successful. Failure transitions into success, one is (in) the other, one succeeds the other, and vice versa.

What can be said about failure and communication? Perhaps not much; words fail. To bring up, or to return to, the topic of failure in communication does not imply that the structure of symbolic exchange harbors somewhere within it the ideal of success, as though a message sent could potentially, at some other moment, be fully received. Whatever we may think, not all can be communicated. There must be a limit to communication that functions simultaneously, and paradoxically, as a permit for its possibility. This limit is by no means a mystical negativity. Rather, it is the difference between what can be expressed and what remains inexpressible—the distance that succeeds all that has been said.

The difference between a word, say, and whatever it might mean, presents an inaugural moment, a kind of opening that calls for something to be said. Yet, though one may choose one's words freely, the *subject* that is spoken is never the same as the *person* who begins to speak. This is why human communication is always a matter of recognition, of "finding a voice" the moment one attempts to express oneself in relation to an other. In this sense, as most of us are aware, communication is more often than not *miscommunication*; it proceeds always against the possibility of failure, a failure to say exactly what one means and to mean exactly what one says. This failure of communication succeeds, or rather overcomes its own failure, by allowing one to express oneself in the first place.

In this special issue, we gather together four articles that address the theme of failure and success as it bears upon issues critical to communication and media theory. These articles discuss in turn philosophy of the first person (Vincent Descombes), digital reproduction of sound (Greg Hainge), theories of spectatorship

and cinema (James Penney), and the relation between vision and thinking (Catherine Malabou). Taken together, these articles form an invitation to consider communication and media in a way adequate to their subject matter, and they do so by rending open—through the exemplars that they are—a *topos*, a vision of thought, perhaps, according to which the question of communication, when thematized properly, will demand the most penetrating and rigorous of theoretical reflections. Gathered to issue a call for serious theoretical work, we present the articles in no particular order. Their failure or success, as any editor will concede, does not depend on our advertisement but rather on the thoughts presented therein. It is to these thoughts that we must turn.

We wish to acknowledge several individuals who helped us along the way. To Francois Cooren goes our “thank you” and much more; without his encouragement, good will, and expert guidance, this special issue would not be a reality. Patrick Mensah has been with this project from the beginning; we thank him most sincerely, especially because he may not know how much we relied on him. A wholehearted gratitude must be extended to Professor Vincent Descombes for his advice and generosity. We must also thank Sebastian G. Rand for his insights and indispensable counsel, which arrived unfailingly when they were needed most. Finally, Professor Catherine Malabou has been most gracious in giving us encouragement and support; our thanks to her here can only fail to match the debt so incurred.