

Tenacious Hope in Hollow Modernity: Respiratory Revelations

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Abstract: Multiple themes from Ronald C. Arnett’s scholarship, including derivative agency, attentiveness, existential homelessness, and his critique of individualism, point to a meta-theme at the heart of his work: the revelatory. This essay highlights Arnett’s notion of tenacious hope as a revelatory phenomenon in connection to this historical moment, which I distinguish as hollow modernity, a moment following Zygmunt Bauman’s (2000, 2005) liquid modernity. Hollow modernity is characterized by disembodied presence, excess of stimuli, and loss of freedom of attention and empathy that feeds thoughtlessness and lack of discernment. I next discuss ethics of attention as an integral part of scholarship on communication ethics that is connected to the revelatory and that needs to be unearthed from its taken-for-granted position. We cannot assume freedom of attention in hollow modernity; rather, it is a matter that needs to be explicitly undertaken in communication research and pedagogy. Finally, I offer initial sketches of a respiratory philosophy of communication ethics that reveals the world by breathing-with—our most intimate and elemental (co)-participation in the world—in connection to tenacious hope that emerges at the limits of thinking, knowing, and hoping.

Keywords: tenacious hope; hollow modernity; freedom of attention; ethics of attention; communication ethics; breathing-with

“No wonder philosophy dies—without air. Did Being, at least, keep some in reserve?”
—Luce Irigaray (1999, 5)

I am delighted and honored to be here with all of you today in honoring Dr. Ronald C. Arnett’s work and offering this keynote speech as part of the 17th Biennial Communication Ethics Conference: Communication Ethics as Tenacious Hope. I am deeply grateful to know and have worked with Ron, whose presence and scholarship gave me hope and renewed enthusiasm regarding the field of communication studies. Let me start by sharing this quote with you: “It is not enough to think, one also has to breathe. Dangerous are the thinkers who have not breathed enough” (Škof and Berndtson 2018, x). I invite us to wonder about this

quote, and there will be several times I will return to it. For now, let us just wonder . . .

As I was preparing this speech, multiple themes from Arnett's work stood out for me—themes including existential homelessness, derivative agency, attentiveness, critique of progress, and critique of individualism. As I continued reflecting, it occurred to me that all of these themes point to one main theme that I felt was at the heart of all the rest: the revelatory. And so the revelatory as tenacious hope, and tenacious hope as a revelatory phenomenon, will be the focus of my discussion today, along with the other themes in the title of my speech.

Before I start, let me share a recent quote from Ron, part of his response when I emailed him to say that I perceive the revelatory to be the heart of not only his writing and scholarship but also his teaching, and interactions with others, including his jokes. I quote part of his response as my starting point today:

The revelatory is the *heart of dialogue*. It is the reminder that we are *guests in the world*. The West has tried to forget *our existential status*. However, it is *not possible to totally ignore the revelatory*. It emerges in what is termed, "*unintended consequences*." (emphasis added)

Formatting Arnett's words as a poem adds emphasis and feeling tone to the words (the spaces I left in between are for pausing and breathing in):

The Revelatory
is the *heart of dialogue*.
It is the reminder
that we are *guests in the world*.

The West has tried to forget
our existential status.

However,
it is *not possible*
to totally ignore
the revelatory.

It *emerges* in
what is termed,
"*unintended consequences*."

So, my main points today are the following: (a) the revelatory is the reminder that we are *guests in the world*; (b) the revelatory is the *heart of dialogue*; and (c) the revelatory *emerges in* what is termed "*unintended consequences*."

The Revelatory Is the Reminder that We Are Guests in the World

“Neither am I the owner on this earth, nor a tenant,
I am but a guest for a lifetime.”
— Erkan Oğur (2016)

In *Dialogic Confession: Bonhoeffer’s Rhetoric of Responsibility*, Arnett (2005) highlights several qualities of being *guests in the world* that form an attitude toward life and the other: humility, hospitality, caution, and responsiveness. A guest is “someone not quite at home” and who assumes “a willingness to attend to the guidelines of the home owner” (53). Rather than operating from a sense of presumed familiarity and knowing, an unassuming attitude accompanied by willingness to learn reflects the hospitality, humility, and cautiousness of the guest, who does not attempt to control everything in the other’s home. Being a guest involves responsiveness to environment and people, including the host, other guests, and their culture, traditions, and rituals. A simple yet powerful example: Imagine arriving at the door of a friend who invited you to have dinner with her family and seeing many pairs of shoes left outside. How do you act?

Being a guest in the world involves acknowledging that our stay is temporary and that we do not necessarily own this house, this pale, blue dot in the universe. To revisit the quote earlier,

Neither am I the owner on this earth, nor a tenant,
I am but a guest for a lifetime. (Oğur 2016)

In the following, I explore this sentence from multiple perspectives, including intercultural, religious, ecological, ventriloqual, respiratory, and aesthetic.

We already touched on the intercultural through the discussion above on the qualities of being a guest, some of which are worth repeating here: a willingness to attend to the guidelines of the homeowner; an unassuming attitude accompanied by an interest to learn; and hospitality, humility, and cautiousness of the guest, who does not attempt to control everything in the other’s home.

Arnett’s (2005) examination of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s life and scholarship exemplifies the attitude of being a guest in the world embedded in a religious communicative ethic, where the religious communicator with a guiding faith story never forgets whose home this is. “A religious communicator assuming the role of guest does not act as if he or she owns someone else’s house” (53). The standpoint of the religious communicator, as a guest in the Master’s home, begins with listening, humility, and caution regarding one’s limits of knowing. The interpretive stance of the guest, from a religious communication perspective, recognizes the generosity of the owner, in response to which a sense of gratefulness and responsibility emerges.

The ecological perspective of Thomas Berry (1999) offers another framework that supports the metaphor of being a guest in the world. Berry (1999,

2006) underlines that the viability of the human species is intimately connected with the viability of the earth, and he repeatedly reminds of the “dependence of the human on the integral functioning of the planet” (2006, 19), as the human subsystem is part of the earth system. Calling for a change from an anthropocentric to a biocentric sense of reality and value, Berry (1999, 2006) shares a vision of being part of the earth and in reciprocal relation with the non-human, rather than an attitude of ownership of the non-human world. An example Berry (1999) offers is illustrative:

As one woman told a group assembled in Florida after Hurricane Andrew, she did not consider herself a victim but a participant in this wild event in all its creative and destructive aspects. The hurricane, she insisted, was telling us something. It was telling us how to build our houses if we wished to dwell in this region. It was telling us to consider well the winds and the sea, to mark well the fact that if we live here we must obey the deeper laws of the place, laws that cannot be overridden by any type of human zoning. We might live here if we wish but on terms dictated by powers other than human. The hurricane has its own discipline. It is itself a response to the needs of the region. This we need to know: how to participate creatively in the wildness of the world about us. For it is out of the wild depths of the universe and of our own being that the greater visions must come. (51)

Attending to the deeper laws of the place, recognizing the discipline of the hurricane where the hurricane itself is a response to a larger reality, and learning to participate in this larger reality to which we belong all illustrate the metaphor of being a guest in the world.

Listening to the hurricane to discern what it is telling is aligned with François Cooren’s ventriloquial approach to communication, which alerts us that we are not only actors but also “passers” in communicative situations (Cooren 2016; Cooren, Higham, and Brummans 2021; Cooren and Sandler 2014). Not only do we say and do things as actors, but we also make things (such as the hurricane) speak through us, which allows them to affect and shape us, including our view of the world and our place in it. We are also passers in the sense that feelings, desires, emotions, and obsessions pass through us, prompting us to say and do things (Cooren 2016). In the case of the woman who gave voice to the hurricane, not only was she acting on behalf of the hurricane by making it speak through her, but also her strong desires, emotions, and longing to participate in a larger reality—the discipline or dynamic of wilderness or the universe—were acting on her, prompting her to give voice to what matters by ventriloquizing the hurricane. Cooren’s ventriloquial framework of communication recognizes that we are guests in the world, part of multiple participants and co-contributors that make a difference in constructing a given situation.

Finally, let’s listen to the respiratory so as not to be “dangerous thinkers” (Škof and Berndtson 2018, x) who have not attended to the breath—the invisible and life-giving breath that is “a connecting force” and that “connects the human being with the outside world and the outside world with his inner world . . . an original unceasing movement and therefore actual life,” as Ilse Middendorf (1990),

a dedicated teacher of somatic breath practices, put it (12). The first respiratory revelation I wish to share with you today, something you can see for yourself right here and now, is related to the language most of us use in referring to the experience of breathing, which shapes our relation to the breath, the body, and the world: *"I am breathing."* Upon attending to breathing as a lived experience, however, one might quickly realize that the breath breathes us, and we are not necessarily the ones in charge. Don't take my word for it, please see for yourself. Let's bring attention to the breath for a moment, and without attempting to change it in any way, just be aware of the breath as it moves through you. Let it come and go, sensing the movements in the body. This is the challenge: to let go of controlling the breath as one becomes conscious of it. Who is breathing? (Pause).

Rest in the awareness of breathing, letting the breath come and go on its own pace. As David M. Kleinberg-Levin (2018) states, learn to breathe as *Gelassenheit* (releasement) rather than the will to power:

If we would learn *Gelassenheit*, learn a way of being that is not the will to power, we must first give thought to our breathing. Only when our breathing is free, released from this power, will it be giving to our speech a breath that is truly drawn from the whole of being, and that returns to that openness with every word. (10)

So, the first lesson we learn from attending to the breath, in terms of our participation in the opening of the world through the breath, is a lesson in releasement, letting go, and finding the right attunement to the world, ourselves, and others by being referenced to the breath—in other words, by learning to be a guest of this breath that breathes us. We are derivative of the breath, a guest for a lifetime until the last inhale and exhale.

Along these lines, Lenart Škof and Petri Berndtson (2018) propose a new respiratory philosophy, inspired by the masters of breath, that is marked by a respiratory difference, which facilitates a new way of thinking and seeing the world:

To see the world in a respiratory way would mean to see it within the atmosphere of breathing, and perhaps to see it according to the breath or to see it in collaboration with breathing. The respiratory philosophy would then be to relearn to see the world perpetually within the atmosphere of breathing. This would mean that whatever we are looking at, we must always be conscious of the atmosphere of breathing and strive to see our subject within it. (xvi)

Škof and Berndtson connect breathing and sensing the world, where the breath guides the sensing, the seeing, as we give ourselves over to it. To see our subject within the breath, and to be guided by the breath to see and sense the world, is to be a guest of the breath, to let the breath guide us.

Finally, the aesthetic perspective on the theme of being a guest in the world highlights the affective, bodily aspect of our existence in the world, the condition of "being effectuated," as Bruno Latour (2004) puts it: "to have a body is to learn to be affected, meaning 'effectuated,' moved, put into motion by other entities,

humans or nonhumans. If you are not engaged in this learning you become insensitive, dumb, you drop dead" (205). We are affected by the world before we conceptually make sense of it. We are enveloped by the world and affected by it before we can act on it. The heart of being human, as Latour states, is learning to become sensitive to what the world is made of—and, Arnett would add, *responding* to the world through this learning.

At the heart of the metaphor of being a guest is a movement regarding agency from the primacy of an autonomous, self-made, self-willed individual that acts upon others to a self that emerges in response to the other. The "derivative self" (Arnett 2003) finds its identity in attending to the other. The focus of attention moves from oneself to the other in attending to culture, faith story, nature/earth/non-human world, and body/breath. Being a guest in someone's home or in the world is rooted in an understanding of derivative self that respectfully, humbly, and joyfully attends to what is given. This sharply contrasts with an attitude of entitlement that self-righteously takes what is given for granted.

A repeating theme in Arnett's work is "communicative responsiveness" (e.g., 2012, 15) through which "human identity finds shape and character" (16). The derivative self is situated in the world; it is shaped in meeting existence beyond its liking or approval and through its response to the demands of existence (the hurricane example above is illustrative). Arnett (2013) understands existence as a "primordial shaper of the self" (15) that calls for our attention and responsiveness. The discussion of responsive, derivative self is essential in making sense of Arnett's examination of tenacious hope.

Arnett's (2022) discussion of tenacious hope is grounded in the meeting of everyday life on its own terms, which contrasts with the unreflective assumption and anticipation of optimism that existence will conform to one's expectations. For Arnett, such expectation and demand reflect a consumer mentality, "placing responsibility on existence, not on one's own actions" (6). Arnett's framing of the vitality and absurdity of tenacious hope radically distinguishes it from optimism that is tied to progress and growth. Communication ethics of tenacious hope resides in "an absurd sense that one's labor matters even when the fruits of one's actions remain unknown" (11). One's labor matters not because of the success of an expected outcome but because, as Hannah Arendt highlights, it is a necessity; doing one's part shapes one's life due to an existential connection between one's labor and life. "The reward of toil and trouble lies in nature's fertility, in the quiet confidence that he who in 'toil and trouble' has done his part, remains a part of nature in the future of his children and his children's children" writes Arendt ([1958] 1989, 107). Laboring is participating in the fertility of life, fulfilling one's responsibilities, and finding gratification in engaging the necessities of existence. Laboring shapes the derivative self.

The uncertainty of the outcome of one's labor is key to Arnett's (2022) discussion of tenacious hope. Tenacious hope does not dwell in undue confidence in the certainty of a single direction but "within shadows and darkness, ever suspicious of an unreflective commitment to progress" (194). The attitude of being a guest in the world resonates with tenacious hope in terms of the cautious,

observant, humble predisposition with which one listens, inquires, and attends. Tenacious hope finds life in attending to the local and staying open to the “not yet” rather than attaching to a desired outcome based on preconceived expectations. Within shadows and darkness, “somehow and someday, one answers an existential demand that wades through a crowded and often joyless void, propelled by the absurdity of tenacious hope” (11–12). Somehow and someday . . .

In an essay titled “Thinking Elsewhere,” or “To Think from Elsewhere” in a translation I prefer, Jean-Luc Marion (2019) writes,

The current of the world crashes relentlessly upon me, nearly swallowing me up in the torrent of what appears . . . among all its appearances, which truly concern me? Alternatively: to what degree do they sufficiently give themselves to me to give me access to a reality? Or otherwise: which of these appearances are important to me and truly concern me because they form an actual world around me and in me? (5–6)

In the course of everyday life, the flux of appearances Marion writes about shows up and passes away without being noted as remarkable; it is mostly left unattended and forgotten. There are exceptions, however, when some phenomenon takes hold of you and does not let itself be forgotten. This type of phenomenon distinguishes itself by its impact, intensity, and transformative power whereby one will not stay the same after the experience.

Marion (2019) defines revelation “as a phenomenon that is not forgotten, a presence that does not pass away, because it affects and transforms those that see, perceive, and receive it” (7). A simple, everyday example offered by Marion to illustrate revelation (with a small “r”) is learning how to ski and make a turn. You are ready, facing the slope, and the instructions offered by your friend or instructor are simple indeed: shift your weight from one leg to the other as you start moving downhill. You understand and observe this being done by others. Yet when it is your turn, you find yourself tensing up your leg, holding on tightly, losing control, and falling. Over and over again. Several days go by, and you are exhausted, discouraged, and ready to quit. Then, you close your eyes and decide to try again. All of a sudden you find yourself skiing, turning, and not falling. Without knowing how or why, you find yourself skiing.

Marion (2019) defines this experience as a revelation that will not be forgotten due to three dimensions. First, it reveals itself rather than being decided or constituted by me. Second, in revealing itself, it reveals a world (such as the open space of the mountain that was inaccessible, the slopes I could not experience before). Third, it reveals me to myself, gives me access to a new aspect of myself (the skier), and it reveals me to others (such as the other skiers with whom I can socialize). For Marion, revelatory phenomena are unforgettable due to their transformative effect and especially because they cannot be willed or intentionally produced: “it maintains the initiative over its own manifestation” (11). I do not fully understand or foresee how or why it happens, yet it affects and transforms me. A revelatory phenomenon “originates from *elsewhere*” (12, emphasis original) and leaves a trace, an impression that will not be forgotten. What makes revelatory

experience unforgettable is its power over the subject in that it cannot be decided, intended, or produced; it comes from elsewhere, impresses itself, and maintains a sense of opaqueness whereby one cannot fully comprehend it. Marion offers other examples where these three dimensions of revelation can be encountered, including the experiences of falling in love, performing, teaching, or praying.

Let's connect the discussion above to the beginning of this talk, "the revelatory is the reminder that we are *guests in the world*." Despite our desires to be in charge, to be the host, and to know, we find ourselves exposed to that which originates from elsewhere, that which I cannot decide or even understand fully. Yet through this exposure, as John D. Caputo (2019) puts it, "we begin to lose our grip and find ourselves in the grip of something that carries us along" (15). Tenacious hope emerges from elsewhere; it reveals a world, and it reveals us to ourselves. It is a "virtue of impossible" along with faith and love (15).

Tenacious hope is an "unstoppable force . . . when a sense of why is no more" (Arnett 2022, 11). An invisible path opens, through attention and deep longing, beyond a sense of knowing why or how. Tenacious hope comes from elsewhere, at the limit of knowing, leaning on the impossible. Tenacious hope reminds us that we are guests in the world, standing right at the limit of the impossible.

The Revelatory Is the *Heart of Dialogue*

"A poem . . . only exists while it's on the writing desk; by the time its ink has dried, it should be recognized as just a scrap of paper."
—Matsuo Bashō (qtd. in Hirshfield n.d.)

The seventeenth-century Japanese haiku master Bashō's words above point to what Emmanuel Levinas (1998) claimed as "the hold the *said* has over the *saying*" (5). As an antecedent to linguistic systems, a "foreword preceding languages" (5), the Saying gets subordinated to a theme as it moves into a language and becomes objectified in representation. The poem turns into a "scrap of paper," as Bashō states.

Yet, we are called to respond—to respond before the ink dries, without a script, "in a saying that must also be unsaid" (Levinas 1998, 7). This is the "difficult freedom of communication ethics" that Arnett (2017, 16) writes about in *Levinas's Rhetorical Demand: The Unending Obligation of Communication Ethics*—a difficult freedom, without the clarity of an answer, that "rejects the impulse to reify answers and control one's identity . . . dependent on the wonder of darkness" (33). Like finding one's way on a path covered with leaves in the fall.

So, how does one respond? In "a saying that must also be unsaid" (Levinas 1998, 7). Sounds like a Zen koan. It is indeed. "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" or "What was your face before you were born?" Zen koans push the limits of language, thinking, and the known toward an opening, an awakening, a letting go, an interruption of the sameself. For Levinas (1998), a "saying that must also be unsaid" emerges in being exposed to the other without holding back, in

the *activity* of saying that remains a “passivity more passive than all passivity” (15), a saying that does not protect itself in the said. Saying is an expression that reveals itself in the suffering of being exposed to the other, in sincerity, vulnerability, and surrender that do not belong to the order of being (or not being) but a being otherwise. Being otherwise, for-another, “is the very fact of finding oneself while losing oneself” (11).

The “difficult freedom of communication ethics” (Arnett 2017, 16) that does not and cannot rely on a script or prescription “emphasizes infinity in opposition to totality” yet also recognizes the necessity of totality that “preserves a trace of Saying” (37). One contemplates, reasons, reflects, engaging insights from education, institutions, traditions, the particularity of the historical moment, of the other, and attends to the revelatory. The *dialogue between the said and the saying* is crucial in the emergence of a genuine response. “The revelatory is the *heart of dialogue*.” Yet, questions emerge regarding the status of the revelatory in our current age of distraction and attention capture. “The fundamental question one must ask about progress is whether it enlarges us as human beings attentive to others” (Arnett 2013, 116). Attentiveness is one of the main themes in Arnett’s work and directly related to the revelatory. Informed by the said, one attends to the saying. But can we assume an ethics of attention as part of communication ethics, especially in our techno-digital age? I will briefly explore this question here.

Communication Ethics Assumes an Ethics of Attention

In *The Ethics of Attention*, Silvia Caprioglio Panizza (2022) offers a rich discussion of attention as a social and ethical phenomenon. Panizza highlights that attention is not detached, abstract knowledge but “participating in what we are seeing or thinking about” (2). Attention joins us to the “the experience of a reality from which distraction, defenses, or projection separates us. That, in itself, makes us better, more open and less self-concerned. Every time, often imperceptibly, attention shapes us and our world” (2). Thus, attention has fundamental implications regarding our engagement with the world, how we experience reality, and who we become. When we attend, we acknowledge and recognize the existence of something other than the self.

Panizza (2022) highlights the truth-seeking aspect of attention, which involves a restraint of the ego in terms of its projections, attachments, and desire to know. Attending in this way “can mean patiently waiting for our faculties to become attuned to the object and for its multiple aspects to reveal themselves” (10). This patient attention, connected to the revelatory, is not effortful but an “active passivity” (28). It is deeply receptive, an allowing rather than a seeking. Thus, although attention can be willed in the sense that we can choose to pay attention, to direct and redirect our attention, the patient or meditative attention that Panizza writes about, based on Iris Murdoch’s (1970) discussion of agency and attention, involves a letting: “to let ourselves be struck by an object, or led by it, and influenced not only in our perception but also in our ‘energy.’ . . . If you try too hard, strive to find, you will lose the object” (28). The revelatory emerges through the invitation of this spacious, delicate, effortless waiting that seems to be

the kind of attentiveness needed in the activity of “saying that must also be unsaid” (Levinas 1998, 7).

The Revelatory Emerges in What Is Termed “*Unintended Consequences*”

“We don’t know what to pay attention to anymore,” a PhD student said in our Crisis Communication course last fall. In *Burnout Society*, Byung-Chul Han (2015) writes about the “excess of stimuli, information, and impulses” (12) that radically affect the structure of attention and cognition: fragmented perception and scattered attention (hyperattention) displace deep, contemplative forms of attention. This flat mode of attention is incapable of attuning to wonder, beauty, rest, boredom, and creativity, which lie at the heart of the cultural achievements of humanity and a concern for good life that goes beyond an impulse for survival.

James Williams (2018) underlines that threats to our attention cannot be categorized under mere distraction or annoyance anymore; they undermine our capacities for self-regulation and the integrity of human will at individual and collective levels. Warning that something deep and potentially irreversible is happening to human attention in the age of information, Williams boldly and rightfully states, “The liberation of human attention may be the defining moral and political struggle of our time” (xii). The liberation of human attention also has crucial implications for the field of communication studies and communication ethics in terms of scholarship, teaching, and application.

The discussion on the loss of freedom of attention, attunement, wonder, rest, and creativity finally brings me to the context of hollow modernity, which is characterized by disembodied presence, excess of stimuli, loss of freedom of attention, and loss of empathy that feed thoughtlessness. As the boundaries between physical and virtual reality get increasingly blurred, people live in a sense of disorientation, discontentment, isolation, and a deep longing for genuine connection, yet without fully remembering how to cultivate it anymore. They look but do not see, as their attention is elsewhere. They are present yet absent, floating in space—existentially uprooted without a connection to their bodily presence, emotions, and what happens around them. Sounds dark, doesn’t it? Don’t we live this every day, in the classroom, on the street?

However, remember: “it is *not possible to totally ignore the revelatory*. It *emerges in what is termed, ‘unintended consequences’*” (Arnett, personal communication, emphasis added). So, let’s come back to the breath and our final respiratory revelation for today. What does it mean to participate in the opening of the world through the breath?

Learning to Breathe as Learning to Be-with

Hazrat Inayat Khan (2020) writes, “People ordinarily think of breath as that little air they feel coming and going through the nostrils, but they do not think of it as that vast current which goes through everything” (89). We breathe with others; we

share a life-giving current that flows through all of us. Awakening to the breath is realizing at a deep embodied level that being-with (*mitsein*) is first and foremost a *breathing*-with. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated this fact powerfully. We could not share breath together during the pandemic; we had to be physically separated. And in the boxed windows of Zoom, though we could see each other as images, we could not breathe-with each other in the same space, which has consequences for being-with in terms of sensing the presence of the other at an embodied level.

In his introduction to the practice of mindfulness of breathing, meditation teacher Gil Fronsdal offers the metaphor of the bridge in reference to the breath (Insight Meditation Center 2021). He highlights the intimate connection of our lives to the breath and how breathing is a bridge for us to feel a deeper connection to the world and to ourselves. Fronsdal shares a story of awakening to the experience of breathing with all living beings after attending a botany class in college. Focusing deeply on the big, circular diagrams the professor drew on the board, which illustrated the cycle of oxygen and carbon dioxide, Fronsdal walked out of the classroom and found himself standing in the courtyard of the campus with some very big, old oak trees. In that moment, he realized that his life depended on those trees, which create oxygen. With a keen sense of interconnection, support, and mutuality of breathing-with these big oak trees, Gil perceived them to be as important as parts of his own body. He perceived a sense of continuity between his body and the trees, and the rigid boundaries were softened: “there was a continuity and there was no sharp line between me here and the trees there. Somehow, we were in it together.”

And, we are—in this breathing-with—together. Yet we forget, just as we forget that speaking is an emergence from breathing, a constant renewal with each inhale and exhale. Being referenced to the breath is to resist reification, essential to the active passivity of “saying that must also be unsaid” (Levinas 1998, 7)

A couple ideas stand out from this presentation that I would like to leave you with:

Tenacious hope is a revelatory phenomenon.

Somehow, in some way, one responds to an existential demand.

In breathing, being breathed, and breathing-with, saying emerges beyond reification. Taking this one step further, how might we think of a model of communication as a revelatory experience—a model of communication that has the revelatory at the center rather than an exchange of messages, effectiveness, and even meaning making? Communicators as “guests” attentive to breathing-with, present at the limits of knowing, open to the emergent to reveal itself? How would such an understanding reveal the world and reveal us to ourselves?

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