

CRITICAL NEW MEDIA LITERACY: FOUR ARTS

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As the new communication technologies have become an integral part of our daily transactions and one of the founding stones of modern social systems, the “way” we are engaged with them has become more of an issue. The Internet, which has unlimited potentials for construction of a better world (more equal, more democratic, more liberating and more just), can also turn into a tool for various authoritarian and totalitarian phantasies. “Critical New Media Literacy: Four Arts” will interrogate the role that could be played by critical new media literacy in transforming the society and the web. The four arts are critical for equipping citizens and collectivities with weapons that will help them to be a part political processes: *the art of deconstruction, the art of defense, the art of connective action, and the art of emancipation*. In short, the four arts will play vital role in realizing the ideal of active, participatory citizenship. Active citizenship stand as one of the most revolutionary ideas of our neo-liberal times which imposes the ideas, “democracy, but not too much”, “politics but not too much”, and “security, very much”. The neoliberal understanding of politics curb citizens’ will to have an influence on their and others’ lives.

Critical new media literacy as an art of deconstruction is about contextualizing, deconstructing and problematizing the supposed naturalness and transparency of media texts. The main question here is “to whose interest?”. This has two dimensions. On the one hand it is a discursive, semiological and ideological critique of media texts; which insists on the social construction of reality (as opposed to essentialist readings of the social) and the role of the media therein. Second, the critical new media literacy problematizes the political economy of the new media and focuses on the economic structure, labor processes and relations of exploitation in production of new media messages. Not only material labor, but also immaterial labor will be a major topic for critical new media literacy.

Critical new media literacy as an art of defense aims at equipping the citizens with skills to defend themselves from techniques of surveillance, monitoring and censorship. In authoritarian settings such as Turkey this skill is indispensable for increasing autonomy of individual citizens and of social movements. These technologies of course are not only owned and promoted by the state, also companies monitor and profile the citizens on the net for profit. Critical new media literacy as an art of defense, in this sense will be the weapon of the weak.

Critical new media literacy as an art of connective action equips citizens with insights to better organize, collaborate, act together, and organize in and through the net. It also pushes citizens to develop their creative and productive capacities through a focus on new media production strategies. As it was the case in many other settings, Turkey, during Gezi Protests realized the importance of the connective and creative potentialities of new media technologies. The mobile phones for instance has turned into alternative media outlets in the hands of citizen journalists. Social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter were actively used by protestors as conduits of organizing, deliberating and collective framing. Critical new media

literacy as an art of connective action focuses on enriching this potential of new media technologies.

Finally, critical new media literacy as an art of emancipation stress the liberating potential and agenda of new media literacy. Thus, what we are dealing is not a pedagogical issue, put primarily a political one. Critical new media literacy is not something to be ‘thought’ by a ‘knowing’ teacher; but an emancipating intellectual journey in which the ‘ignorant schoolmaster’ (with reference to Jacques Ranciere’s *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and *The Emancipated Spectator*) will act, transform, challenge, be challenged, and learn with/from the ‘students’. The life itself, the real new media users and new media spaces are where the traces of an emancipatory strategy (for critical new media literacies) can be found and followed. Breaking the pedagogical relationship and replacing it with a radical, revolutionary perspective will lie at the heart of critical new media literacy.

The four arts, their relevance for and place in a restricted internet setting (Turkey) will be discussed in details. In other words, the four arts of critical new media literacy are designed and thought specifically for Turkey setting. The major political goal of the four arts outlook is to contribute to halting the authoritarian turn in Turkish politics –keeping in mind the Internet is one of the prominent targets of authoritarian measures.

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