

A textbook for 1st or 2nd year comm students
will be ready early 1976 (Finnish version summer 75).

File

CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOCIETY:

(NOTES TOWARDS) AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SCIENCE OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION

by

Kaarle Nordenstreng

(Visiting Professor in Spring 1975
from the University of Tampere, Finland)

in cooperation with

"CMNS 493" and particularly Richard Mardon

Department of Communication Studies
Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C.

April, 1975

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Foreword | |
| PART ONE. HUMAN COMMUNICATION: A HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE | |
| 1. Information Processes in the Development of Society | |
| 2. Objective Reality and Its Subjective Cognition | |
| PART TWO. CONSCIOUSNESS: THE REALM OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION PROCESSES | |
| 3. Human Organism as a Material Base of Consciousness and a System of Information Processing | |
| 4. The World-view of an Individual | |
| 5. The Types of Information and the Process of Communication | |
| 6. Language as a Means of Organizing and Mediating Consciousness | |
| PART THREE. SOCIETY: THE OPERATIVE FRAMEWORK OF CONSCIOUSNESS | |
| 7. The Social Position of an Individual: Praxis and Socialisation | |
| 8. The Structure of Society and the Exercise of Power | |
| 9. Ideology and Social Consciousness | |
| 10. Bourgeois Democracy as a Communication System | |
| PART FOUR. MASS COMMUNICATION: AN AGENT OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS | |
| 11. Remarks on the Process, Effects and Functions of Mass Communication | |
| PART FIVE. COMMUNICATION RESEARCH: AN EMERGING DISCIPLINE | |
| 12. An Anatomy of the Science of Human Communication | |
| 13. Recent Trends in the Study of Communication | |
| Appendices: | |
| Kaarle Nordenstreng, "Communication Research in the United States: A Critical Perspective" (1968) | |
| Dallas W. Smythe, "The Political Character of Science (including Communication Science) or Science is not Ecumenical (1971) | |
| Herbert I. Schiller, "Waiting for Orders: Some Current Trends in Mass Communication Research in the United States" (1974) | |

FOREWORD

There are numerous introductions to (mass) communication available today. Wilbur Schramm's collections of the '50s are classic examples, and the most recent version of the same 'bible tradition' is Mass Media: an Introduction to Modern Communication by Ray Hiebert, Donald Ungurait and Thomas Bohn (David McKay, 1974).

Usually these texts combine factual descriptions of the media institutions with theoretical treatment of the concepts involved in the process of mass communication. Particular attention is usually given to the effects of the media and such phenomena as public opinion (which also is the subject of a number of books). In recent years increasingly attention and space has been devoted to the new communications technology and the future of mass communications as well as to international communications (which, like public opinion, has a distinct traditional literature).

All this learning material may be seen as a response to needs to be met in higher education in this emerging field which has rapidly become very popular and increasingly significant. 'Human communications' today combine what ten years ago was a disjointed family of separate fields like journalism in its professionally-oriented bases; speech in its rhetorically-oriented departments, drama, cinema and literature in their humanistically-capsuled circles; communications research in its behaviorally-oriented social science settings; etc. The concept of communication has become a nexus of several traditional arts and sciences and consequently its scholarly identity and organisational arrangements within the academic community are increasingly debated.

The presently available learning material addressed to a first-year student of communications (aiming at any of the above-mentioned fields) is unsatisfactory. In Finland, for example, the same books have been used in communication classes ever since the sixties - partly because there were no significant alternatives available but also partly because this material corresponded fairly well to our conceptions of what the field was about and how it had to be viewed. But in the early seventies our understanding of the discipline had bypassed the boundaries subtly set by the textbooks and we explicitly began to find another framework to be presented in the introductory courses. In fact, introductory courses and textbooks may well be the most significant inputs in the learning process of any field since the basic framework is usually set by them.

I started to teach introductory courses in communications at the University of Tampere in 1971, upon being appointed as professor there. These courses took a fundamentally different approach from some of my earlier similar teaching experiences which always in late sixties had followed the patterns of American textbooks in the spirit of the good old Lasswell formula (who says what to whom etc.). My course outline did not concentrate on pure description of the media institutions (which furthermore in earlier years covered American media more than those of my own country - thanks to the Schrammain testaments) and on selected 'research' items such as influence studies, findings of persuasive-communication experiments, attitudes towards the media, etc.

In fact I departed from the whole concept of mass media and instead took a broad look at the individual and society as agents in the process

of communication. Mass media got only a relatively minor part in the whole course outline: towards the end of the presentation they were treated according to what I thought to be their appropriate social role. Description of media institutions and a survey of experimental and other behavioral-science communications research was bypassed not because such factual information was regarded as unnecessary but because such factual information can be more easily picked up from written texts, and then without the risk of being elevated as the overriding framework within which the whole field is perceived. In this way I hoped to provide a student with an overall holistic framework into the field and its scientific research and at the same time to prevent such elements as 'gatekeeper', 'sleeper effect' or 'one-daily city' - as important as these elements are as building material of the body of knowledge of the field - to occupy central positions in the picture which a student was to form about the field.

Consequently, it was my intention to oppose what may be called 'mystification of the media' (e.g. in the sense of McLuhanism - which incidentally serves as the framework of the above-mentioned fresh American textbook by Hiebert et al.). Furthermore, by deliberately stressing the philosophical and general social-science substance in the course (at the expense of particularities of behavioral tradition) I indirectly took a reserved stand with regards to the notion of an independent discipline of communication - even in the sense it has been expressed in the title of this course: "An Introduction to the Science of Human Communication". Although I basically think there is room for a specialised study - and even a 'science' - of human communication, I have wanted, for pedagogical

reasons, to introduce the identity of this field as highly problematic and far from the given self-sufficiency that often surrounds American textbooks.

The course which I have been teaching here at Simon Fraser University during a four-week period in March-April, 1975, closely followed the pattern I have found appropriate in my own domestic teaching experiences both from a substantial and pedagogic point of view. I am currently writing the final draft of a Finnish textbook based on my classes at Tampere, and the break-down of topics covered in the class roughly corresponds to the table of contents of this book.

What follows is a more or less accurate account of my class, based partly on previously written contributions but mainly on transcriptions of what was spoken during the class - both by myself, Dr. Dallas Smythe (Chairperson of the Department who generously attended most of the sessions) and the students. Discussion periods mostly were summarised (by each of the students in turn) while my own talk has been largely transcribed as such (with minor editing), a task carried out by one of the students, Richard Mardon, who also has helped in the final putting-together of the text with the Department secretary Ms. Janet Knutsen.

As appendices to the class proceedings appear three relevant earlier papers which served (among other reading material) as background material for the class.

Needless to mention, the present 'product' is far from complete - even as an introduction. It claims to be no more - but no less either - than "Notes Towards . . ."

Burnaby, April 4, 1975
Kaarle Nordenstreng