LET'S PUT THE HUMAN ELEMENT BACK IN

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PONDERING THE NATURE and occasion of my assignment, I made some enlightening discoveries. "Seminar" comes from "seminarium," as does "seminary," which used to mean "seed-plot" or nursery where something is cultivated, as in the stark example offered in Webster's: "slums are *seminaries* of crime." "Invitation" used to mean "treat as a guest, entertain." Alas, its meaning has changed to the act of asking a person "to come somewhere or do something"; also to allure, entice, or tend to bring on, as in another gratuitous sample (I had never realized what lurid literature Webster's really was): "Such talk *invites* scandal." Obviously, an invitational seminar 2000 years ago would have entertained us in a garden of culture; today it lures us into scandalous talk in a hotbed of vice.

Next I turned to clarify the meaning of my topic. I found "social science" defined with simple elegance as "the study of people and how they live together." Equally incisive, although much more sobering, were some definitions of "professional" such as "a person who makes some activity not usually followed for gain . . . the source of his livelihood," or "having much experience and great skill in a specified role: as, a *professional* rabble rouser," or "avowal, whether true or pretended." Looking for some reassurance, I turned to the article by James D. Finn which launched AVCR (5). There I found a more attractive image of the audiovisual professional: he is a highly-trained intellectual technician with a strong sense of values, working in close association with other members of his profession, guided by theory, expanding with research (and, I suppose, age).

Then I proceeded to get to the root of the matter of professional education in audiovisual. Just as I got to the root, I was reminded of the Russian fable (retold by Edgar Dale) about a pig who ate his fill of acorns under an oak tree and then started to root around the tree. A crow remarked, "You should not do this. If you lay bare the roots, the tree will wither and die." "Let it die," replied the pig. "Who cares as long as there are acorns?"

Well, having had *my* fill of acorns, I thought it quite fitting to the spirit of

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the occasion to root around the tree—but for a different reason. My thesis is that the tree is suffering from mineral deficiency, and that perhaps a direct transfusion of social science might revive it. I don't mean just the injection of a little learning theory here, some applied psychology there, and a sprinkling of communication research on top. I mean a redefinition and reorientation of AV professional training as the social science of educational mass communication in and out of school. You can see that I take my Webster's seriously and propose to overstep, scandalously, what ordinary prudence might suggest to be the terms of my assignment. But it seems evident to me that the *professional* education of the audiovisual communication specialist will either have more to do with "the study of people and how they live together," or it will wither away and die, pigs or no pigs.

I would like to elaborate, then, the reasons and evidence for my thesis. I will argue that a social science orientation is a necessary condition for the professional as well as academic respectability of an increasingly technological discipline. And I will attempt to sketch some aspects of that orientation.

When acorns still cover the ground and many more are to be seen on the branches, why do I say that the tree is lacking some vital minerals? My first reason is the inability of professional leadership in audiovisual to assume a central organizing role in the rapidly developing field of communications study, teaching, research, and scholarship. This field owes much to the pioneering efforts of a few educators. Certainly no other discipline has a more direct stake in the human outcomes of the communications revolution. Why then did audiovisual education not assume leadership, or at least the role of catalyst, in the emerging field of communications? Harold D. Lasswell posed the same question recently and found schools of education "disqualified by academic resistance from performing a successful interdisciplinary role." Paying tribute to educational accomplishments in the field, he concluded that "it was difficult to establish effective working relations with the central corps of university work in the social sciences and humanities" (13).

The second and related reason for my diagnosis is the state of organized professional education in audiovisual. According to the figures collected by Robert deKieffer (3), the percentage of AV departments, graduate programs, and recognized majors and minors fell significantly in the past 10 years. But more important than numbers are the reasons given by most colleges and universities for establishing, or not establishing, such programs. By far the major single reason for their establishment has been political—namely, state certification requirements. And by far the major obstacle to their establishment has been that sure sign of "academic resistance": faculty apathy.

Our communications problems in and out of education increase in magnitude. The need for and promise of the study of communications as a social science enterprise commands increasing attention and respect. But professional education in audiovisual cannot lead this academic procession because it is barely a part of it.

Now the glitter of academic respectability is not all gold. But at its best and only worthwhile form it is a hard-earned commodity. And it is an essential re-

quirement for attracting and developing able men and women.

You can organize a field, but *professionalize* only a discipline. Audiovisual education is a sprawling field of busy activity. But it lacks both the intellectual discipline and the social value orientation necessary for a profession.

AV educators are the unstable occupants of a three-legged stool with two legs braced to support the growing burden but the third collapsing under our weight. Historical necessity and the technological means available form the two sturdy legs. The first, the need for rapid and efficient mass communication and training brings increasing responsibilities and even financial support, at least on the national scene. The second, a snowballing series of technological revolutions in communication, takes us on an imaginary joyride into outer space where no terrestrial nonsense enters into the automatic application of technological "solutions" to social problems. We were able to balance on these two legs more or less successfully only when singleness of purpose and community of national goals made the application of technology to rapid mass training a relatively unambiguous goal, a situation most characteristic of our society in wartime. But problems of knowledge, education, and technological mass communication become much more complex when questions of *how* cannot even be discussed intelligently without first raising the question of *what* and, even more importantly, *for what?*

That is the tottering third leg of the stool. What is the conceptual rationale for the discipline? What is its conception of the social roles and responsibilities inherent in communication innovation?

The conceptual rationale most widely held by AV practitioners is not a rationale at all but a rationalization. "Abstract verbal labels" may be empty without "rich sensory experiences" (although no worse than the other way around); but the mechanical application of the dubious dichotomy between the "abstract" and the "concrete" to the ordering of media and channels of communication into a hierarchy is a ritual which—as indeed the very name of the tribe—blocks attempts at clear thinking.

The conceptual foundations of the discipline *can* be built on the study of communications in the learning process, and on the analysis of its interactions with social and technological change. This means a redefinition and reorientation of professional education in audiovisual as the social science of educational mass communication. Anna L. Hyer recently suggested that the foundation of the audiovisual profession is in the psychology of learning, and that the principal roles of the professional are those of "curriculum agent," "change agent," and "learning agent" (11). I would broaden this somewhat. While the analysis of the role of the *communication process* in learning is relevant to the tasks of the profession, so are the scrutiny of communications *needs* and *resources;* the study of communication *systems* and their role in education, society, and popular culture; and the study of *utilization* and *administration* in the light of some professional philosophy. Our "highly trained intellectual technician with a strong sense of values" needs to be versed in the sciences, art, technology, and organization of communication activities, and needs to be oriented toward some normative concepts regarding the humanizing role of

communication in social life. (Later I will indicate what these terms mean to me.)

The materials necessary for a reorientation of learning in professional audio-visual education either do not exist, or are so scattered both in terms of location and of orientation as to be virtually unavailable. Perhaps the first task of professional leadership in the field might be to sift, synthesize, develop, and focus social science materials in the direction of educational communication theory and practice.

I don't think much can be done until that basic job of intellectual leadership is well under way. I don't think the contributions of social science can be economically harvested by sending students into a dozen standard social science courses during the time of professional preparation. I hope that the interdisciplinary cooperation apparent in this seminar can be extended to continue the job of structuring and development.

Communication Process in Learning

Perhaps the most obvious area in which recent developments in social science might be integrated with current materials is the analysis of the communication process in learning. A number of theoretical models, recently summarized by Bettinghous (1), have been proposed to help in this analysis. Osgood's theory of meaning and its measurement (14) has contributed tools to the study of the connotative aspects of communication. The continuing work of Hovland and his associates would have considerable relevance to the production and utilization of materials involving attitude change.

Recent contributions to a theory of encoding behavior and of perception are too numerous to name. They come from psycholinguistics, psychology, social psychology, cultural anthropology, information theory, art theory, and other fields. Study of small group communication networks and interaction, and of reference-group theory continues to offer insights relevant both to interpersonal and mass communications. The two-step flow of influence hypothesis of Katz and Lazarsfeld is likely to give way to a more complex, many-step flow hypothesis in the light of new studies. Content analyses in terms of effectiveness is being supplemented by source-oriented approaches (15) as well as those inferring social and cultural dynamics from the study of content (9). Some basic notions about the nature of communication effects have been challenged, or at least refined, by Festinger's theories and studies. Behavior may be more adaptive than ideology; attitude change may follow as well as precede behavioral effects; relevance of the communication or its salience to group norms or tasks may be determinants of response as critical as prior agreement.

I trust that other members of this symposium better versed than I am in many of these areas can amplify and supplement these random suggestions. I would like to go on to mention some much more neglected aspects of social science in professional education. It might be that in the long run extreme preoccupation with techniques for achieving slight (even though "statistically significant") margins of effectiveness will prove to have been myopic. We are probably still at the beginning of an era of vast communication systems whose social consequences are by no means perceived or accounted for in terms of test scores. What are the social

and technological imperatives of this era? What are their implications for the structure of authority, of freedom and control, of power and the integrity of knowledge? Too few people think deeply enough about these questions in ways that would be meaningful for professional education. Most of those who do are here with us today. Others who come to mind are Edgar Dale, Gilbert Seldes, Charles Siepmann, Robert Lewis Shayon. The only person I know who is developing an approach to the political economy of communications is Dallas W. Smythe (17).

I do not think that familiarizing students with experimental and survey research findings in social science (necessary as that might be) helps them solve most professional problems. Research information is most useful in increasing the range of alternatives apparent to the policy-maker, and indicating probable consequences attached to these alternatives. But when all is said and done, policy decisions are value judgments based on weighing alternatives and consequences in concrete and specific situations, and on the price of making changes for the sake of probable rewards. Here there is no substitute for historical analysis, social theory, and professional philosophy. Let me speculate briefly about each of these.

Historical Analysis

What contribution can the historical view make to the professional education of communication specialists? If we take history to be the study of the origin and development of social problems, issues, and ways of dealing with them, the historical view is essential to professional insight. The historical view of a discipline is often narrowed to outstanding events, people, and places that figured prominently in the "movement." This should be broadened, I believe, to accomplish three major objectives: (1) to clarify the conceptual and intellectual legacy of the field; (2) to establish the *rationale* for the existence of the discipline as contrasted with *rationalizations* concocted to justify practices, organizations, and budgets; and (3) to enable practitioners of the profession to assess their stand and their function in the social processes of the day.

No such history exists in the field of audiovisual communications. Some contributions have been made by such a diverse group of people as Brooker (2), Hogben (10), Innis (12), Lasswell (13), Saettler (16), and Jim Finn, Marshall McLuhan, and others at this seminar. But the particular synthesis needed to provide depth to a professional grasp of concepts, rationale, and social relevance has not been achieved. What kinds of social insights might be hidden behind the facade of chronology?

The development of the phonetic alphabet was a technological innovation comparable to the digital computer. It helped liberate man from mythical empiricism (a sort of primitive audiovisualism). It also prepared the stage for the class-bound dissociation of the learned from the popular (mostly oral) culture. But the "Gutenberg era" bridged the gap. This had explosive consequences. Comenius, sometimes called the "father of visual education," advocated the idea of universal popular education through print in an era of almost universal illiteracy. His dream of the Christian Republic (motivated by religious dissent) was founded on the social ideal of small farmers, merchants, property owners acting independently,

their equality limited only by natural capacity to cultivate and enjoy the fruits of industry and talent. A century later Rousseau—another "father of modern education"—saw this ideal crushed by plutocracy on one hand and impoverishment on the other. The child must be *protected* from books, he said, as from all other evils of society until he develops through "natural activities" his powers of resistance. Even then the curriculum should begin with that document of economic individualism and self-reliance, *Robinson Crusoe*.

Social Theory

Behind the conceptual history of educational and communications developments is the constant interaction with conditions of life, institutional structure, and social change. The first modern theories of public communication, using concepts such as "public opinion" and "mass mind" arose, as Lasswell noted, "as part of the great counterattack . . . against planned, revolutionary, and drastic social change—in a word, against the French revolution" (13).

In our time the industrial revolution shifted into the communications stage. Communication processes became mechanized and their products mass-produced. New media arose to transmit messages and images across boundaries of time, space, and class. Cultural communication industries, instruments, and processes created new networks of influence, audiences, markets, institutional empires—and educational devices. Bigness, fewness, costliness brought centralization of control, standardization of product, streamlining of technique. Large and intricate systems of all kinds demanded new ways of data processing, information transmission, storage, retrieval, and decision-making. Increasing penetration of mechanized communications into every sphere of life brought new delights and raised new concerns. Soon the technological avalanche will have to be pressed into the service of creating the growing army of its own technicians.

A thousand years ago there was a standard formula for the "solution" of most social problems. It permeated communications content, method, and point of view. The formula was "get more slaves." The essence of a thousand years of human productive progress can be summed up in the new formula: "build more machines." But the new formula is no more a matter of simple "application" than the old was. A new folklore has arisen to symbolize our anxieties about it and, characteristically, most of it revolves around communications. Suspicion surrounds a variety of occupational roles in communications which serve mostly to implement, to apply, and to carry out the demands of business and industrial technology; rarely to question, to scrutinize, to reflect upon human and social consequences, or to resist when professional responsibility might demand.

I would not want the educational communication specialist to join our symbolic rogue's gallery of "professional" implementers, appliers, persuaders, and manipulators. I would not like him to think that the application of a "communication approach" or technique can solve any major problem in industrial society. On the contrary, I would like him to understand that communication systems, technologies, and even theories are an *integral part* of our social problems; that what we need is not a "com-

munication approach" to society but a social-scientific and human value-conscious (i. e., truly professional) approach to communications. In sum, I would like him to know that the "communications revolution" of our time is part of a series of concrete historical developments and approaches whose nature and relevance to social change and human welfare his profession can and must assess.

Professional Philosophy

This brings us to the potential contributions of social theory to the professional education of our communication specialist. Here such ideas as those of Robert K. Merton, Leo Lowenthal, William H. Whyte, David Riesman, C. Wright Mills, Arnold Hauser and others working in the sociology of knowledge, art, institutions, and the cultural process can be helpful. But, again, the necessary body of literature does not exist. My basic point of departure into the field of social theory has been described by Finn as being "the greatest educational dilemma of our time" (7). The horns of this dilemma are the increasing need for responsible citizenship and the demands of a technological society for specialists. Finn said: "If these two objectives come into complete conflict, a technological society, in order to survive, has no choice but to pick technology. We may not like the world we so create . . . but we must recognize it for what it is."

I recognize it for what it is and I *don't* like it. Not because society "picks" technology (a matter in which it has no choice) but because I have no interest in the survival of the kind of technological society which comes into complete conflict with the values of responsible citizenship.

Professionals cannot serve as executioners of the "inevitable." Part of their task is to be, when necessary, "fighters against their times." Social theory in professional education illuminates the probable consequences of the "inevitable" and helps develop reasonable alternatives. The historic opposition between technology and social responsibility is no longer a reasonable alternative. Technology is never only technology. Technicians are the advance agents of social change whether they know it or not. Professionals ought to know it, and to *profess* what they know. That means, according to Webster's, "to avow publicly."

Now that I have used Jim Finn out of context as a foil, let me put him back into context to make my point. In "A Look at the Future of AV Communication" (6) he wrote:

> I submit that it is our job to be concerned about the content and philosophy of the materials we use in the future . . .
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> If we are on the side of mankind; if we believe that the future must contain *choices* [my emphasis], we must, in the future, defend the freedom of audiovisual communication and see that the materials contain, insofar as it is possible, all knowledge, not a perversion of it.
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> . . . The problem of knowledge is one of the greatest our society must carry into the future; it is an absolute social necessity that we begin now to apply audiovisual techniques to aid in its solution, and to protect its integrity.

Here we come to what I called earlier the normative professional concepts regarding the humanizing role of communications in social life. These concepts are rooted, for us, in the problem of knowledge.

Collaboration, community, and communication make human beings out of Homo sapiens. The unique social func-

tion of communication in this process involves learning about and judging a real world. That is what knowledge means in communication terms. As N. R. Hanson wrote in his *Patterns of Discovery*, "... knowledge of the world is not a *montage* of sticks, stones, colour patches and noises, but a system of propositions."

The professional audiovisual specialist is first and foremost an expert in the communication of knowledge. His ultimate concern is not with "sticks, stones, colour patches and noises" but with the communication of systems of propositions about the world by means and in forms best suited to the nature of the proposition and of the occasion. He knows that you can sketch a bear's teeth but not his growl, hear his growl but not his hunger, state his condition but not his "bearness." He also knows that his central position in the developing systems of educational mass communications thrusts responsibilities upon him which transcend those of technological competence. He has to see himself as a public communication specialist assuming some responsibilities of the scientist, the artist, and the administrator. In the first role he is concerned with the truth, validity, and adequacy of his propositions; in the second with their believability and concreteness; and in the third with the structure of freedom in which such systems of propositions can be produced for wide availability and use.

Increased technological challenge demands increased awareness of consequences. That is why professional education in audiovisual needs the infusion of social science and theory. Exclusive preoccupation with technique in communication training would be the rearguard tactic of a profession (and a civilization) perhaps in technological bloom but in historic retreat.

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