

177 Biddulph Road
Radnor, Pennsylvania 19087

February 24, 1984

Dr. George Gerbner, Dean
The Annenberg School of Communication
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104

Dear George:

As you know, a number of sociologists and psychologists have recently addressed themselves to the contextualistic nature of human activity and human experience. By this, I mean the idea that all knowledge is perennially conceptual and conjectural and no method can conclusively demonstrate the truth, which recognizes the plurality, spontaneity, and ecological dependency of human behavior. Many of these investigators have been influenced by the writings of Dewey, Pepper, and others in this tradition. You may have already seen the recent paper that Marianthi Georgoudi and I submitted to the Journal of Communication, which deals with this subject as it seems to pertain to your special issue on "Ferment in the Field."

Marianthi and I are trying to pull these different positions together in a book in which leading "contextualizing" social scientists like yourself would contribute an original essay on a topic within the domain of what we will call "human psychology" (but also encompassing other fields, such as communications). We are writing to you in the hope that you agree such an undertaking seems worthwhile and would consider contributing an essay (under 30 pages) of a general nature dealing with the need for new theorizing and methodologies in the area of language and mass communication. That is, what gaps need to be filled in the further evolution of this movement or point of view in this area? The two essays which would precede your chapter will focus on a particular subarea to show how a contextualizing science can illuminate some case study or problem ^{and} will also discuss the current state of thinking in this area. So we are asking you to go beyond the specific details and make some conjectures or recommendations for future directions in your field (and my field).

Enclosed you will find a tentative table of contents and list of other possible contributors (to whom I am now writing as well). Please think of these titles as speculative or working titles; we invite you to submit your own title and direction for your essay. I am sure you will have many original ideas of your own on how best to organize this piece.

At this stage in our planning, we would very much like to know whether you would be interested in participating in this project and also whether you have any suggestions for other possible chapters or contributors. A yes or no will suffice, and once we have heard from all the people listed we will write to you again with further details and a more concrete proposal.

When we are closer to a final table of contents there would then be about 6 months leeway for completing your essay. Thus we are probably talking about November or December at the earliest. We trust this time schedule seems workable and hope very much that you will join us in this venture.

I would appreciate if you would let me know your decision within 3 or 4 weeks if that is convenient. If you have any questions, feel free to call me at home (688-4837).

I'll look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,



Ralph L. Rosnow

March 5, 1984

Professor Ralph L. Rosnow
177 Biddulph Road
Radnor, PA 19087

Dear Ralph:

Thank you for your letter of February 24. Yes I read your paper submitted to the Journal of Communication and like it; it is now being reviewed by other readers and we shall write to you about that separately.

Of course I have always been thinking about the context of things but did not realize that was an "ism." What I might be able to contribute, original or not, is an essay on how to try to make representative statements about very large and constantly flowing systems of messages (as in mass media, but also in some other types of systematic human discourse).

If that would fit, put me down provisionally until things get clarified..

Many thanks for your interest.

Sincerely yours,

George Gerbner
Professor of Communications
and Dean

GG: ab

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for

CONTEXTUALISM AND UNDERSTANDING IN HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY

Ralph L. Rosnow and Marianthi Georgoudi, Editors
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