

PART 3: THE CRISIS OF THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTNew Technologies: Proliferation and Concentration

4.15.14 We have witnessed what is called the explosion of new technologies, of new channels of communication, of new devices such as cable, cassettes, video, satellites, and unlimited channels of communication. And when these new technologies came in, we were told that they start a renaissance, a great new revival of diversity in communication. Now that contention is really deceptive, 4.17.12

NEW TECH SHOTS

CABLE - CHANNEL FLICKING

4.17.12 First of all, you have to look at the entire orchestration of our culture. Print has always had a great diversity of communication- much greater than anything on electronic communication because the capital investment required to put something on the electronic circuit is still much greater than print is, even though most publishing companies today are owned by electronically based conglomerates because they provide raw material for some of the films, some of the videos, some of the programs that go on television. 4.17.48

4.17.48 But the interesting fact is that as channels proliferate, at the same time, two other things take place. 4.17.58

4.17.58 One is the concentration of ownership. Conglomerates means that they own many media, across media. That they own many outlets that may communicate by different channels, but essentially respond to the same set of imperatives, because they're owned by same or very similar organizations. 4.18.21

GRAPHIC ON TIME-WARNER

4.18.21 The second is that as people grow up in the television age, they learn not only what they might select, but they learn what their taste are, they'll learn taste, they'll learn preferences. It used to be said that people will select out their books,

GRAPHIC: LIGHT VS HEAVY VIEWER

their movies, their television programs according to their own preferences. And that their preferences are cultivated basically in the home, in the community, in the region of the country, according to their ethnic make-up, background, or according to their religion. But we find that most of these differences, differences due to gender, to age, to class, to region, to ethnicity- most of these differences really manifest themselves mainly among light viewers. Heavy viewers of television are much closer together. The major effect of television is a kind of homogenization, a kind of convergence that takes place among heavy viewers. 4.19.26

4.19.26 so that a heavy viewer child growing up in a suburb, where most of the children come from families that are relatively light viewers, and we should comment on the fact that television is really an inherited habit. It runs in families. It's not an individual choice. Most people learn their choices. Such a suburban child who happens to be a heavy viewer, will have an outlook that is much closer to an inner-city child, who may be a light viewer, because they come closer together...Let me start it...that is much closer to a heavy viewer inner-city child because they have been growing up in the same cultural environment. They've been kind of homogenized. 4.20.21

4.20.21 Now, as you grew up you learn your preferences, you learn not only what to select, but you learn what you think you like. And then you have many channels. Those who have been growing up and who have been cultivated to prefer certain types of things- we'll find it more often, so that the proliferation of channels allows for a concentration of choice. And in fact, that is what is taking place. There are two things that are taking place. 4.20.54

4.20.54 The heavy viewers who say "I know what I like and I want to see it more of the time", will use more channels to select the same content. The light viewers, who have a larger, more diversified cultural participation pattern, are going to find many of the things they used to read about, now on tape. Instead of going out to the movies, they bring the tape to the home, into the home, so that in effect they reduce, not increase and diversify, but reduce and make and transfer into the electronic channel their total cultural participation and much of that is a substitution for reading. That is one thing that is taking place. 4.21.38

4.21.38 The other thing that is taking place is that as there is a concentration of ownership, more and more channels are being programmed by the same, most popular, so-called blockbuster programs, blockbuster movies. More and more channels will provide essentially the same kind of most popular fare. Even now we find that two-thirds of the people who record on videocassette and who use that, they use it not to diversify their viewing. They use it to play their favorite programs at more convenient times, and more frequently. 4.22.19

4.22.19 And so while channels proliferate, the choosing among many people becomes narrower and the content that goes into many of the channels becomes not more, but in effect less diversified. It's a very curious, deceptive situation- a challenge to our theories of free communication which used to say if there are many different sources, there's a greater diversity. What is happening now? Many different channels don't necessarily mean many different choices. They simply mean more avenues, more penetration into the daily life, life, ...lives of individuals with not necessarily more and very often fewer choices. 4.23.09

Concentration of Ownership

4.23.09 And how could it be otherwise? Along with the proliferation of channels and the concentration of ownership comes the reduction of the work force, the reduction of the number of journalists, the reduction of the number of writers, the reduction of the amount of time that writers are given, in order to make these conglomerates more efficient, more profitable. They reduce the actual sources of information, the creators of information. So how can there be greater diversity when there are fewer people who create the information and the entertainment, and when more and more of this information and entertainment is communicated through essentially highly centralized assembly-line mechanisms? 4.24.03

GRAPHIC: REDUCTION IN EMPLOYMENT  
FOR MEDIA WORKERS

HEADLINES FROM AD AGE AND  
ELECTRONIC MEDIA ON CUTS

4.24.03 Most of the news that comes to us, comes, comes to us through news agencies. There are fewer and fewer reporters who originate the news. Most of the drama, most of the entertainment programs, comes, come to us from a relatively few, major program producers that work for the networks, that work for cable companies. 4.24.28

GRAPHIC: AP & UPI -  
TV REPORTERS

ABC, CBS, NBC, HBO

4.24.28 Many of the programs that are originating with the networks go out to cable later on, many of the syndicated programs across the board, until it is possible for one large company, like Time Warner for example, to commission a book by one of their publishing firms, to make a movie, review that movie in their own newspapers, review that book in their own newspapers, make it into a television program, again review it, or start with a television program and then write a book. In other words, it is now possible to work on all media, in what business calls a synergistic way. Synergistic, synergism is the ability to work with the same material across media. So that too, is going on, and what we need to

GRAPHIC: EG FROM TIME WARNER

GRAPHIC ON SYNERGISM

remember is that the proliferation of channels does not necessarily mean a diversification of choosing or of content. That indeed, there is a massive concentration, not only national, but a massive global GLOBAL CONCENTRATION concentration that is going on in our cultural environment. That just as MAJOR CO'S with the physical environment, our cultural environment is becoming affected by the by-product of industrial production in the storytelling process that we talked about earlier. 4.26.04

4.26.04 And for the first time in history, we find ourselves in a highly orchestrated, highly streamlined, highly power-driven, highly market-driven cultural situation that we are not prepared really to analyze. That we are not prepared really to address in democratic ways. We find ourselves in a culture which is no longer home grown, which is no longer hand-crafted, which is no longer diversified. A culture that is run by GRAPHIC OF MAJOR OWNERS a virtual ministry of culture, the center of which are the major networks. 4.26.51

4.26.51 And these ministers of culture are anonymous. We've never elected PICTURES OF HEADS OF NETWORKS them. We don't even know their names. There are three or four of them, and they're men, who determine what the vast majority of the American children grew up with, and the American people will see. So we have drifted into a situation where the very culture, the universal curriculum of our people, is out of the reach of democratic decision making. 4.27.24

4.27.24 And so our task it seems to me, our task is to consider how we can build or perhaps rebuild a sense of public participation in the making of the policies that affect all of us. 4.27.40

The Global Situation

4.27.40 The highly centralized cultural environment is not only national, it is now increasingly global, because most American, and to some extent other western products, but prominently American, are produced for the world market. That means that if you are producing a program or a film in the United States, whether it's owned, whether the company is owned by American, and that again is becoming internationalized, the British, the Japanese, the French, have all participated in financing American productions or co-productions. You are producing for the world market. You are essentially homogenizing many of the cultures around the world, And the money that you make on the domestic market just meets your costs. You're forced onto the world market for a profit. 4.30.58

4.30.58 That means you can sell it much cheaper. An hours programming ACTUAL COSTS OF TV PROGRAMS IN that costs about \$100,000 or \$200,000 DIFFERENT MARKETS a minute, that costs millions of dollars, you can sell to a Western European country for maybe thirty or forty thousand, to an African country maybe for five or six thousand, to Asia maybe ten, twelve thousand. It's incredibly, and becomes very attractive to many countries, much more attractive than to produce their own. 4.31.27

4.31.27 And the tragedy is that many countries cannot, or cannot afford to consider the consequences of importing their culture. It is a kind of globalized, conglomerate, market-oriented culture. At the expense of LOCAL ARTISTS AND TRADITIONS their own artists, of their own creators, of their own producers, of their own traditions which may be good or bad, but at least they have some control of it, and in effect mortgaging the socialization of their children to global conglomerates who THIRD WORLD KIDS SUPERIMPOSED WITH have something to sell, but who know CONGLOMERATE NAMES little and care less about the growing up and the socialization of children

in the great variety of human cultures. 4.32.14

4.32.14 The difficult part of this is for people to understand that they have to make an investment in the creative talent and in the patterns of their own cultures if they wish to control it, if they wish to have some say, some participation in the making. But that investment is as important, in many ways more important than the investment in their armies, which they all realize, because after all, what are armies for? Armies are essentially to help people preserve some integrity, some sovereignty, some integrity of their own decision making, or perhaps to make other people behave as they wish them to behave. 4.33.09

4.33.09 But the storytelling process that we're talking about, the cultural environment is after all, what makes people behave the way they behave. So if you can control storytelling, if you can control the cultural environment, you can control, or at least substantially influence the way in which people grow up and the way in which they will behave, much more cheaply, much more effectively, and much more entertainingly than by armies and by sheer brute force, that ARMY SHOTS is less and less effective in gaining the confidence and gaining the VS cooperation of people. So today, the principle way of affecting human behavior is the cultural way. The WATCHING TV AND ADS principle way is what we're doing right now, is by communicating to large groups of people from a limited number of sources. That is why I say that as control and influence by communication increases, control by sheer force and by armies- the need for that seems to be decreasing. And therefore the investment that a culture makes, that a society makes in its own culture, should be seen as comparable to the investment it makes in its own defense, the investment it makes in the preservation of its own integrity. 4.34.31

4.34.31 Unfortunately, the global marketing situation is such that business people in all countries find it so much cheaper and more profitable to buy the relatively cheaply available American and Western product, which has a certain popularity because it's active, because of good production quality, because it is essentially...has what I GLOBAL PROGRAMMING call a kind of commercial, populist approach. Which means instant gratification, it tries to grab people, it tries to be very active, partly because it's violent, partly because this is a style. And therefore, it becomes very attractive and very profitable, but goes at the expense of national survival, goes at the expense of sovereignty of people over their own societies and their own cultures. And that is why the global situation, I think deserves some very special, concentrated attention and action. Action of an international cooperative kind, that I think we should talk about some more. 4.35.52

Education in an Age of Propaganda

5.54.33 You may have heard the story about the class, in which the teacher said, "Children, who can tell me what it is that our century owes Mr. Edison?". And Johnny puts up his hand and says "Teacher, without Mr. Edison we would be watching television by candle light." You know our children don't remember a time before television. I suppose many of you, many of the parents don't remember a time before television. Some of us who remember a time before television won't be around. Our numbers are vanishing. And so that great wave, that great transformation, from what I call the "generation B.T." (I guess you know what that means.) to the "generation A.T.", has already passed, or is about to pass away. 5.55.54

5.55.54 We followed that wave in our studies, and found that a person who was born before television, who grew up before television, who grew up essentially in a context, in a culture which was much more neighborhood, home, family, region- bound, that that person has an outlook on life that is much like the light viewers of television today. The heavy viewers of television who are born into a television culture, have a perspective, that we know has been influenced or cultivated by television. And the great difference between those two generations, that great difference has passed now.  
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5.56.48 Today our children and many of their parents, and soon their grandparents, will not know what the world before television was like. So we have to discover, we have re-discover for them. Does the fish in the ocean know that it's living in salt water? See, if that fish has never experienced anything else, it doesn't know. In that way we don't... the more pervasive television becomes in every day life, the less visible, the less noticeable it becomes.  
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5.57.18 Therefore it becomes a new, and I think an important task for our schools, for our parents, for our political life to discover that we are in a new cultural situation, which is so pervasive that it's practically invisible, and that we have to attend to it. 5.57.38

5.57.38 Many people ask what parents should do. And of course, parents themselves are trapped in a situation in which television is, as I say, very often the babysitter. And I think that one has to respect the fact that there are more and more single parents, there are more and more parents, where both parents have to work outside the home. That indeed, television should be able to be

trusted to be a babysitter, when the situation demands. Unfortunately it is not produced to take care of those needs. We're one of the few KIDS PROGRAMMING - CARTOONS - ADS civilized, industrial countries who do not have high quality children's programming in prime-time at all. So, under these circumstances parents are trapped, for the fact that television is attractive to children, although no more attractive than it is to parents. You know, if left alone, a child typically watches less television than their parents do. The television viewing is essentially determined by the style of life of the home and the parent. 5.58.53

5.58.53 But given that situation, what should parents do? First of all, I think parents should not use GRAPHIC: DON'T USE AS REWARD television as a form of reward or punishment. Although to some extent it becomes inevitable, they should be aware of the fact that using television as reward or punishment, using it like, like something you can turn on and off. It doesn't matter what you watch, essentially teaches indiscriminate viewing. It teaches that it's not so much what you watch, but how much you watch that really matters. Now from a research point of view, television has some of the most magnificent productions of our culture, even though they're few and far between. And some high quality and much low quality production. It's important that a kind of selective, and discriminating viewing is the objective of parents, rather than simply the amount of viewing. 6.00.01

6.00.01 Secondly, parents should participate with their children in enough viewing, that they have some GRAPHIC: PARTICIPATE TOGETHER standing. Because if children know that they're just talking about programs they have never seen, they SHOTS OF PARENTS WATCHING TOGETHER lose credibility. Participating gives WITH KIDS them some standing to express an opinion, to express a perspective. Not just to control, but to show that there is another way of looking at the world, that there is an alternative

way of looking at life, other than what they see on television. And that's very important. The most powerful effects of a kind of cultural mainstream, that television is, is when it monopolizes the cultural life of the child or the person, and when they're not aware that there are any alternatives. Just having a notion of alternatives is already a kind of immunizing factor. It shows that, yes, this is one way, but here's an institution that has it's own agenda, that has it's own vested interest, that has its own purposes, that looks at and illuminates life from a restricted point of view. There are other alternative ways that one can seek out, to look at life. I think that that is very important. 6.01.20

6.01.20 Finally I think parents should prevail upon, and demand that schools teach analytical and critical viewing. The teaching of how to handle this new, cultural environment is as important as anything that the schools can do. It's in effect, it's a fresher approach to the liberal arts. Let's consider for a minute, what the liberal arts are designed to do. They are designed... Let's consider what the liberal arts are designed to do. They are designed to liberate the individual from the limited and restricted cultural environment of a particular place and time, and to put the individual in touch with the great art, the great science, the great philosophies, the great religions of human kind. 6.02.18

GRAPHIC: MEDIA LITERACY

6.02.18 Well, there is no parochialism. Television has broadened the cultural horizons of the people who used to be parochial, who used to be out of it, who used to be removed from the mainstream of cultural and political life. Television can, and occasionally does bring in the great art, the great science and scientists of human kind. So the form of liberation is no longer to seek out these. 6.02.49

6.02.49 The form of liberation today, is to liberate the individual from a kind of unthinking and unquestioning acceptance of the every day cultural environment of which television is a central part. So the new task of the liberal arts, the new task that the tools of the teachers of English, and of Social Studies, and of history, should now be applied to, is the every day cultural environment of the individual. 6.03.21

6.03.21 And I think parents should remember, that they're not only parents, they're not only teachers, they're not only members of school systems, important as those roles are, but they're also citizens. What's the point of bringing up children in a relatively healthy and diversified environment, if you bring them up into a world, and into a culture that is a mess. You can't just do one and ignore the other. So parents should also think of themselves as citizens of society, and citizens of a culture, and consider what they can do and what they should as citizens who address the problems of a cultural environment. 6.04.11

#### A New Cultural Environment Movement

6.04.11 We find ourselves in a new cultural environment, and in a historically unprecedented challenge. The challenge is this: We used to think of culture as something that grows spontaneously out of communities, out of families, out of art, science, religion, that is essentially hand-crafted, that is OLD SHOTS OF CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT largely homemade, that is propagated by the parents, and by the experts, and by the teachers. But that is simply no longer the case. 6.12.01

6.12.01 Culture today is a highly integrated, essentially mass produced product. Most of our children grow up in an environment which has been manufactured, which has been mass-produced, which has great riches that many people have never had before, but also has great problems. It is now highly centralized and it is inevitably controlled. It doesn't grow on trees anymore. It doesn't grow spontaneously out of community circumstances. Community circumstances were modified somewhat, but basically there are very few major sources. It's a highly streamlined mass-produced product. 6.12.46

NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

6.12.46 So then, perhaps a way of illuminating what this means is to take a look at the physical environment whose degradation we are familiar with and which we are beginning, perhaps at the very beginning of coping with. The degradation of the physical environment is a by-product of an industrial civilization, whose main products we often enjoy, and wouldn't want to do without. But we're beginning to realize that there is a price that has to be paid for really enjoying the benefits of industrial civilization, and surviving as a human race. So as the physical environment is necessary for our survival, the cultural environment is essentially the question of what kind of people are going to survive. Of the quality of life rather than just the quantity or the length of the life span. And this has never been before a policization. There has been no such thing as cultural policy. 6.14.00

PHYSICAL POLLUTION

GRAPHIC: POLLUTION  
GREENHOUSE EFFECT  
ACID RAIN  
DEFORESTATION

16.14.00 As a matter of fact, the First Amendment of the Constitution says that Congress shall make no laws abridging the freedom of speech, press, religion, etc, and that was it in a negative way. We said nobody should streamline, nobody should orchestrate, nobody should legislate about cultural policy. What this overlooks is that the founding

GRAPHIC: FIRST AMENDMENT

fathers, the framers of the Constitution, had in mind. Government as the public authority. That in their experience, was the only authority capable of legislating in a way that would abridge the press.  
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6.14.42 Today we have another government. A private government. Large, national, trans-national CORPORATE LOGOS corporations that are governments in the real sense of being the authoritative decision-makers in many areas of life. And these are governments that are exempt from the prohibitions of the First Amendment. In fact, they can use the protections of the First Amendment as a shield for privilege and monopoly by which they claim the freedom to censor everybody else. This is a situation, that has a reason in which there is a highly centralized and in a curious way, legally protected oligopoly, if not monopoly, of cultural expression, that determines the nature of our cultural environment. It's a new challenge, one with which... It's a new challenge which we never had to face. And one with which we now have to cope. And the questions, how do we cope with it?  
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6.16.01 Well, to import the notion of pollution from the physical environment is a very tricky matter. In terms of expression, one person's pollution is another person's enrichment. So you can't really think about pollution. 6.16.16

6.16.16 But we can think about this diversity, is the essential part of freedom, of action, which is to have alternative representations of life, alternative perspectives represented, and this is exactly what is being threatened. The essential FACES OF PEOPLE NOT REPRESENTED ON TV concentration and the overwhelming market-orientation of our cultural production reduces the alternatives, reduces the challenges, reduces the multiplicity, the plurality of perspectives, to a few that can be

most profitably cultivated. And while they have a legitimate place, they have no place, or no right to monopolize a total culture. 6.17.04

6.17.04 So we're in a situation in which we have reached a position in our culture, that the policy is the unwritten, the unrecognized policies, that the virtual ministry of vulture of a handful of people who determine what the American and the international community should see, is out of the reach of democratic decision-making. It's not that they don't know how to do much better than what they're doing, it's that the same constraints of marketing strategy impede them. 6.17.41

6.17.41 In effect, they are being censored by the situation in which they find themselves and I think that they should be liberated from them. They should be allowed and given the resources to do and well as they know how to do, which the creative people and many of the executives in the media tell us can not do because of the constraints placed upon them. 6.18.06

6.18.06 This has to be done by what I would call a cultural environment movement. A new organization that is social, cultural, educational, and political activity. Which is a dual form of new type of organization. First it is, and it should be a kind of a coalition of existing groups. Citizen's groups that are interested in media, educational groups, professional groups, groups of scientists, groups of artists, and even groups in the media who would like to have more time, more resources, more opportunities for talented people to engage in a greater diversity of production, and of representation, both journalistic, artistic, dramatic- that they know how to do and they know are prevented from doing right now. 6.19.06

GRAPHIC: CEM

6.19.06 So, this is a federation or coalition of existing forces, and secondly we need to build a constituency for media reform, a constituency for engaging with the decision makers, and engaging with legislators and the rule-makers, in a... with a view to our diversifying, freeing, liberating production, liberating expression and representation from the existing SHOTS OR ORDINARY PEOPLE constraints, partly of the market, partly of a kind of narrow conception of power in a relatively few hands. That kind of constituency is necessary because in our society, and I think in any society that pretends or aims to be self-governing, you need a constituency to support any action.  
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6.20.07 We have legislators, we have executives, we have decision-makers in whole areas of public and private organization who know better to do, how to do, how to design new policies than they are doing right now. But they can't do it without public support. When we suggest to them that maybe we should have a greater variety of types, of let's say, television LOBBYISTS SHOTS productions that address a greater variety of human needs than mainly merchandising, they'll say, "Fine, we would like to do it, but where are your troops? Where are your supports? We have the lobbyists coming in every day. You need to give us an indication of public interest, of public support". And that is what a cultural environment movement should try to do. 6.21.04

6.22.49 Remember the slogan of the Soviet or Russian dissidents of the 1960's and 1970's? When they offered a toast they said "And here is to the success of our hopeless endeavor".  
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FADE FROM GG TO BERLIN WALL  
COMING DOWN?