File 5/26/85

Presenting 'Stuart Hall'
(Lawrence Grossberg)

It is both appropriate and ironic that one meet Stuart Hall under the banner of "paradigm dialogue." Hall would both celebrate and challenge the epigraph; celebrate its suggestion that we learn to "live with difference," and challenge its claim to represent and adjudicate the "ferment in the field." Hall would enjoin us to recognize that this ferment is complexly tied to other forms of contemporary social and cultural ferment. Explicating Hall's vision of this dialectic of theory and practice provides an attractive alternative to the attempt to summarize his position on some set of issues, to locate him within a single tradition or paradigm, or to generalize a method from his contributions to media studies. (Inevitably, I will do some of each of these.) But it is difficult to identify a single position, concern, tradition or method in Hall's work, or to assign specific arguments to a single theoretical level or 'empirical' arena. The 'multi-accentuality' of his work is magnified by his commitment to modes of collective intellectual work and authorship. His 'author-ity' extends far beyond those texts he himself has authored; he is as much a teacher and an activist as a writer. As a founding member of the "new left" in England, as one of those crucially responsible for the definition and institutionalization of "cultural studies" during his tenure at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and as a leading figure in the attempt to forge a new marxism, both intellectual and practical, since moving to the Open University, his work embodies an ongoing project, realized in an explicit dialogue with others and characterized, above all, by a modesty and generosity, as much in his descriptions of people in concrete historical situations as in his considerations of other positions.

I want then to offer Hall's own practice as exemplary. His engagement with other writers embodies a "critical dialogue:" he simultaneously borrows and distances himself from them, struggling with their texts, reinflecting them into his own understanding of history as an active struggle. History and theory--both enact an ongoing process of what Gramsci called 'destruction and reconstruction' or, in Hall's terms, 'de- and re- articulation' (although Hall tends to use 'articulation' when talking about cultural or signifying practices). While many increasingly acknowledge the need for theoretical complexity, Hall elaborates and concretizes that demand as he moves from the more abstract to the more concrete. He rarely claims that the questions he addresses are sufficient, merely that they are often ignored. He does not offer his answers as authoritative; he seeks rather to open up new fields of exploration and critical reflection, to challenge that which we take for granted. His theoretical advances are offered, not as the end of a debate, but as the ongoing attempt to understand the complexity, contradictions and struggles within the concrete lives of human beings. Yet the model of his practice--as a writer, teacher, theoretician, cultural critic and political strategist--and the middle ground he constantly tries to occupy, can be extended beyond the debates he addresses. It is this commitment to struggle, at all levels, which can provide a model of the ways we study communication, construct our positions and polemics, and perhaps, will engage in "paradigm dialogue."

reproduce/transform organizations, while an adequate analysis of organizations would require reference to a theory of interaction elaborate enough to indicate the variety of ways interactional strategies like facework could produce the institutional qualities. This point is especially relevant to communication researchers, because we often concentrate on micro-level data and theories, without considering how necessary it is to link our own theorizing to a general social theory which accounts for the institutions that are the context of communication. More generally, Giddens argues that there are four major "tasks of social research informed by structuration theory" (1984, p. 327): hermeneutic elucidation of meaning-frames, investigation of forms of practical consciousness and the unconscious, identification of 'bounds of knowledgeability'--unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences of action, and specification of institutional orders by describing the structural principles underlying their integration. (The third will be elaborated below.) All four of these can involve contributions from macro- or micro-level, and from quantitative or qualitative, research.

One final idea of Giddens' deserves discussion because it is so relevant to the concept of 'paradigm dialogues.' In discussing the work of Thomas Kuhn, Giddens notes the unfortunate impression Kuhn sometimes gives that rival paradigms are separate and incommensurable. Giddens argues that, rather, each paradigm includes a version of the other, in a sense: each mediates, or reproduces, the other within its own structure. This phenomenon is not rare or unduly taxing--it also occurs whenever any two people communicate, as the reply of one builds on and tacitly assumes the prior comment of the other. And it also occurs whenever social theorists study human beings or human society, or try to communicate their ideas back to society. Indeed, Giddens regards this latter form of intermediation as much more characteristic of social science, and much more problematic, than the case of paradigm dialogue. Every human agent, as noted above, is capable and knowledgeable within certain bounds or conditions involving "unconscious elements in action, practical consciousness, and the unintended consequences of action...." (1979, p. 250) These conditions of action underlie all the causal relations, laws, or regularities that are not simple results of human intentions, and the special task of social science is to explore "the nature and persistence of these bounds." But every such bound is, in principle, capable of being removed or pushed back once it is understood. So we can expect a general, though uneven and undirected, evolution in social science, as old bounds are surpassed and new ones become relevant. Very often, paradigms are distinguished, not so much by their object of investigation as by the bound they concentrate on and the direction of attack they take on it. So perhaps in social science multiple paradigms will always be with us; nevertheless, Giddens seems to offer us a variety of insights which increase the ease with which we can learn from one another.

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Nevertheless, Hall does write from a particular position, defined in part by his own social and intellectual history. The latter is likely to be unfamiliar to many communications scholars. Hall works within both marxist and semiotic discourses which attempt to understand the nature of contemporary social life and the central place of communication within it. To try, in the name of generalization, to eliminate either his fundamental concern with power and historical change, or the real theoretical advances, over a broad range of issues, accomplished in his vocabulary, would be a disservice. In what follows, then, I will try to move between the abstraction and the detail, offering a map of Hall's strategies and struggles, much as he might offer one of ours.

For Hall, all human practices (including communication and communication theory) are struggles to 'make history but in conditions not of our own making.' He brings this marxist maxim to bear upon at least three different, albeit related concerns: to offer a theory of ideology which sees communicative practices in terms of what people can and do make of them; to describe the particular historical form of contemporary cultural and political struggle (hegemony); and to define a "marxism without guarantees" by rethinking the 'conjunctural' nature of society. At each of these levels, Hall connects, in complex ways, theory and writing to real social practices and struggles. There can be no radical separation between theory, at whatever level of abstraction, and the concrete historical context which provides both its object of study and its conditions of existence. This is not merely a political position (although it is that); it is also an epistemological one. Hall extends the marxist attempt to 'reproduce the concrete in thought' with Benjamin's comparison of the magician and the surgeon: the magician acts upon the surface of reality, the surgeon cuts into it. (It is not coincidental that Benjamin's metaphor describes the new media technology, specifically photography.) Rejecting the 'magical incantations' of the empiricist who claims to have secure access to the real (even in its marxist forms: e.g., theories of false consciousness), Hall (1980a) seeks "concepts with which to cut into the complexity of the real, in order precisely to reveal and bring to light relationships and structures which cannot be visible to the naive naked eye," relations of power and contradiction, of domination and struggle. Hall also refuses the relativism of rationalism: although theories and descriptions are always ideological, their 'truth' is measured in the context of concrete historical struggles, their adequacy judged by the purchase they give us for understanding the complex and contradictory structure of any field of social practices, for seeing beyond the taken-for-granted to the ongoing struggles of domination and resistance. Thus, at whatever level of abstraction, Hall's fundamental commitment is to a structuring principle of struggle, not as an abstract possibility, but as a recognition that human activity always takes place within and over concretely 'contested terrain.' For example, against those who would reduce the politics of culture to a simple economic relation of domination, Hall (1984a) argues that

> we must not confuse the practical inability to afford the fruits of modern industry with the correct popular aspiration that modern people know how to use and master and bend to their needs and pleasures modern things. . . .

> In part, of course, this is the product of a massively capitalised swamp advertising campaign. But more importantly, it is also a perfectly correct perception that this is where modern technology is, these are languages of calculation of the future . . . Not to recognize the dialectic in this is to fail to see where real people are . . .

By identifying the possibilities of struggle within any field, Hall occupies the middle ground between those who emphasize the determination of human life by social structures and processes, and those who, emphasizing the freedom and creativity of human activity, fail to recognize its historical limits and conditions: a middle ground in which 'people make history but in conditions not of their own making.'

Hall seeks to define a nonreductionist theory of determination and social practices, of ideology, culture and politics. The concept of 'articulation' signals his attempt to rethink the dialectic of determination as struggle; it marks his movement of this marxist problematic onto the terrain of structuralist theory while simultaneously registering the limit he places upon the 'riot of deconstruction.' Structuralism argues that the identity of a term is not pregiven, inherent in the term itself but rather, is the product of its position within a system of differences. For Hall, the meaning and politics of any practice is, similarly, the product of a particular structuring of the complex relations and contradictions within which it exists. 'Articulation' refers to the complex set of historical practices by which we struggle to produce identity or structural unity out of, on top of, complexity, difference, contradiction. It signals the absence of guarantees, the inability to know in advance the historical significance of particular practices. It shifts the question of determination from origins (e.g., a practice is defined by its capitalist or working class genesis) to effects. It is the struggle to articulate particular effects in history that Hall seeks to find at every level, and in every domain of social life.

Although Hall is best known for his work in cultural theory and ideological analysis, the power of the concept of 'articulation' is perhaps more clearly illustrated by his 'conjunctural theory' of the social formation. Here, Hall's middle ground between 'culturalism' and '(post)structuralism' is explicitly theorized. What is the nature of society and of the structural determinations operating within it? In the 'culturalist' position, the coherence and totality of a particular social structure (and the nature of the power relations within it) are already given, defined as a series of correspondences between different levels of social experiences, cultural practices, economic and political relations. Society is an 'expressive totality' in which every practice refers back to a common origin. A chain of equivalences is constructed: for example, a particular class= particular experiences= particular political functions= particular cultural practices= particular needs and interests= a particular position in the economic relations of capital. That is, a particular social identity corresponds to particular experiences, defines a particular set of political interests, roles and actions, has its own 'authentic' cultural practices, etc. What determines this network of correspondences, what defines and guarantees this

systems's existence is--whether in the first or the last instance--the economic. Culturalism is a theory of necessary correspondences in which the meaning and politics of every action is already defined, guaranteed in the end by its origin in the class struggle or by its stable place in the contradictions of capital. As a theory of power, struggle and contestation are possible only by appealing to an abstract principle of human nature: the question of agency is necessarily transformed into one of creativity; the subject is somehow determining but indeterminate.

On the other hand, in the '(post)structuralist' position, structural unity and identity are always deconstructed, leaving in their place the complexity, contradictions and fragmentation implied in difference. There are no necessary relations, no correspondences; that is guaranteed outside of any concrete struggle. What something is (including the social formation) is only its relations to what it is not, its existence in a nominalist field of particular others. Any structure or organization is to be dismantled: one can build neither theory nor struggle upon it. With any unitary nature denied, society can only be seen as a network of differences within which power operates 'microphysically' (i.e., absolutely nonhierarchically). Similarly, the identification of the historical agent with a creative subject is broken. The actor is fragmented and its intentions 'decentered' from any claim of origination/determination. Agency is nothing but the product of the individual's insertion into various and contradictory codes of social practice: the speaker is always already spoken. Thus, the social totality is dissolved into a pluralism of powers, practices, subject-positions. This is a theory of necessary noncorrespondence, in which the lack of identity and structure is guaranteed, in which there can be no organization of power (as either a system of domination structured by certain more fundamental contradictions or a coherent structure of resistance.) Resistance itself is comprehensible only by appealing to an abstract principle of the unconscious or the repressed.

At this level, the concept of 'articulation' marks Hall's unwillingness to accept the necessity of either correspondence or noncorrespondence, either the simple unity or the absolute complexity of the social formation. He argues that correspondences are historically produced, the site of the struggle over power. Society is, for Hall, a complex unity, always having multiple and contradictory determinations, always historically specific. This 'conjunctural' view sees the social formation as a concrete, historically produced organization--a 'structure-in-dominance'--of the different forms of social relations, practices and experiences. Each form of social practice (political, economic and cultural) has its own specificity or 'relative autonomy;' each has its own specific field of effects, particular transformations that it produces and embodies. But the effects of any concrete practice--its conjunctural identity--are always 'overdetermined' by the network of relations in which it is located. For Hall, the struggle is over how particular practices are positioned, into what structures of meaning and power, into what correspondences, they are articulated.

Hall offers a 'marxism without guarantees,' a theory of 'no necessary (non/) correspondence,' in which history is the struggle to produce the relations within which particular practices have particular meanings and

effects, to organize practices into larger structures, to 'inflect' particular practices and structures into relations with political, economic and cultural structures of domination and resistance. Hall's marxism demands that we seek to understand the concrete practices by which such articulations are accomplished and the contradictions around which struggles are and can be organized. The theory of articulation is the assertion of struggle over necessity, struggles both to produce structures of domination and to resist them. (It is perhaps also meant to remind the left of an important lesson: 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.') It offers a different version of determination, a rigorously antireductionist model of the production of social life as a field of power. Furthermore, Hall argues that these systems of power are organized upon contradictions, not only of class and capital, but of gender and race as well; these various equally fundamental contradictions may or may not be made to correspond--this is yet another site of articulation and power. Hall's theory offers, as well, a nonessentialist theory of agency: social identities are themselves fields of struggle; they are the product of the articulations of particular social positions into chains of equivalences, between experiences, interests, political struggles and cultural forms, and between different social positions. This is a fragmented, decentered human agent, an agent who is both 'subject-ed' by power and capable of acting against those powers.

These same principles and practices define Hall's contribution to the theory of culture and ideology. Culture is never merely a set of practices, technologies or messages, objects whose meaning and identity can be guaranteed by their origin or their intrinsic essences. For example, Hall (1984b) argues that

> there is no such thing as 'photography'; only a diversity of practices and historical situations in which the photographic text is produced, circulated and deployed. . . . And of course, the search for an 'essential, true original' meaning is an illusion. No such previously natural moment of true meaning, untouched by the codes and social relations of production and reading, exists.

Cultural practices are signifying practices. Following Volosinov as well as the structuralists, Hall argues that the meaning of a cultural form is not intrinsic to it; a text does not offer a transparent surface upon or through which we may discern its meaning in some nontextual origin, as if it had been deposited there, once and for all, at the moment of its origin. The meaning is not in the text itself but is the active product of the text's social articulation, of the web of connotations and codes into which it is inserted. Hall (1981) writes: "The meaning of a cultural symbol is given in part by the social field into which it is incorporated, the practices with which it articulates and is made to resonate. What matters is not the intrinsic or historically fixed objects of culture, but the state of play in cultural relations." The text is never isolatable; it is "always caught in the network of the chains of signification which over-print it, inscribing it into

the currency of our discourses" (1984b). On the other hand, we can deconstruct any text, disseminating and fragmenting its meaning into its different contexts and codes, displacing any claim it makes to 'have' a meaning. Yet, particular texts are consistently read with the same meanings, located within the same codes, as if they were written there for all to see. Thus, every sign must be and is made to mean. There is no necessary correspondence between sign and meaning; every sign is 'multi-accentual.' Culture is the struggle over meaning, a struggle that takes place over and within the sign. Culture is "the particular pattern of relations established through the social use of things and techniques" (1984a).

But it is not only the sign that must be made to mean, it is the world as well. For meaning does not exhaust the social world: for example, "Class relations do not disappear because the particular historic cultural forms in which class is 'lived' and experienced at a particular period, change" (1984a). Culture is the site of the struggle to define how life is lived and experienced, a struggle carried out in the discursive forms available to us. Cultural practices articulate the meanings of particular social practices and events; they define the ways we make sense of them, how they are experienced and lived. And these already interpreted social practices can be, in turn, articulated into even larger relations of domination and resistance. It is here--in the question of the relations between discourse and the realities it purports to represent--that Hall locates the question of ideology.

Ideology is articulated (constructed) in and through language but it is not equivalent to it. There is, in fact, no necessary correspondence between a text and its politics, which is always a function of its position within an ideological field of struggle, the struggle to achieve an equivalence between language and reality. Particular ideological practices are not inscribed with their politics, any more than particular social identities are inscribed with their ideologies 'on their backs.' Practices do not intrinsically belong to any political position or social identity; they must be articulated into it. The meaning and political inflection of, e.g., 'democracy,' 'freedom,' or 'black,' or of a particular media practice, technology or social relationship are not guaranteed by its origin in a particular class structure. It is always capable of being de-articulated and re-articulated; it is a site of struggle. Hall (1981) writes that "The meaning of a cultural form and its place or position in the cultural field is not inscribed inside its form. Nor is its position fixed once and forever. This year's radical symbol or slogan will be neutralized into next year's fashion; the year after, it will be the object of profound cultural nostalgia," or, one might add, it may be rearticulated as a symbol of opposition. Moreover, "it depends . . . on the way concrete practices are used and implemented in concrete historical conditions, the [strength] with which certain codes are constituted as 'in dominance', the relations of struggle within the social relations of representation." It is the struggle to articulate certain codes into a position of dominance, to legitimate their claim, not only to define the meaning of cultural forms but to define the relation of that meaning (and hence, the text) to reality as one of representation, that defines the specificity of the ideological.

Ideological practices are those through which particular relations, particular chains of equivalences, are 'fixed,' 'yoked together.' They construct the necessity, the naturalness, the 'reality' of particular identifications and interpretations (and of course, the simultaneous exclusion of others as fantastic, contingent, unnatural or biased). Ideology is the naturalization of a particular historical cultural articulation. What is natural can be taken for granted; it defines 'common sense.' Ideology 'yokes together' particular social practices and relations with particular structures of meaning, thus anchoring them in a structure in which their relations to social identity, political interests, etc., have already been defined and seem inevitable.

We cannot live social reality outside of the cultural forms through which we make sense of it. Ideology involves the claim of particular cultural practices to represent reality. Yet, it is not reality that is represented (and constructed); it is rather our relation to it, the ways we live and experience reality. Ideology constructs the field and structures of our experience. It is, then, a contradictory field in which we struggle to define the systems of representation through which, paraphrasing Althusser, we live the 'imaginary' relations between ourselves and our real conditions of existence. The necessity which it inscribes upon particular interpretations is grounded in the 'immediacy' of experience and in the ways we are located within it. Ideology links particular social identities with particular experiences, as if the former were the necessary source of the latter. While the individual is positioned--their identity as the author/subject of experience defined--within ideological practices, however, the individual is never a tabula rasa seduced into a simple ideological structure. The ideological field is always marked by contradictions and struggles. Moreover, the individual is already defined by other discourses and practices. Ideologies must attempt to win subjects already spoken for into their representations by articulating various social identities into chains of equivalence which constitute and are articulated into structures of domination.

Such ideological struggles can only be read by examining the complex 'ideological structuration' of the text and its insertion into concrete historical struggles. It is here that one must locate the most significant work that Hall accomplished and sponsored while at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. For example, Hall and Jefferson (1976) offers a theory of subcultures centered on the question of style as the articulation of an alternative ideology which offers its members a 'magical' solution to the real contradictions of their social position. Similarly, the Centre's main contributions to media studies in the seventies can be understood in the context of Hall's developing theory of ideology. In particular, Hall's analytic separation of the moments of encoding and decoding (Hall et al., 1980) can be seen as one version of the struggle of articulation. In the studies around the 'Nationwide' program (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978; Morley, 1980), the gap between the two moments becomes evident as the authors elucidate first the semiotic structures of the program and then, the various ways in which audience fragments interpret the program. The particular signifying practices of the text (e.g., its modes of address, its modes of representation, the ways in which it frames various 'ideological problematics') not only

embody real historical choices (an 'encoded' or 'preferred' reading) but also become the active sites at which ideological struggles are waged. Of course, not only are different 'decodings' possible, but such alternative readings are themselves inflected into different political formations and relations. Thus, while Hall wants to argue that the ideology of a text is not guaranteed, no text is free of its encoded structures and its ideological history. Texts have "already appeared in some place--and are therefore already inscribed or placed by that earlier positioning. They will be inscribed in the particular social relations which produced them. . . . The vast majority will already be organized within certain 'systems' of classification. Each practice, each placing, slides another layer of meaning across the frame" (1984b). These 'traces' of past struggles do not guarantee future articulations but they do mark the ways in which the text has already been inflected. If we are to understand ideology as a contested terrain, we must not only recognize the struggle but also learn "to read the cultural signposts and traces which history has left behind--as Gramsci says, 'without an inventory'" (1984b). Furthermore, if we are to understand ideology as a contested terrain, we must recognize that ideological struggles are never wholly autonomous; they are themselves located within, articulated with, a broader field of economic, cultural and political struggles. But ideology is not reducible to struggles located elsewhere; its importance cannot be dismissed by claiming that it is determined by the nonideological. Ideological practices have their own 'relative autonomy' and they produce real effects in the social formation, even outside of their own (signifying) domain.

This is the point at which, most explicitly, Hall's theory and his historico-political context intersect. It is not only ideology that must be located within a broader context of struggle but Hall's arguments as well. Hall disclaims abstract and universal theory; he prefers to see himself "theorizing from the concrete." His work is a response to historically specific conditions: the emergence of new forms of cultural power. Hall extends the parameters of 'cultural studies', calling (1981) for us to look at

> the domain of cultural forms and activities as a constantly changing field . . . [to look] at the relations which constantly structure this field into dominant and subordinate formations . . . [to look] at the process by which these relations of dominance and subordination are articulated . . . [to place] at its centre the changing and uneven relations of force which define the field of culture--that is, the question of cultural struggle and its many forms . . . [to make our] main focus of attention . . . the relation between culture and questions of hegemony.

Hall's work increasingly draws attention to the historical fact of "hegemonic politics," and the need to 'cut into' the processes by which a dominant cultural order is consistently preferred, despite its articulation with structures of domination and oppression. For example, he has turned his attention to the 'autonomy' of civil society (in the so-called 'democratic' nations) as a problem; how is it that the very freedom of civil and cultural institutions from direct political intervention results in the rearticulation

of the already dominant structures of meaning and power? How does the appeal to 'professional codes,' in the production of both news and entertainment consistently reinscribe 'hegemonically preferred' meanings? How are people 'subject-ed' to particular definitions and practices of 'freedom'?

For Hall, the appearance of 'hegemony' is tied to the incorporation of the great majority of people into broadly based relations of cultural consumption. Of course, this required both the incorporation of culture into the sphere of market relations and the application of modern industrial techniques to cultural production. This was and remains a limited form of cultural enfranchisement for it left unchallenged the people's "expropriation from the processes of democratization of the means of cultural production." But it also had its real effects upon the social formation and empowered the population. Benjamin had observed that "The adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception." Hall (1975) echoes and elaborates this:

> Once the masses enter directly into the transformation of history, society and culture, it is not possible any longer to construct or appropriate the world as if reality issues in The World from the wholly individual person of the speaking, the uttering subject. . . . We are, as historical subjects and as speakers, 'spoken' by 'the others'. It is the end of a certain kind of Western innocence, as well as the birth-point of a new set of codes.

The appearance of 'the masses' on the historical scene, especially as an agent in the scene of culture, displaces the field of cultural struggle from the expression of class conflict into a larger struggle between the people and the elite or ruling bloc. (This does not deny the continuing relevance of class contradictions but places them in relation to other contradictions: e.g., race, gender, age). As a result of this restructuring of the field of cultural relations, new forms and organizations of cultural politics emerged: Hegemony (the term is Gramsci's, who had argued similarly).

Hegemony is not a universally present struggle; it is a conjunctural politics opened up by the conditions of advanced capitalism, mass communication and culture. Nor is it limited to the ideological struggle of the ruling class bloc to win the consent of the masses to its definitions of reality, although it encompasses the processes by which such a consensus might be achieved. Hegemony need not depend upon consensus nor consent to particular ideological constructions. It is a matter of containment rather than compulsion or even incorporation. Hegemony defines the limits within which we can struggle, the field of 'common sense' or 'popular consciousness.' It is the struggle to articulate the position of 'leadership' within the social formation, the attempt by an alliance of class fractions, which is already establishing a particular economic dominance, to win for itself the position of leadership across the entire terrain of cultural and political life. Hegemony involves the mobilization of popular support, by a particular social bloc, for the broad range of its social projects. In this way, the

people assent to a particular social order, to a particular system of power, to a particular articulation of chains of equivalence by which the interests of the ruling bloc come to define the leading positions of the people. Hall describes hegemony as the struggle between 'popular' and 'populist' articulations, where the latter describes structures which neutralize the opposition between the people and the power bloc. He has used this framework to describe the unique political successes of the 'new right' in Britain. However, it is important that we do not romanticize the 'popular,' nor locate it outside of the struggle for hegemony (1984a):

> Since the inception of commercial capitalism and the drawing of all relations into the net of market transactions, there has been little or no 'pure' culture of the people--no wholly separate folk-realm of the authentic popular, where 'the people' existed in their pure state, outside of the corrupting influences. The people have always had to make something out of the things the system was trying to make of them.

Once again, Hall enjoins us to recognize that 'people make history but in conditions not of their own making.' This is Hall's dialectic, the search for a middle ground which is never merely a 'desired' synthesis or reconciliation of contradictions but the recognition and embodiment of struggle at every level. Returning to the immediate concerns of the present occasion, in conclusion, Hall offers us two invitations. He certainly offers us a new set of theoretical paradigms with which to talk about the meanings and political effects of communicative and cultural practices. Some of us will choose to follow Hall into these paradigmatic and political commitments, others will perhaps attempt to appropriate and rearticulate these paradigms, and still others will refuse the invitation. But Hall offers us as well a model of dialectics in the best sense, a model of our own practice, of our struggle to understand the practices, relations, institutions and texts which populate our communicative environment, and the processes which organize it. It is a model, and an invitation, that I hope none will decline.

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