Video Ergo Sum

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A person born in the year that Constantinople fell to the Turks, if he lived to be fifty, would have seen more books produced in his life-time -- some 8 million -- than had been written in the previous thousand years of Constantinople's existence.[1] This is how Elizabeth Eisenstein dramatizes in quantitative terms the revolution in communication brought about by the printing press; and the print revolution, as she goes on to argue convincingly, worked a radical transformation in Christendom which led, among other things, to the rise of western science, the Protestant Reformation, the voyages of discovery which gave Europe mastery of the globe, the introduction of assembly line production, and the idealization of Italian Renaissance art. In short, a revolution in the technology of communication was responsible for our civilization in matters of science, religion, art and politics.

Some fifty years have now passed since the first public transmission of a commercial television program. And in these fifty years, what an extraordinary advance television has made across the cultural landscape! In the United States no major city is without competing television stations, very few homes are without a television set, many have several, three quarters of them can choose between more than ten channels, almost half are linked by cable. We are now in the same position in relation to this new medium of communication as was our fifty year old person, born in 1453. There has been an advance in the technology of communication, who can doubt it? But can we discern the full consequences of this advance?

It seems to me that television has indeed turned out to be the agent of a radical change in human consciousness, comparable to the revolutions in communication that occurred with the invention of alphabetic writing and print. I use the term human consciousness in the manner defined by Walter Ong as "the individual's own sense of presence in and to himself and in and to the world around him."[2] And I acknowledge that I have been much helped by the work of Ong and others on the dynamics of change in human consciousness brought about by earlier changes in the technology of communication. It is significant that studies in these earlier revolutions in communication history are of recent appearance, prompted in fact by the momentous nature of the television revolution. It's only because of what's happened with television that we've begun to understand the specific cultural and psychological ramifications of oral expression, writing and print.[3]

In the case of television, I shall not spend time discussing the question of evolution versus revolution, interesting though this question is. The influence of photography, film and radio, the tradition of the circus, the vaudeville, the theater, a general surge of technological inventiveness, and many other factors have gone into making television what it is. But what it is, it is *sui generis*.

Much criticism can no doubt be leveled at the commercial nature of American television, at the pressure of advertising which spurs networks to seek the biggest possible audience in order to increase ratings and maximize profits. But it is these commercial incentives that have enabled television to exploit the costly technology that has made it a truly popular mass medium. A fundamental psychological characteristic of television viewers is the desire to watch of their own free choice what everyone else is also watching. It is only through the free market process

that this desire can be met, though the British 1986 report on the financing of the BBC, the Peacock Report, takes a somewhat different line on this subject.[4]Ninety-five percent of Americans, however, choose to watch commercial television[5] and many would argue that television in America is television in its most natural state.[6] I believe myself that the American model is destined to be followed, eventually, everywhere in the world.

Let us then first look at this cultural phenomenon we call television. I come at once to a startling figure: in the western world today (I include Japan) people are spending between a third and a fifth of their waking lives watching television. The statistics, of course, are imprecise and open to debate, but the main point is clear enough. In Japan, in North America, in northern Europe, what is significant about television is not the vast audience for this or that program, impressive though these audience sizes are, especially if it's a Royal Wedding or a World Cup Final. No, what is significant is the total amount of viewing that most people subject themselves to, day in and day out, morning, noon and night, for most of their lives. In the average American home, the television set will be switched on for more than six hours a day; in Japan, for more than eight hours;[7] in Britain, for at least five. In the United States, first graders will spend the equivalent of one entire 24-hour day per week watching television, more time than they spend in the classroom. For most people in the United States, viewing television has become the third most common activity after sleep and work.[8]

This quantitative appraisal of the television revolution must be set alongside the facts about illiteracy, though these facts, too, are hotly debated -- namely, that something in excess of sixty million Americans are wholly or functionally illiterate.[9] That is to say, something like forty percent of the voting population of the United States is unable to participate in any form of communication that depends on literary convention. And then there is aliteracy -- the capacity to read but disinclination to do so, estimated by the outgoing Librarian of Congress to be about 44% of the adult population.[10]

Many of us are shocked by these figures. But they are overwhelming in their reality. Because of them and what they imply, there is, in my view, little point in discussing external controls. The world wants television, and the world is going to get it. Our culture is changed, changed utterly.

For television is much more than an optional activity; rather, it has become a necessary component of all of life's activities, public and private, and its influence is evident in a thousand different ways. Instead of suicide notes we have public figures blowing their heads off in front of the cameras, and instead of a letter to the newspaper we have a man barging into the television studio with a handgun demanding that his statement be delivered live over the air. Television has invaded territory far from the living room, witness its increasing use in courtrooms, or as evidence of authentic personality, as in the Bernard Goetz trial. We now hear of videotapes for use on VHS machines which enable pet lovers to keep an electronic dog or cat at home without the bother of having to feed, walk or clean up after it. Likewise an electronic wood fire with no wood to stack and no ash to dispose of. I heard recently that the latest thing in zoos is to install television cameras in the wild and invite visitors to observe the animals on television screens in rooms in a central building. And having children see themselves on television at birthday parties is a more effective trick than producing a live magician; visiting by means of a videotape is a more effective boost to the morale of hospital patients than coming to the bedside in person.

Then there are the portable video cameras making their appearance in increasing numbers at tourist sites. Last year, while visiting the Tetons, my wife and I found ourselves standing next

to a man who had a video camera on his shoulder and was conducting a strange monologue, as if he were addressing a hidden audience -- which, of course, he was doing. He was recording his impression in sound and vision for what he imagined a television experience should be for an audience hidden in the future. To update Susan Sontag's famous observation, it was a sobering reminder of how reality today is experienced in terms of video images.[11]

Can there, indeed, be any serious doubt that television has worked a revolution in cultural habits as profound as the revolution worked by print in the second half of the fifteenth century? Whether illiteracy increases or remains normative for large numbers of viewers may not be relevant, for television has radically altered the habits of mind even of the reading public. Furthermore, the sheer volume of video material being produced by the VHS market itself poses a commercial threat to consumer spending on traditional reading matter, and more than one-half of the television population are already owners of home VHS sets. Those of us who still believe in the desirability of literacy will be bewildered, to say the least, by this new culture. I have had students who describe people who don't own a television set as deviants, fit for the madhouse; and of course it's true that if you genuinely don't view on a regular basis, you are a cultural oddity, not properly in tune with the times. You are deprived, or backward, in a new kind of way, as were illiterates in print culture. In fact, you are a new type of underclass, a lettered one, "an endangered species" in Kozol's term.[12]

Television, on the other hand, has at least given Americans their own national language, something the United States lost at the Revolution in the sense of a mother tongue containing the cultural and historical associations that define national consciousness. By providing a sense of common identity to the diverse groups that make up this pluralistic society, television has replaced the need for such a mother tongue. The consequences of this shift in the role of language in a television age must be profound for all mother tongues, none more so than English. The Peacock Report on the BBC used an apt phrase to describe this attribute of television, perhaps not giving it the weight that I am doing, and somewhat smugly, I think, claiming it exclusively for the BBC. The report quotes a study that states: "that British broadcasting in its existing public service mode should and did assert and reflect Britain as a community, society, and culture and that it was the principal forum by which the nation as a whole was able to talk to itself."[13]

The principal forum by which the nation as a whole is able to talk to itself -- does not this sum up the mirror-like nature of television's effect on human consciousness? That most Americans want to view what everyone else is viewing confirms their sense of belonging. When, after the Challenger disaster, Mr. Reagan spoke of the nation keeping a vigil by their television sets, he was testifying more truly than perhaps he realized to the new order of consciousness possessed by Late Twentieth Century North American Persons. To view is to be. Selfhood is realized in the knowledge that we are all watching the same image at the same time.

From this shared reality, mediated by television, the myths of a new age are born, nursery and household tales brought up to date. One such myth is the apotheosis of President Kennedy following his assassination in November 1963, which happened to be the first time that television dominated media coverage of such an event. Here is no less a figure than Theodore White, himself a master of literary exposition, testifying to television's role in creating this myth. White was in Washington at the time, a guest in Averell Harriman's house. He writes:

I would slip out of the house to pick for fragments of the story, and then dart back in to sit and watch on television to find out what was really happening... Sitting with friends in Harriman's parlor and watching the tube was to be in touch with reality, to be part of the

national grief. But to slip out, to do one's reportorial duty, to ask questions that must be asked, was a chore, for television tugged one back, irresistibly, to emotional participation.[14]

There are still benighted folk, some of them, I regret to say, colleagues, who say that television is nothing more than a delivery system for modes of address belonging to the old culture. This ostrich-like attitude ignores Marshall McLuhan's central insight into the communication process, that a medium's particular technology is all the time transmitting a psychological message to us, and it is this psychological message that alters our perception of reality. I must confess that much criticism of the present state of our culture strikes me as unreal (one might even say, "academic") since it is framed in terms that belong to a culture that is already passing away. Nothing is easier, as I am the first to admit, than to accuse television of being no more than "mindless entertainment", a favorite term of abuse among the intelligentsia. Even if every television program were to satisfy the tastes of an educated minority (a ghastly thought), the forms the medium employs to broadcast such programs would be the same and the psychological effect of these forms on viewers would be no less potent in transforming consciousness. To preserve the old cultural terms of reference means abandoning television altogether, a most desirable operation, according to my dear friend Malcolm Muggeridge, which he terms "having one's aerials removed" (in the age of cable, one might substitute "one's umbilical cord"). Jerry Mander's book takes a similar view, as its title makes clear: *Four Arguments For The Elimination of Television*.[15]

More to the point, I believe, are those who accept that television is here to stay and will remain the primary educational force in society, and who therefore call for restraint and greater social responsibility from media practitioners, an argument strongly made by John Silber, the President of Boston University, in his book, *Straight Shooting*. And of course it is the viewing public also that has to exercise restraint and self-discipline. Let us, however, remember that the affective quality of television lies in its technology. Its forms are educating as much as its content. It is the act of viewing that attracts viewers rather than specific programs.[16] Take *Sesame Street*. In my opinion it is wishful thinking to suppose that *Sesame Street* is transmitting a message about reading books, or reading at all for that matter. But how powerful a tool *Sesame Street* is in teaching children to view television regularly, with great expectations, and to accept the authority of television over every other experience and authority in life, including the authority of parents and teachers!

Acknowledging, then, that television has swept over western culture with astonishing speed and radical impact to become the medium of all media, what can we say of its technological message, the message that is specific to the medium? Television is a medium whose very nature repudiates the path of intellectual knowledge. In the presentation of information, factual or fictional, its essential form is drama -- dramatic music, dramatic graphics, dramatic titles, dramatic delivery by announcers, dramatic cutting from one scene to another, one shot to another, and -- not least, certainly -- dramatic advertising pitches. Given the choice between two visual images, we will always take the stronger, the more dramatic one. What is being transmitted through this form, therefore, is predominantly emotional information. Eliminate these dramatic devices and you have no program. In fact, you don't have what we mean by "television". Nothing is more boring than a camera that never changes its angle or shot, nothing less likely to attract an audience, and so less capable of sending messages. Do you ever see a crowd around the monitors of security cameras? Without dramatic changes, we have entropy. If knowledge is measured by facts, names, dates, grasp of geography, of logical argument and the rational assessment of issues, then exposure to network news on television has no bearing on the acquisition of this kind of knowledge.[17]

If the information that television transmits is predominantly emotional, the mechanism by which this information is transferred lies in a complex system of audio-visual codes. Of all the technical forms of television, the cut, I believe, is the most fundamental, the one that most determines the hidden message of the medium, as type does with print, and rhyme and meter do in poetry. Unlike the editing of feature films, where the cut follows the demands of linear story telling (I'm speaking of film in its popular narrative form), cutting from one television image to the next grew from the necessity in the early days of television to provide more than one picture of what was going on in the studio, be it a play, a panel discussion, an informational presentation, or a children's game. Originally these studio productions were live, which gave television its special drawing power, despite poor quality pictures. The illusion of being present at a live happening is what I think still makes television appealing to large masses of people for large amounts of time and accounts for the high sales value of its supposed "reality". Viewers are able to share in the studio event in real time but in a manner unlike real life. The different viewpoints provided by cutting from one camera to the next, from one angle to another, are not freely chosen by viewers, as we might allow our eyes to stray across a hall or church gathering or theater stage in an experience directly affected by other members of the audience or congregation, as well as by the total scene in front of us. In viewing a television program, the changing viewpoints are determined for us by the studio director according to a logic -- a language, if you will -- which is peculiar to television itself.

Each time a cut is made a message is sent to the viewer saying, "look for meaning in this cut." On television, the cut is more potent in its ability to attract attention than the action taking place between cuts. It is what sets television apart from film, although many of the conventions of film are still apparent in television. Try turning the sound down and note what catches your eye; it is the cut linking image to image rather than action within each image. Yet it is the sound as often as not that provides the excuse for the cut, a complex relationship between the two senses like the intertwining of the DNA helix. For this relationship will often supply the organizational force holding together a composite image made up of different shots, as in a news story. When the eye and the ear are competing against each other, usually the eye will win. But we need the ear to help us interpret the image, even if this is only music, which always sends a strong emotional signal. Television, indeed, is heavily dependent on its verbal elements, the talking head being its commonest form, whether in factual or fictional shows or, at its most debased, in the sound bite of news. For we should note that in his hidden language, what must be avoided at all costs is visual boredom. The intellectual content of words spoken is on no importance, all that matters is the sound made by the words. Unlike human speech in print culture, where words are carriers of thought and the expression in sound of human reason, in television culture speech plays the same role as a piano accompaniment in the days of silent movies. It's a redundant tool to inform us of mood and to assist us in reading the pictures, often aided, of course, by other sound effects, such as laughter and applause. It's enough for us to understand the fury in the words without our seeking, like Desdemona, to understand the words themselves.

With cutting from image to image providing one form of conditioning agent in the language of television, another comes from our habituation to the small size, rectangular shape, and poor quality of the visual frame itself. Tidily enclosed by the box of the television receiver, the television frame is a frame within a frame. It presents us with a world under our control, a world domesticated by our actual homey surroundings. In these surroundings we are not called on to suspend disbelief since we don't disbelieve our own home, our furnishings and family snapshots. On the contrary, we willingly commit ourselves to a belief in the reality of the images. And the more the images can be made to appear as real reality, the more we believe them, especially when it comes to "harm-inflicting actions."[18]

In itself, a television image is dull. It is so lacking in arousal that we need exaggerated sound and devices like the cut to maintain interest. Where the film frame utilizes every part of the screen for movement and effect, and with great beauty of color and composition, the small size and poor quality of the television frame -- at least until recently -- force us to present our representation of reality center screen. All that happens must happen before our eyes, and the images must hold "instant meaning" for most if not all of the viewing audience, so we rely on symbols and stereotypes to provide this instant meaning, like the codewords of speech. There is neither time nor readiness to explain what is unusual or difficult.[19] It follows, I think, that for most of the population what cannot be shown on television by a comparatively small repertoire of symbolic images does not exist. Reality is picture: without pictures, no reality. The result is a television world of grotesque disproportion, which presents, for instance, a major political problem when it comes to dealing with the images -- or, more to the point, the lack of them -- coming from closed societies like the Soviet Union, as we saw with the series of eight videotapes on Andrei Sakharov and his wife, Elena Bonner, produced by the KGB with hidden cameras from August 1984 to June 1986 and widely disseminated in the West.[20]

A further aspect of the television frame needs mentioning. The present ratio of the frame -- four parts horizontal to three parts vertical -- cruelly restricts what we can show of the outside world. The big landscape, the tall building, the vast expanses of ocean, sky or space -- none of this can be adequately represented on television. The ratio of the frame makes it impossible even to present a person standing upright with full effect. Too much unnecessary visual information is coming at us from the space on either side of that person -- visual noise. It is the same with trees and the steeples of churches. The television frame forces us to look at the world as flat, horizontal, with no horizons. It does not invite us to raise our eyes to the heavens. Do these mechanical factors leave a psychological imprint?

To compensate for the limitations of the television frame, we must concentrate on detail, on close-ups, on a mosaic-like montage of images, and a dazzling array of visual tricks. But in thus reducing the cosmos to the dimensions of a television screen, we introduce a new visual scale where small objects become unusually large and large objects small. Surely over time and with heavy viewing our visual perception of the natural world must change, and is it not the case that the world of ideas already suffers from a similar distortion?

Emotional arousal is what visual images are best at achieving. They are much better suited to this function than to making rational statements or even, according to Gombrich, to the expression of feelings.[21] If drama is the essence of each image and sound effect which make up a visual message, each television program is structured on the fundamental dramatic principle of conflict, complication, resolution, or as I like to simplify it, the problem-solution formula. In fictional programs -- serial dramas, *Masterpiece Theater*, sitcoms and soaps -- the employment of this dramatic principle is logical. Such is the weight of these programs in the daily schedule, however, that the formula has come to dominate all other programs, including those which are supposedly non-fictional. Here is a senior news executive instructing his staff: "Every news story should, without any sacrifice of probity or responsibility, display the attributes of fiction, of drama. It should have structure and conflict, problem and denouement, rising action and falling action, a beginning, a middle and an end. There are not only the essentials of drama; they are the essentials of narrative."[22]

So how does it work? A typical news story would run like this: There's trouble again in the Middle East (conflict); the Arabs say one thing, the Israelis another, and the Soviets are trying to make things worse (complication); the President of the United States sends a special envoy

to sort it out (resolution). The principle works just as effectively in television advertising. You're going out on a date, but (problem) you have BO! Solution - our soap!

In one form or another, the problem-solution formula underlies virtually every television message, and this fact, to my way of thinking, must build up in audiences a deep-seated expectation that all problems have solutions. Is not this expectation, so characteristic of the American psyche, present in the way we deal with religious as well as political affairs, moral and intellectual issues? If there are problems that have plagued mankind since the Garden of Eden, the solution is to change the ground rules.

I'd like to illustrate the necessity of studying the technical forms of television by describing a small visual event which I happened to catch as it was being transmitted live in the summer of 1985. I say small, but as a leaf thrown on the surface of a river will show the direction of the current, so these small television events tell us of the strength of the hidden force beneath.

The event took place in a courtroom in Rhode Island as the second trial of Claus von Bulow reached its climax. Had von Bulow attempted to murder his wife by injecting her with insulin? The jury sent word that they were agreed on their verdict, and a delay of fifteen minutes ensued so that the media could be ready, along with other participants such as von Bulow's current mistress, who until now had hidden herself in the control van of Cable News Network.[23] There was one camera in court, supplied by a Providence station and providing continuous coverage on a pool basis for the networks.

Here was live television with a scene of dramatic actuality ideally suited to the medium. Now I must interject a personal comment. When I joined the television service of the BBC, straight from university at a time when television was virtually unknown at home and at school, I joined a group of men and women whose education, like mine, had been in the classical tradition of the Western Enlightenment. Products of a literate culture, we thought in terms of a literate audience. We were taught, and we believed it, that you showed the audience the source of the information you were transmitting. If you were quoting from a document you showed the document, if there was a speech you recorded the speech, or the portion of it you wanted. Afterwards, perhaps, or on the side, you might take shots of the audience or other relevant material. That's how literate people, print people, people of the enlightenment, think.

To return to the courtroom in Rhode Island. You are in control of the one camera in court. As the foreman of the jury stands up to announce the verdict in this highly publicized trial, a verdict eagerly awaited and much speculated upon, where do you point your camera?

I put this question regularly to my students, all typical Late Twentieth Century North American Persons, children of the television revolution. With rarely an exception, the class says: you point your camera at von Bulow. Why? Because we want to see his reaction as the verdict is given.

In terms of their own transformed consciousness, the students are undoubtedly correct. Today's television audience does not want to see the source of factual information, because the medium is not transmitting this kind of information at all. It is transmitting emotional information. News is theater, a spectator sport, and what we want is drama. Here's NBC's Reuven Frank again: "The highest power of television journalism is not in the transmission of information but in the transmission of experience...joy, sorrow, shock, fear, these are the stuff of news."[24]

The three main networks all carried the von Bulow story, ABC and CBS making it their lead item. Their three audio-visual packages were virtually identical, for ABC and CBS, an average of five seconds per shot, for NBC, four seconds.

Analyzing the stories shot by shot, with their sound elements, we can see that what we have in each case is a composite image which says in sum "a trial", "a verdict". These are no more the direct reporting of a live event than Seurat's paintings are direct accounts of life on the banks of the Seine. Instead we have a tableau as in Madame Tussaud's waxworks museum, or better, a television equivalent of a musical -- "Monday in the Court with Claus". What television news gives us is a representation by means of types. The shots are chosen for their symbolic value, a value which derives more from fictional portrayals in the real soap operas and drama series to be seen every day and every night on network television than from the few cases of actuality like von Bulow's which merit the attention of network news. Not for nothing did the news media call the von Bulow trial a soap opera. They would not have reported it had it been anything else.

Jurists I have spoken to express concern that by allowing television into the courtrooms, the real life actors in these real dramas are turning out performances to match those of their fictional counterparts. A recent report on New York City's police pointed to the same concern. According to this report, the public's perception of police behavior was based on its fictional representation in television serial dramas, behavior the real-life police found unreal and unprofessional. Nevertheless, some real-life police begin to ask themselves if they ought not to adapt their behavior to that of their fictional counterparts in order to retain the good will of the public.[25]Study after study, like those conducted by the Media Institute in Washington DC, reveals a contrast between reality as portrayed on television and reality as described by statistics and sociology.[26] But which reality is psychologically convincing?

Theodore White wrote of emotional participation. I have suggested that it is in television's forms that we should look for the medium's affective power, notably in the power of visual images mediated by editing techniques in which music and sound play important parts. I do not say that the manifest program content is of no importance, but its interest lies mainly in showing us how age-old themes are being adapted to the new medium's technology.

But if television is creating its own symbolic world, what has happened to the symbols and rituals of the pre-television age, particularly those used in religious ceremonies? The question, of course, is central to our discussion of today's values and icons. Can the traditional Christian liturgies, for example, be transferred successfully to the television screen? How is the word to be expressed in a television age?

Many of us have been troubled by these questions for a long time. We find it hard to reconcile ourselves to the reality of television and are tempted to take a negative position. Muggeridge likens television to a twentieth century golden calf.[27] But we can't, of course, tell how things will work out in a hundred years from now, and we must remember that each new mode of communication contains its predecessors within it. I can imagine scribes meeting with mulled wine in their refectories in the early sixteenth century and complaining that style was being destroyed by this new uniform type, and the authority of the church was being undermined in matters of education and morals by these upstart, self-promoting printers, and all for commercial gain. Are there not various churches today, not ecclesiastical ones, who take the same line?

To return to the thesis advanced by Walter Ong, that a radical change in the technology of communication leads to a radical change in human consciousness, I venture to suggest that,

paradoxical as it may seem, one consequence of prolonged exposure to the technology of television is to increase the tension between what we see and what we believe. Is what we see orderly or anarchic? There are those who argue that regular viewers of television are left with a greatly strengthened sense of chaos since the general impression given by such prolonged viewing is of an unstable world where disasters, natural and man-made, are the norm, where verbal and physical strife is seen to be uppermost in all public and private conduct, and where moral confusion reigns in the affairs of government, corporations, and private life. Television, on this view, is a blend of nihilism and hedonism. The people sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play. This television world is a world "without much coherence or sense" in Neil Postman's eyes, the eyes of one devoted to literacy and rationalism.[28]

Against this pessimistic diagnosis we must weigh the force of the medium's own codes and conventions and remind ourselves of what Gombrich calls "the beholder's share," namely what viewers bring to their viewing. With the mass audience, which is most of the population, including the educated elite, certain expectations are so inculcated in us that we take them for granted as belonging to the givens in life. One of these expectations is the program schedule itself, which exercises an iron discipline over the networks because of the demands of affiliates and advertisers and competitive planning. However much some viewers say they object to commercial breaks, we know that they will come at points of rising tension, that each commercial will run for a set term, now usually thirty seconds, and that programs will change on the hour or the half hour. Such scheduling procedures are part of the rhythm of television life. To break them, as when we go live for an unrehearsed event, is a deeply unsettling experience.

Also belonging to the regular beat of television life is the dramatic structure I've mentioned, the problem-solving formula, as well as the standardization of production techniques linking visual image, musical feeling and verbal comment. Though television has had a radical impact on culture, it has, I think, proved to be a conservative force in holding society together, at least in democracies. In other parts of the world, as a symbol of modernity, television may perhaps encourage change and the displacement of sacred cows. Is it too much to suggest that the message of the cut in television, a cut which joins as well as severs, signaling a beginning as well as an end, is to accustom us to change within order? And though the information being transmitted with each message is emotional, are we not convinced that beneath the sending of each message there is a rational force at work? Furthermore, does not television's technology make it possible to look forward to a new kind of language, one that transcends mother tongues and national barriers, one that may persuade the human race that it has a common destiny?

These considerations lead me to think that the television revolution may, after all, amount to a massive reinforcement of mankind's intuitive sense that there is order and meaning in the universe, a reinforcement, therefore, of the religious instinct. And by the same token, this sense must also lead to a massive rejection of atheistic materialism and philosophies based on chance.

Where, then, does the word migrate to in the world of television? God, of course, alone knows for sure. The word on television is not an event in time nor an object in space, for television has abolished time and space, nor is the word on television solely an image, though it may be revealed in images. The word on television is perhaps more like a happening, an experience of the heart. For myself, though mystified, I do not believe this excludes the possibility, any more than earlier media revolutions did, of individuals coming to know the word made flesh.

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