



The Medium is the Message From Marshall McLuhan

New York — "I am having to exaggerate and simplify many of these points in order to establish beachheads of some sort, but it seems to me that, whereas in the age of print our educational efforts are quite properly directed to the message and to the criticizing of the spelled-out lineal sequence of words, under electronic conditions we have to transfer our critical attention and powers of perception and judgment to the medium itself, and to become intensely aware of what its properties are and what its powers over our psyches are.

This is Marshall McLuhan, perhaps the world's most celebrated theorist on mass communications, and this is his most famous dictum, otherwise known as "the medium is the message."

McLuhan, a 53-year-old Canadian who is a convert to Catholicism, has just been awarded the \$100,000 a year Alben Schweitzer Chair in the Humanities at Jesuit-operated Fordham University where, beginning in September, he will continue what he calls his "probes" into the mass media.

His work has not only attracted other communications scholars—Fordham's Rev. John C. Kirkin, S.J. was among his early promoters and will be one of McLuhan's aides—but his attentive audiences have included broadcasting executives, advertising officials and heads of industry.

McLuhan's basic premise is that the impact on society by any medium—whether it be print, radio, television, movies or whatever—is as great, if not greater, than the message or content of those media. He suggests that modern man begin to pay more attention to the properties and characteristics of each of these media—especially TV—as the only way to fully understand their impacts on society. His theories also offer suggestions on the most effective ways to make use of modern mass media and, more importantly, point out changes in man that different media bring about by the very nature of the media themselves.

For instance: print. The arrival of print—and before that, the written word—had another effect besides the obvious one of making man more knowledgeable. It moved him from an ear-oriented society to an eye-oriented society and the differences between the two are deep. People who get their information mainly by hearing it act very much as people did in

He cites the Kennedy funeral as a chief example of "the power of TV to invest an occasion with the character of corporate participation. It revealed the unrivaled power of TV to achieve the involvement of the audience in a complex process." The funeral also provided an opportunity for nothing, he says, "a paradoxical feature of the 'cool' TV medium. It involves us in moving depth, but it does not excite, agitate or arouse." He maintains that had there been only newspaper and radio coverage of the assassination and funeral, the national "lid" would have "blown off."

When the school fails to make sense of their environment, they drop out, either physically or psychologically." (Catholic Press Features)

Another way of explaining the acceptable, as opposed to unacceptable, TV personality, McLuhan explains, "is to say that anybody whose appearance strongly declares his role and status in life is wrong for TV. Anybody who looks as if he might be a teacher, a doctor, a businessman, or any of a dozen other things—all at the same time—is right for TV."

When the person looks classifiable, as Nixon did, the TV viewer has nothing to fill in. He feels uncomfortable with the TV image. He says uneasily, "There's something about the guy that isn't right."

A prime example of the "much-needed harshness of texture and general sculptural quality demanded for serious regard on TV," says McLuhan, is Ed Sullivan, whose frequent description as "the great stone face" is precisely the key to his staying power on television.

The youngsters coming out of a highly integral electronic environment, McLuhan notes, go to school and are confronted by a fragmented specialist environment of subjects and hours and instructions which baffle them. They know that this fragmentation does not

New York — (RNS) — Dr. Marshall McLuhan, director of the University of Toronto's Center for Culture and Technology (right), has been named to the Albert Schweitzer Chair in Humanities at Fordham University. He is shown with Father John M. Calkin, S.J., director of Fordham's Communications Center, at a recent film conference at the Jesuit university.



Theater News I Do! I Do!

by EUPHEMIA WYATT

I DO! I DO! — Yes, indeed do offer congratulations to Mary Martin and Robert Preston who are the soloists, chorus and dancers for the musical based on "The Four Poster" by Jan de Hartog which was a triumph for Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy in the '40's. Like the Cronyns, Miss Martin and Mr. Preston comprise the entire cast. The story opens with their coming straight from their wedding to their new room in their new house and closes fifty years later.

Two children are born, grow up and marry and that is about all that happens. Mr. Hartog understands that most happy marriages have the same pattern and that is the secret of the success of his play.

What surprised me, and I am sure it shouldn't, was Miss Martin's ability as an actress. We all know her sunny aura and Mr. Preston's worth as a comedian. He is also prudent about the amount of sugar in his emotions. High comedy graces their quarrels. As a matter of fact one never really misses the unseen children. It's a warm spirited evening with an audience in close rapport.

Credit for this must include Gower Champion, director, Oliver Smith and Freddy Wittopp for decor and costumes. The score and lyrics were composed by Harvey Schmidt and Tom Jones of "The Fantasticks" which remains superior in wit and melody but they provide good background music for the cast whose professional skill never permits the action to lag.

THE STAR SPANGLED GIRL — There was once a young man named Andy who thought he could best serve his country by sound criticism of its weakness and to do this he undertook to publish a paper with no attachable strings. Andy's financing was both ingenious and ingenious.

His own studio apartment in San Francisco housed the editorial staff with the rent donated by the landlord, a Mrs. McIlhenny with a dangerous predilection for difficult sports such as surfboarding, skiing by land or water, mountain climbing etc. for which Andy was her indentured companion. The writers are one young man with an encyclopaedic memory, volubility and a score of pseudonyms.

Everything is working on schedule with the deadline twenty-four hours away when Norman, a shy and hesitant bachelor opens the door this morning in answer to a knock and there stands a small but "star-spangled" blonde who offers him a cake and announces that she has moved in next door.

Like a pin-pricked balloon, Norman collapses at the small feet of romance. His mind is numb and he can only spell out her name, Sophie Rauschmeyer, on his typewriter. When Andy returns, frustration reduces him to frenzy, a triple frenzy that must be sustained for two more acts. This frenetic feat they actually accomplish under George Axelrod's directorial goad.

Sophie Rauschmeyer, who is Connie Stevens, becomes breathless with her complaints about Norman, who is Richard Benjamin, who stacks all the exotic items of a delicatessen outside her door; steals in to wash her

Dial Phones First in Italy?

Vatican City — (NC) — Two Vatican publications have claimed that the first automatic telephone was actually invented by an Italian and installed in the Vatican five years before the U.S. inventor Almon B. Strowger produced his own, generally reputed to be the world's first.

The press bulletin, of L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican City daily and the Vatican City weekly picture magazine, L'Osservatore della Domenica, said that Giovanni Battista Marzi, who was born in Rome in 1860 and died in 1927, built and installed the world's first automatic telephone system in the Vatican Library in 1886.

Marzi's system had 10 outlets in the offices of the Vatican Library.

According to statistics published by the Holy See, there are 4,000 telephones in Vatican City, two for everyone living or working there. In 1965, 5 million telephone conversations were carried out in Vatican City. The press bulletin said that Vatican City "perhaps" leads the world in the number of telephones per person and in the number of telephone calls per person.

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New Number for Pope. Dial Vatican 3101

Vatican City — (RNS) — New telephone numbers were assigned throughout Vatican City during the closing days of 1966.

The changes came with completion of an expanded central telephone switchboard which will have a special telephone information service capable of giving hour-by-hour details of all Holy See news developments.

Another new number will connect callers with an office providing stamp collectors details of the newest Vatican Post Office issues.

One number, handled by a special switchboard and carefully shielded against possible incoming calls from cranks or the merely curious, will be 3101—the Pope's own number.

One innovation is a "red line" that links a phone on the desk of the Vatican Secretary of State (Arlindo Giovanni Cardinal Cicognani) with the desk of Pope Paul in the Vatican Palace.

The Vatican telephone system — regarded as the first established anywhere — is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year.

The anniversary of the system was marked by an issue of Vatican stamps recalling the installation of ten automatic lines in 1886 by Giovanni Battista Marzi.



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