

4. Programming: distribution and flow

We have looked at some uses of received cultural forms in the new technology of television, and we have looked also at some of the new and mixed forms which have been created within the technology. We ought now to look at the selection and association of these different forms in different kinds of programming. The concept of 'programme' needs, as we shall see, analysis. But it is useful, as a first step, to look in some detail at the distribution of varying forms of television within different kinds of service. We cannot properly speak of the uses of television until we have made these internal comparisons and contrasts. But it will then be all the more necessary to go beyond the static concept of 'distribution' to the mobile concept of 'flow'.

A. COMPARATIVE DISTRIBUTION IN FIVE TELEVISION CHANNELS

The distribution of types of television programme, in five channels - three in Britain, two in the United States - was analysed for a week in March 1973.

The channels are:

BBC 1, London.
BBC 2, London.
IBA, Anglia, Norwich.
KQED (Public Television), San Francisco.
Channel 7, (ABC), San Francisco.

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The categories used are conventional, as follows:

(a) *News and Public Affairs*: This category can be subdivided into news bulletins, general news magazines, news magazines for particular ethnic groups, and public affairs discussions. There is some overlap between these, at certain points, in that there are often magazine items within news bulletins, news announcements within magazines, discussion within bulletins and magazines, and so on. The significance of the figures, while occasionally interesting for the minor categories, is mainly in relation to the category as a whole.

(b) *Features and Documentaries*: These are as defined in 3, B, (iv) (page 75 above). It is a category not always easy to separate from, for example, news magazines and public affairs discussions. The normal criterion used is that an item is classified as 'feature' or 'documentary' when a substantial part of it is offered as direct presentation of the substance of a problem or an experience or a situation, by contrast with the 'discussion' in which a situation or problem may be illustrated, usually relatively briefly, but in which the main emphasis falls on relatively formal argument about it.

(c) *Education*: This is defined as items of formal educational intention, as distinct from 'educational' elements in other kinds of programme. It is subdivided into course-programmes for schools, colleges and universities; instructional programmes, not normally related to external courses, mainly on crafts, hobbies, etc.; and adult education of a more general kind - specific teaching of general skills, which is however not related to formal courses and qualifications. There is again some overlap between these categories, and the course programmes, for example, are available to and often watched by the general public. The total figure for education is thus more significant than the subsidiary figures.

(d) *Arts and Music*: This is a difficult category to separate, since it depends on received definitions of 'the arts' - painting, sculpture, architecture, literature - and 'music' in the sense of the established classical concert repertory and opera. It is given

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as a separate category because it is usually planned in these terms and is then significant as a received interpretation and as a proportion.

(c) *Children's Programmes*: This is defined as programmes specifically made for and offered to children, at certain special times. Children of course watch many other kinds of programme, but this separable category is significant. It is subdivided into programmes composed mainly of cartoons and puppet-shows; other kinds of entertainment programme, usually 'live' stories and plays; and educational programmes. This last subdivision needs explanation. Such programmes – *Sesame Street*, *The Electric Company*, *Playschool* – often use cartoons or puppets, and are often entertaining. But they are separately listed because their formal intention is to help with learning, and much specific teaching of skills is included in them, though often in informal ways.

(f) *Drama*: This includes all kinds of dramatic work (other than the special categories found in education, children's programmes and commercials). It is subdivided into 'plays' offered singly, even if under some general title such as *Play for Today* or *Armchair Theatre*; 'series', in which each play is normally self-contained but in which certain regular characters recur – principal characterisation, for example, thus building up through several items; and 'serials', in which a connected dramatic presentation is offered in several linked episodes.

(g) *Movies*: This is defined as films originally made for distribution in cinemas and movie theatres. Plays, series or serials which may in whole or in part have been filmed have been included under Drama.

(h) *General Entertainment*: This is a miscellaneous category, but as such significant; in Britain it is often grouped under a Light Entertainment Department. It is subdivided into 'musical shows' – where singers or groups are principally presented, at times with rather different supporting items; 'variety shows' – where the main emphasis is on comedy, in a number of cases with supporting musical items; 'games and quiz-shows' – where in many different forms there is some kind of overt game-

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playing or competition (often of the 'parlour-game' kind, in its many modern variants, often with members of the public participating) and question-and-answer shows of the same competitive kind; 'talk-shows' – a category not always easy to separate from 'discussions' and 'magazines' but conventionally defined as a separate form and presented as entertainment, usually late at night: in matter and manner usually strongly linked to 'show-business'.

(i) *Sport*: Televised Sport and sports discussion.

(j) *Religion*: Religious services, discussions and features, presented at specific times.

(k) *Publicity (internal)*: A channel's presentation of its own programmes, by trailers, advance announcements, etc.

(l) *Commercials*: Advertising programmes of all kinds other than internal publicity.

The analysis is presented in table form, in hours and decimal fractions of hours. All timings have been carefully made, but it must be noted that in the absence of any published statistics of detailed programming, and in the absence also of any really adequate facilities for exact timing over several simultaneous channels, the figures are necessarily subject to some marginal errors. This is especially the case in relation to commercials and internal publicity, which break the form of the published schedules. In these cases spot-checks were made and then an average figure applied.

The figures as a whole are significant not so much for exact allocations as for purposes of general discussion and comparison.

Table 1: Programme Distribution by Hours

Sample week 3-9 March 1973	BBC 1	BBC 2	Anglia	KQED	Ch. 7
A. News and Public Affairs					
News	5.7	3.5	5.0	5.2	11.6
News mag. (gen.)	7.1	—	5.1	5.1	5.3
News mag. (ethnic)	3.1	—	—	2.5	0.3
Public affairs dis.	8.3	4.3	3.0	8.5	1.8
	24.2	7.8	13.1	21.3	19.0
B. Features and Documentaries					
Features	5.6	6.2	4.5	4.5	0.6
Documentaries	1.0	5.9	2.0	1.0	—
	6.6	12.1	6.5	5.5	0.6
C. Education					
Schools, colleges, etc.	17.9	16.5	10.7	18.6	—
Instructional	2.9	1.7	2.2	3.5	0.9
Adult education	1.9	—	—	2.5	2.0
	22.7	18.2	12.9	24.6	2.9
D. Arts and Music					
	1.2	1.7	—	4.5	—
E. Children's Programmes					
Cartoons, puppets	4.4	0.1	1.1	—	2.5
Other entertain'mt	1.4	0.7	4.6	—	2.0
Educational	5.7	3.3	2.6	25.0	0.8
	11.5	4.1	8.3	25.0	5.3
F. Drama					
Plays	4.4	3.1	3.5	—	—
Series	6.3	0.9	8.7	1.0	16.3
Serials	0.8	1.5	8.1	3.7	6.1
	11.5	5.5	20.3	4.7	22.4
G. Movies					
	6.7	6.6	12.3	5.2	23.8
H. General Entertainment					
Musical shows	2.7	3.0	2.0	—	1.1
Variety shows	1.2	0.5	3.7	—	0.4
Games, quiz shows	1.5	1.0	3.2	—	15.9
Talk shows	2.0	—	0.9	—	15.0
	7.4	4.5	9.8	—	32.4
I. Sport					
	5.9	1.1	6.7	2.0	6.4

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(Table 1 continued)

	BBC 1	BBC 2	Anglia	KQED	Ch. 7
J. Religion	1.1	—	0.6	—	0.8
K. Publicity (internal)	1.1	0.7	1.7	1.4	1.4
L. Commercials	—	—	10.8	—	18.4
Total Hours	99.9	62.3	103.0	94.2	133.4

Comment on Table 1

Of the five stations listed, three are public-service channels (BBC 1, BBC 2, and KQED), two are commercial channels (Anglia, Channel 7). There are differences to be observed quite generally, between television programming in Britain and the United States, but the most striking fact is a certain similarity of distribution within the public-service channels on the one hand and the commercial channels on the other. Since total hours vary so considerably, it is useful to express the distribution, by categories, as proportions of the total material broadcast. This distribution is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparative Percentages in Programme Category
Distribution
(to nearest half-percentage point)

Sample week 3-9 March 1973	BBC 1	BBC 2	Anglia	KQED	Ch. 7
News and Public Affairs	24.5	12.0	13.0	22.5	14.0
Features and Documentaries	6.5	20.0	6.3	6.0	0.5
Education	23.0	29.5	12.5	26.0	2.0
Arts and Music	1.0	2.5	—	5.0	—
Children's Programmes	11.5	6.5	8.0	27.0	4.0
Drama - plays	4.5	4.5	3.1	—	—
Drama - series and serials	7.0	4.0	16.6	5.0	17.0
Movies	6.5	11.0	12.0	5.5	18.0
General Entertainment	7.5	7.5	9.5	—	24.5
Sport	6.0	1.5	6.2	2.0	4.5
Religion	1.0	—	0.6	—	0.5
Publicity	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.0
Commercials	—	—	10.7	—	14.0

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Comment on Table 2

Certain striking particular variations can be seen from this table - in particular in News and Public Affairs, in Education, in Children's Programmes, in Drama series and serials, and in General Entertainment. Indeed it is possible to distinguish two broad types of programming, which might provisionally be called Public Service (Type A) and Commercial (Type B). A comparative distribution of these types is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Comparative Percentages of Types of Programming*
(to nearest half-percentage point)

Type A: News and Public Affairs, Features and Documentaries, Education, Arts and Music, Children's Programmes, Plays.					
Type B: Drama series and serials, movies, general entertainment.					
Sample week 3-9 March 1973	BBC 1	BBC 2	Anglia	KQED	Ch. 7
Type A	71	75	42.9	86	20.5
Type B	21	22.5	38.1	10.5	59.5

Comment on Table 3

If comparisons are made only between the British channels or between the American channels, the distinction between Public Service Television (Type A) and Commercial Television (Type B) is especially clear. Yet when all five channels are compared, it is clear that the situation in American television is more sharply polarised. The American commercial channel (Channel 7) is a more complete representation of the predominantly commercial distribution than its British counterpart (Anglia) which shows some of the same tendencies but is midway between the British public-service type (BBC 1 and 2) and the American commercial type. Correspondingly, the American public-service channel (KQED) is more markedly of a public-service type, and

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in that sense less of a general broadcasting service, than its British public-service counterparts.

General Comment on Tables 1, 2 and 3

Tables of distribution by categories can show us some significant features of the uses of television in different kinds of broadcasting institutions. Moreover, some of these features are significant indicators of quality. But some are not, and we must try to make this clear, as a way of seeing beyond simple equations of quality and type.

Thus a category such as drama serials can vary from 'classic serials' and 'masterpiece theatre' to what is still, in very much the original terms, 'soap opera'. Movies, obviously, can vary enormously, from routine productions to significant works in the film repertory. It is true to say that distribution, in these respects, often follows the general tendency of the programming, but in the case of movies, especially, this is by no means universally so. A film on KQED is likely to be of the 'repertory' type, and serials on KQED and BBC 2 of the 'classic' type, while serials on Anglia and Channel 7 are quite often 'soap-opera'. But there is no such distinction between the selection of movies on, for example, BBC 1 and Anglia and Channel 7. The same general point holds for games and quizzes. In general those on BBC 1 and BBC 2 offer themselves as of a 'cultural' type, while those on Channel 7 are wholly commercial in conception and presentation and those on Anglia vary between the two kinds. There is some real variation of quality here: *University Challenge* and *Top of the Form* are in real respects different from *The Golden Shot* and *Double Your Money*. But the difference does not necessarily hold for games like *Call my Bluff*, where the surface material - the meanings of rare words - is 'cultural' but the essential presentation is a matter of straight show-business.

What can be discerned, indeed, is not only a general distinction between 'cultural' and 'commercial' programmes - of the kind roughly indicated by Type A and Type B programming - but also an equally significant cultural 'set' in each type of

programming. Thus Type A is based not only on assumptions about education and the learning process – though these are evident – but also on characteristic definitions of public and general interest which often, on analysis, show themselves as essentially abstract and at times merely passive. In Type B there are evident assumptions of entertainment and distraction, but these involve definitions of interest which are sometimes more closely centred on individually presented persons and on a kind of participation (these elements are particularly evident in some of the serials and in some of the relationship games). It is then only on the assumption of a particular cultural 'set' – itself related to the character of education and daily life, and containing within it quite evident class characteristics – that one can assume that, for example, a documentary on international aviation is more *serious* than a serial or a game involving the presentation of a relationship between husbands and wives or parents and children. The mode of attention in each case has a specific character, and if the latter is trivialised or vitiated by a manner of presentation, so may the former be abstracted and in its own way trivialised by its more conventionally 'serious' abstract examination. That is why, though the distribution shown and the broad distinction between types are necessary elements of analysis, they are only one kind of analysis of real content, either generally or in terms of the particular television experience. It is then to another mode of analysis that we must now turn.

B. PROGRAMMING AS SEQUENCE OR FLOW

Analysis of a distribution of interest or categories in a broadcasting programme, while in its own terms significant, is necessarily abstract and static. In all developed broadcasting systems the characteristic organisation, and therefore the characteristic experience, is one of sequence or flow. This phenomenon, of planned flow, is then perhaps the defining characteristic of broadcasting, simultaneously as a technology and as a cultural form.

In all communications systems before broadcasting the essen-

tial items were discrete. A book or a pamphlet was taken and read as a specific item. A meeting occurred at a particular date and place. A play was performed in a particular theatre at a set hour. The difference in broadcasting is not only that these events, or events resembling them, are available inside the home, by the operation of a switch. It is that the real programme that is offered is a *sequence* or set of alternative sequences of these and other similar events, which are then available in a single dimension and in a single operation.

Yet we have become so used to this that in a way we do not see it. Most of our habitual vocabulary of response and description has been shaped by the experience of discrete events. We have developed ways of responding to a particular book or a particular play, drawing on our experience of other books and plays. When we go out to a meeting or a concert or a game we take other experience with us and we return to other experience, but the specific event is ordinarily an occasion, setting up its own internal conditions and responses. Our most general modes of comprehension and judgment are then closely linked to these kinds of specific and isolated, temporary, forms of attention.

Some earlier kinds of communication contained, it is true, internal variation and at times miscellaneity. Dramatic performances included musical interludes, or the main play was preceded by a curtain-raiser. In print there are such characteristic forms as the almanac and the chapbook, which include items relating to very different kinds of interest and involving quite different kinds of response. The magazine, invented as a specific form in the early eighteenth century, was designed as a miscellany, mainly for a new and expanding and culturally inexperienced middle-class audience. The modern newspaper, from the eighteenth century but very much more markedly from the nineteenth century, became a miscellany, not only of news items that were often essentially unrelated, but of features, anecdotes, drawings, photographs and advertisements. From the late nineteenth century this came to be reflected in formal layout, culminating in the characteristic jigsaw effect of the modern newspaper page. Meanwhile, sporting events, especially football

matches, as they became increasingly important public occasions, included entertainment such as music or marching in their intervals.

This general trend, towards an increasing variability and miscellaneity of public communications, is evidently part of a whole social experience. It has profound connections with the growth and development of greater physical and social mobility, in conditions both of cultural expansion and of consumer rather than community cultural organisation. Yet until the coming of broadcasting the normal expectation was still of a discrete event or of a succession of discrete events. People took a book or a pamphlet or a newspaper, went out to a play or a concert or a meeting or a match, with a single predominant expectation and attitude. The social relationships set up in these various cultural events were specific and in some degree temporary.

Broadcasting, in its earliest stages, inherited this tradition and worked mainly within it. Broadcasters discovered the kinds of thing they could do or, as some of them would still normally say, transmit. The musical concert could be broadcast or arranged for broadcasting. The public address – the lecture or the sermon, the speech at a meeting – could be broadcast as a talk. The sports match could be described and shown. The play could be performed, in this new theatre of the air. Then as the service extended, these items, still considered as discrete units, were assembled into programmes. The word 'programme' is characteristic, with its traditional bases in theatre and music-hall. With increasing organisation, as the service extended, this 'programme' became a series of timed units. Each unit could be thought of discretely, and the work of programming was a serial assembly of these units. Problems of mix and proportion became predominant in broadcasting policy. Characteristically, as most clearly in the development of British sound broadcasting, there was a steady evolution from a general service, with its internal criteria of mix and proportion and what was called 'balance', to contrasting types of service, alternative programmes. 'Home', 'Light' and 'Third', in British radio, were the eventual names

for what were privately described and indeed generally understood as 'general', 'popular' and 'educated' broadcasting. Problems of mix and proportion, formerly considered within a single service, were then basically transferred to a range of alternative programmes, corresponding to assumed social and educational levels. This tendency was taken further in later forms of reorganisation, as in the present specialised British radio services One to Four. In an American radio programme listing, which is before me as I write, there is a further specialisation: the predominantly musical programmes are briefly characterised, by wavelength, as 'rock', 'country', 'classical', 'nostalgic' and so on.¹ In one sense this can be traced as a development of programming: extensions of the service have brought further degrees of rationalisation and specialisation.

But the development can also be seen, and in my view needs to be seen, in quite other ways. There has been a significant shift from the concept of sequence as *programming* to the concept of sequence as *flow*. Yet this is difficult to see because the older concept of programming – the temporal sequence within which mix and proportion and balance operate – is still active and still to some extent real.

What is it then that has been decisively altered? A broadcasting programme, on sound or television, is still formally a series of timed units. What is published as information about the broadcasting services is still of this kind: we can look up the time of a particular 'show' or 'programme'; we can turn on for that item; we can select and respond to it discretely.

Yet for all the familiarity of this model, the normal experience of broadcasting, when we really consider it, is different. And indeed this is recognised in the ways we speak of 'watching television', 'listening to the radio', picking on the general rather than the specific experience. This has been true of all broadcasting, but some significant internal developments have greatly reinforced it. These developments can be indicated in one simple way. In earlier phases of the broadcasting service, both in sound and television, there were *intervals* between programme units: true intervals, usually marked by some conventional

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sound or picture to show that the general service was still active. There was the sound of bells or the sight of waves breaking, and these marked the intervals between discrete programme units. There is still a residual example of this type in the turning globe which functions as an interval signal in BBC television.

But in most television services, as they are currently operated, the concept of the interval – though still, for certain purposes, retained as a concept – has been fundamentally revalued. This change came about in two ways, which are still unevenly represented in different services. The decisive innovation was in services financed by commercial advertising. The intervals between programme units were obvious places for the advertising to be included. In British commercial television there was a specific and formal undertaking that 'programmes' should not be interrupted by advertising; this could take place only in 'natural breaks': between the movements of a symphony, or between the acts in *Hamlet*, as the Government spokesman said in the House of Lords! In practice, of course, this was never complied with, nor was it ever intended that it should be. A 'natural break' became any moment of convenient insertion. News programmes, plays, even films that had been shown in cinemas as specific whole performances, began to be interrupted for commercials. On American television this development was different; the sponsored programmes incorporated the advertising from the outset, from the initial conception, as part of the whole package. But it is now obvious, in both British and American commercial television, that the notion of 'interruption', while it has still some residual force from an older model, has become inadequate. What is being offered is not, in older terms, a programme of discrete units with particular insertions, but a planned flow, in which the true series is not the published sequence of programme items but this sequence transformed by the inclusion of another kind of sequence, so that these sequences together compose the real flow, the real 'broadcasting'. Increasingly, in both commercial and public-service television, a further sequence was added: trailers of programmes to be shown at some

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later time or on some later day, or more itemised programme news. This was intensified in conditions of competition, when it became important to broadcasting planners to retain viewers – or as they put it, to 'capture' them – for a whole evening's sequence. And with the eventual unification of these two or three sequences, a new kind of communication phenomenon has to be recognised.

Of course many people who watch television still register some of these items as 'interruptions'. I remember first noticing the problem while watching films on British commercial television. For even in an institution as wholeheartedly commercial in production and distribution as the cinema, it had been possible, and indeed remains normal, to watch a film as a whole, in an undisturbed sequence. All films were originally made and distributed in this way, though the inclusion of supporting 'B' films and short features in a package, with appropriate intervals for advertising and for the planned selling of refreshments, began to develop the cinema towards the new kind of planned flow. Watching the same films on commercial television made the new situation quite evident. We are normally given some twenty or twenty-five minutes of the film, to get us interested in it; then four minutes of commercials, then about fifteen more minutes of the film; some commercials again; and so on to steadily decreasing lengths of the film, with commercials between them, or then between the commercials, since by this time it is assumed that we are interested and will watch the film to the end. Yet even this had not prepared me for the characteristic American sequence. One night in Miami, still dazed from a week on an Atlantic liner, I began watching a film and at first had some difficulty in adjusting to a much greater frequency of commercial 'breaks'. Yet this was a minor problem compared to what eventually happened. Two other films, which were due to be shown on the same channel on other nights, began to be inserted as trailers. A crime in San Francisco (the subject of the original film) began to operate in an extraordinary counterpoint not only with the deodorant and cereal commercials but with a romance in Paris and the eruption of a prehistoric monster who

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laid waste New York. Moreover, this was sequence in a new sense. Even in commercial British television there is a visual signal – the residual sign of an interval – before and after the commercial sequences, and ‘programme’ trailers only occur between ‘programmes’. Here there was something quite different, since the transitions from film to commercial and from film A to films B and C were in effect unmarked. There is in any case enough similarity between certain kinds of films, and between several kinds of film and the ‘situation’ commercials which often consciously imitate them, to make a sequence of this kind a very difficult experience to interpret. I can still not be sure what I took from that whole flow. I believe I registered some incidents as happening in the wrong film, and some characters in the commercials as involved in the film episodes, in what came to seem – for all the occasional bizarre disparities – a single irresponsible flow of images and feelings.

Of course the films were not made to be ‘interrupted’ in this way. But this flow is planned: not only in itself, but at an early stage in all original television production for commercial systems. Indeed most commercial television ‘programmes’ are made, from the planning stage, with this real sequence in mind. In quite short plays there is a rationalised division into ‘acts’. In features there is a similar rationalised division into ‘parts’. But the effect goes deeper. There is a characteristic kind of opening sequence, meant to excite interest, which is in effect a kind of trailer for itself. In American television, after two or three minutes, this is succeeded by commercials. The technique has an early precedent in the dumbshows which preceded plays or scenes in early Elizabethan theatre. But there what followed the dumbshow was the play or the scene. Here what follows is apparently quite unconnected material. It is then not surprising that so many of these opening moments are violent or bizarre: the interest aroused must be strong enough to initiate the expectation of (interrupted but sustainable) sequence. Thus a quality of the external sequence becomes a mode of definition of an internal method.

At whatever stage of development this process has reached –

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and it is still highly variable between different broadcasting systems – it can still be residually seen as ‘interruption’ of a ‘programme’. Indeed it is often important to see it as this, both for one’s own true sense of place and event, and as a matter of reasonable concern in broadcasting policy. Yet it may be even more important to see the true process as flow: the replacement of a programme series of timed sequential units by a flow series of differently related units in which the timing, though real, is undeclared, and in which the real internal organisation is something other than the declared organisation.

For the ‘interruptions’ are in one way only the most visible characteristic of a process which at some levels has come to define the television experience. Even when, as on the BBC, there are no interruptions of specific ‘programme units’, there is a quality of flow which our received vocabulary of discrete response and description cannot easily acknowledge. It is evident that what is now called ‘an evening’s viewing’ is in some ways planned, by providers and then by viewers, *as a whole*; that it is in any event planned in discernible sequences which in this sense override particular programme units. Whenever there is competition between television channels, this becomes a matter of conscious concern: to get viewers in at the beginning of a flow. Thus in Britain there is intense competition between BBC and IBA in the early evening programmes, in the belief – which some statistics support – that viewers will stay with whatever channel they begin watching. There are of course many cases in which this does not happen: people can consciously select another channel or another programme, or switch off altogether. But the flow effect is sufficiently widespread to be a major element in programming policy. And this is the immediate reason for the increasing frequency of programming trailers: to sustain that evening’s flow. In conditions of more intense competition, as between the American channels, there is even more frequent trailing, and the process is specifically referred to as ‘moving along’, to sustain what is thought of as a kind of brand-loyalty to the channel being watched. Some part of the flow offered is then directly traceable to conditions of controlled

competition, just as some of its specific original elements are traceable to the financing of television by commercial advertising.

Yet this is clearly not the whole explanation. The flow offered can also, and perhaps more fundamentally, be related to the television experience itself. Two common observations bear on this. As has already been noted, most of us say, in describing the experience, that we have been 'watching television', rather than that we have watched 'the news' or 'a play' or 'the football' 'on television'. Certainly we sometimes say both, but the fact that we say the former at all is already significant. Then again it is a widely if often ruefully admitted experience that many of us find television very difficult to switch off; that again and again, even when we have switched on for a particular 'programme', we find ourselves watching the one after it and the one after that. The way in which the flow is now organised, without definite intervals, in any case encourages this. We can be 'into' something else before we have summoned the energy to get out of the chair, and many programmes are made with this situation in mind: the grabbing of attention in the early moments; the reiterated promise of exciting things to come, if we stay.

But the impulse to go on watching seems more widespread than this kind of organisation would alone explain. It is significant that there has been steady pressure, not only from the television providers but from many viewers, for an extension of viewing hours. In Britain, until recently, television was basically an evening experience, with some brief offerings in the middle of the day, and with morning and afternoon hours, except at weekends, used for schools and similar broadcasting. There is now a rapid development of morning and afternoon 'programmes' of a general kind.² In the United States it is already possible to begin watching at six o'clock in the morning, see one's first movie at eight-thirty, and so on in a continuous flow, with the screen never blank, until the late movie begins at one o'clock the following morning. It is scarcely possible that many people watch a flow of that length, over more than twenty hours of the day. But the flow is always accessible, in several alternative sequences, at the flick of a switch. Thus, both

internally, in its immediate organisation, and as a generally available experience, this characteristic of flow seems central.

Yet it is a characteristic for which hardly any of our received modes of observation and description prepare us. The reviewing of television programmes is of course of uneven quality, but in most even of the best reviews there is a conventional persistence from earlier models. Reviewers pick out this play or that feature, this discussion programme or that documentary. I reviewed television once a month over four years, and I know how much more settling, more straightforward, it is to do that. For most of the items there are some received procedures, and the method, the vocabulary, for a specific kind of description and response exists or can be adapted. Yet while that kind of reviewing can be useful, it is always at some distance from what seems to me the central television experience: the fact of flow. It is not only that many particular items – given our ordinary organisation of response, memory and persistence of attitude and mood – are affected by those preceding and those following them, unless we watch in an artificially timed way which seems to be quite rare (though it exists in the special viewings put on for regular Reviewers). It is also that though useful things may be said about all the separable items (though often with conscious exclusion of the commercials which 'interrupt' at least half of them) hardly anything is ever said about the characteristic experience of the flow sequence itself. It is indeed very difficult to say anything about this. It would be like trying to describe having read two plays, three newspapers, three or four magazines, on the same day that one has been to a variety show and a lecture and a football match. And yet in another way it is not like that at all, for though the items may be various the television experience has in some important ways unified them. To break this experience back into units, and to write about the units for which there are readily available procedures, is understandable but often misleading, even when we defend it by the gesture that we are discriminating and experienced viewers and don't just sit there hour after hour goggling at the box.

For the fact is that many of us do sit there, and much of the

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critical significance of television must be related to this fact. I know that whenever I tried, in reviewing, to describe the experience of flow, on a particular evening or more generally, what I could say was unfinished and tentative, yet I learned from correspondence that I was engaging with an experience which many viewers were aware of and were trying to understand. There can be 'classical' kinds of response, at many different levels, to some though not all of the discrete units. But we are only just beginning to recognise, let alone solve, the problems of description and response to the facts of flow.

C. ANALYSIS OF FLOW

We can look at some examples of flow in television, in three different orders of detail. First, there is the flow (which is at this stage still, from one point of view, only sequence) within a particular evening's programmes. For this we can use the general notation which has become conventional as 'programming' or 'listing'. Second, there is the more evident flow of the actual succession of items within and between the published sequence of units. Here notation is already more difficult, for we have to move beyond the abstract titles and categories of listing, and yet we are still not at the stage of the detailed sequence of words and images. Flow of this second kind, however, is centrally important in our experience of television, since it shows, over a sufficient range, the process of relative unification, into a flow, of otherwise diverse or at best loosely related items. Third, there is the really detailed flow within this general movement: the actual succession of words and images. Here notation of a kind is available, but it is still subject to the limitation that it notes as discrete (if then related) items not only the planned combination and fusion of words and images, but the process of movement and interaction through sequence and flow. Some of these limitations are, in print, absolute. But my examples are presented, with some commentary, as experiments towards some new methods of analysis.

Programming: distribution and flow

(i) Long-range analysis of sequence and flow

(a) BBC 1, 14 JUNE 1973

- 5.15 Children's programme: *Robinson Crusoe*
- 5.40 Children's puppet-show: *Hector's House*
- 5.45 National News
- 6.00 News magazine: *Nationwide*
- 6.45 American Western serial: *The Virginian*
- 8.00 Film: *Chaplin Super-Clown*
- 8.30 Documentary: *an Australian mining millionaire*
- 9.00 National News
- 9.25 Series: *Warship* (KGB official defects in Mediterranean naval context)
- 10.15 *Night Music*
- 10.45 Public Affairs discussion: *Midweek*
- 11.30 Late News
- 11.35 Educational programme: *Mammals*

(b) BBC 2, 15 JUNE 1973

- 7.05 Series: *Mistress of Hardwick* (Scenes from an Elizabethan life)
- 7.30 News
- 7.35 *Gardeners' World*
- 8.00 *Money at Work*: The Gold Rush
- 9.00 Film: *Little World of Don Camillo*
- 10.40 Film Night: Review of James Bond films
- 11.10 News

(c) BBC 2, 9 JUNE 1973

- 7.35 News
- 7.50 Feature: *Saboteurs of Telemark* (wartime)
- 8.40 Serial: *Song of Songs* (Sundermann); early twentieth-century Vienna
- 9.30 Feature: *The Ascent of Man* (history of science)
- 10.20 Farce: *Ooh La La!*; late nineteenth-century France
- 11.20 News
- 11.25 Film: *The Razor's Edge*

Television

(d) ANGlia, 15 JUNE 1973

- 5.50 News
- 6.00 News magazine
- 6.35 Serial: *Crossroads*
- 7.00 Quiz-show: *The Sky's the Limit*
- 7.30 American series: *Hawaii Five-O*
- 8.30 Series: *Roman Jones* (domestic comedy)
- 9.00 Series: *Between the Wars* (drama)
- 10.00 News
- 10.30 Magazine: *County Show*; ponies, vintage tractors
- 11.00 Series: Theatre of Stars: *The Enemy on the Beach* (wartime)
- 12.00 Sport: tennis
- 12.30 Prayers for World Children's Day a.m.

(e) CHANNEL 7, 12 MARCH 1973

- 5.30 News Scene
- 6.00 National News
- 6.30 Movie: *Annie get your Gun*
- 8.00 Series: *The Rookies* (police)
- 9.00 Movie: *Doc Elliot*
- 11.00 News
- 11.30 Talkshow

(f) KQED, 5 MARCH 1973

- 5.30 Children's programme: *The Electric Company*
- 6.00 Children's programme: *Zoom*
- 6.30 Magazine: *Mission and 24th Street*
- 7.00 Newsroom
- 8.00 TV movie: *Wineburg Ohio*
- 9.30 Movie: Bergman's *The Silence*
- 11.20 Station publicity
- 11.30 Newsroom (repeat)

Commentary

These samples of 'an evening's viewing', on the five channels

Programming: distribution and flow

studied, correspond, in general, with the impressions gained from distribution analysis. The types of programming already described can be seen in their detailed sequences (two examples are given from BBC 2, because it is, in general, more variable than the others).

The specific content is in some cases worth special notice. There is a significant frequency of military material (much of it retrospective) and of costume-drama in BBC and Anglia programming. Anglia and (to a lesser extent) BBC 1 carry important amounts of American material. The BBC 2 mix is more cultural (and international) in its range, as is KQED, but BBC 2 is also quite closely attuned to specific English middle-class interests. Channel 7, as has been noted, has a limited range of largely pre-made programming.

The problems of sequence and flow are already apparent. Sequences (b), (c) and (f) seem designed for more conscious selection of particular items than (a) and (e) and especially (d). In (d) there is an evident sequence – in effect a flow – from 6.35 to 10.00 (a series of comparatively brief programmes of essentially displaced events and dramatisations), and the same might be said of 6.45 to 8.30 or 8.30 to 10.15 in (a). It is worth considering what effect, for example, the documentary at 8.30, in (a), and the series at 9.25, have on the News which comes between them: a certain definition of interests, of a characteristic kind, seems indicated. There would be a different effect in (d), where the News is preceded by retrospective drama and succeeded by the County Show.

The problems of definition of mood and attention occur in several of the sequences. It is noticeable that the sharpest contrasts occur in (b), (c) and (f), while there is a relative homogenisation – the most evident specific feature of flow – in (d) and (e) and to some extent in (a).

We can next look at some specific problems of sequence and definition, and from these of attention and mood, in what is in many ways the binding factor of television programming: the news bulletins and news magazines.

Television

(ii) *Medium-range analysis of flow and 'sequence'*

(a) CHANNEL 7, SAN FRANCISCO, 12 MARCH 1973,
FROM 5.42 P.M.

... (News Scene; three announcers at desk; camera alternates between general shot of all three and medium shot of the one who is speaking; inset for stills or drawings above, left)

I (Announcer 1)

A government committee has reported that many claims in drug advertisements are false: one brand of aspirin is not 'much better than another'; one brand does not 'work faster than another'. (Inset: shelves of packets of drugs, still)
The committee recommends that 25% of the time of drug advertisements should in future be given to correcting these misleading claims.

II (Announcer 1)

A Senator has suggested that pharmacists should display comparative prices of drugs.
Interview (filmed) with a pharmacist: he disagrees; people should go to a store they trust.

III (Announcer 1)

(Inset drawing of food boxes and shopping bag.)
Consumers need all the help they can get, with all prices rising. A housewife, angry at rising costs, has sent the President four hundred peanut-butter sandwiches, in protest against the rising price of meat.

IV (Announcer 2)

(Inset, still, of Federal Building, San Francisco.)
There have been protests in the city against the Presidential impounding of funds for projects voted by Congress.
(Film of Mayor and local Congressmen)
The Mayor and the local Congressmen say impounding is unconstitutional. The country

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should be brought to a halt until this unconstitutional action is stopped.

V (Announcer 2)

(Inset: drawing of wreath)
The oldest Catholic Priest in the United States has died in San Francisco. He was 102. He attributed his longevity to brisk early morning walks.

VI (Announcer 2)

A mayor in Alameda County is working for a proposition to ban further apartment construction in his city. But his wife and six daughters are working on the other side.
Reporter (film of street in city; cars and houses): The proposition is being voted on tomorrow. The issue is legal and environmental. Further development, it is said, will reduce open spaces and lead to extra traffic pollution.

VII

Woman (film: hand-spraying from can; table dusted). Liquid Gold furniture polish; brings new sparkle to your furniture; it's like meeting an old friend again.

VIII

Man (film clip): The 6.30 movie is *Annie Get Your Gun*. Betty Hutton as the sharpest-shooting gal the Wild West ever saw.

IX

Weather forecast: (Medium, with charts). An area of high pressure, bringing in cold air.

X

(Announcer 2)
In Utah, for the second time in a month, an entire barn has been stolen.

XI

(Announcer 1)
Two strikes in the San Francisco area today; (Inset: still of Golden Gate Bridge)
one at an oil refinery; the other at a hospital.

XII

(Announcer 2)
News soon about a man released from China and about the situation at Wounded Knee.

Television

- xiii (Film of cats eating)
Man: Little Friskies high protein cat dinners.
- xiv (Film of women in home)
Man: Anacin relieves headaches.
- xv (Model of house, with gold coins inside it)
Man and woman: loans available on house property in Bay Area.
- xvi (Woman)
One-day sale at Macy's
- xvii (Announcer 2)
A former CIA agent was released today from China.
- xviii (Announcer 2)
Situation between Indians and Justice Department at Wounded Knee still tense.
(Still of Indian in headdress)
- xix (Announcer 2)
(Still of Chateau)
Pompidou is still President of France.
(Still of hand and ballot-box)
- xx (Announcer 2)
Vice-President Agnew says there is no constitutional crisis.
(Film of Agnew speaking at meeting)
- xxi (Announcer 3)
A murder victim in San Francisco has been identified.
- xxii (Announcer 1)
(Film of police at scene of discovery of body)
Many reports of vicious dogs in the area.
(Reporter)
Farmers have reported attacks on animals.
(Film of dogs and film of sheep)
- xxiii (Announcer 2)
The sports news will be next.

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- xxiv Man: if you didn't know this was freeze-dried coffee you would take it for fresh.
(Film: can undoing itself; cup being filled with coffee)
- xxv Man: Let United Airlines show you this great land you live in.
Song: 'Come to your land.'
(Film: Golden Gate Bridge: girl singing
City street : girl and man
Country fence : two girls and man
Seashore : group singing
Group travelling in plane
Black face close-up
Group travelling: song ends)
xxvi (Film: acted episode)
Crook: I used to be able to steal this kind of car.
Now it has an alarm system.
He opens door: Alarm sounds: Sheriff appears.
Crook shows key.
- xxvii (Announcer 3)
Sports news: winning run by basketball team.
Male voice (film clip): On the 6.30 movie, *Amie Get Your Gun*. Betty Hutton as the sharp-shooting gal the West has ever seen.
- xxix (Network news: one man at desk; oblique medium shot)
A former CIA agent has been released from China.
(Film: group of men at border; ex-prisoner arrives at airfield; interview - he is glad to be back)
(Still: his invalid mother)
- xxx Announcer:
In Vietnam, many permanently disabled men have been released from 'tiger-cages'.
(Film: disabled men in hospital; several emaciated and crippled; one crawling on floor)

Television

- xxxI Newsroom
(Title: ABC Evening News)
- xxxII Family camping in wood; children running under trees: the wife has brought margarine instead of butter; it is fresh and healthy.
- xxxIII Man at bank; in obvious pain. He is given a tablet in each hand; he walks away.
- xxxIV (Map of Wounded Knee)
(Announcer): Situation still tense.
(Film of car stopped and searched; close-up of Justice Department spokesman; close-up of Indian leader; Indian pointing to barricade)
- xxxV (Announcer)
(Stills: Bermuda street; flags)
Scotland Yard called in to investigate Bermuda murders.
- xxxVI (Announcer)
A supporter of Peron has been elected President of Argentina.
- xxxVII (Stills of Peron and Cremona)
Newsroom
(Title: ABC Evening News)
- xxxVIII (Film): Truckload of television sets; one taken out; pictures shown on it, man talking; camera draws back to show more than twenty sets, each with same man talking.
- xxxIX (Cartoon): a fish jumps over the world; tinned tuna; woman eating from plate; fish jumps again.
(Announcer)
- XL
A government committee has reported that many claims in drug advertisements are false.
(Still: shelves of packets of drugs)

Commentary

What seems to me interesting in this characteristic evening news sequence is that while a number of important matters are in-

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cluded, the connections between them are as if were deliberately not made. Consider, as examples:

- (i) the lack of direct relation between I, XIV, xxxIII and XL, which in any normal perspective are directly connected;
- (ii) the lack of conscious connection between VII, XII, XVIII, xxvIII and xxxIV, though one kind of connection had been made by the Indian demonstrations at Wounded Knee;
- (iii) the lack of connection between the directly related items of political controversy IV and XX;
- (iv) the lack of conscious connection in the various items about prisoners, XII, xvII, xxIX, xxx;
- (v) the apparent unconsciousness of contrast in xxx and xxxII.

More generally, the effect of indiscriminating sequence can be seen in IV-VI, IV-XI, as well as in the periods of 'interruption' by advertisements, e.g. XI-xvII or xxII-xxvII.

Nevertheless, if the overall flow is examined, it can be seen that a range of news and views - some reported, some propagated, some dramatised - has in effect been fused into what can properly be seen as a sequence. Items such as xxV or xxxvIII are not incidental; they are among the controlling general images of the flow as a whole - the perspective of the society, the practice of the medium. The apparently disjointed 'sequence' of items is in effect guided by a remarkably consistent set of cultural relationships: a flow of consumable reports and products, in which the elements of speed, variety and miscellaneity can be seen as organising: the real bearers of value. Within this organisation, I, XIV, xxxIII and XL are not contradictory but are unpaired alternatives; as are also VII, XII, xvIII, xxvIII and xxxIV, where the mediation, however, is more generally diffused. The organised exclusion of certain kinds of connection and contrast, as in xxx and xxxII, is part of the effect of the flow, with its own more compelling internal signposting and directions of attention.

Television

(b) BBC 1, 13 JUNE 1973, FROM 5.42 P.M.

... (*Hector's House* - children's puppet-show)

I Dog puppet: 'I'm a gentleman.'

II (Local Announcer 1): In *Look East* after the National News there will be a report on a new safety material for airfield runways. Also a report on a man who has broken the world speed record for beer drinking.

III Clock.

IV (National Announcer)

(Still: Lord Lambton)

Lord Lambton fined £300 on drug charges.

(Reporter: against background of Lambton still)

Report of case hearing.

(Film: car arriving at court, men entering by special back entrance)

(National Announcer)

V

The ten-week-old work-to-rule at a Peterborough factory continues. (Aerial view of factory)

(Reporter)

Result of voting at workers' meeting.

(Film of crowd raising hands)

Interview with union official: 'We shall stay out.'

(Film of factory and engines, as reporter continues)

Interview with manager (office).

(National Announcer)

House of Commons reply to Peterborough M.P.

(National Announcer)

VI

(National Announcer)

Pay strike at Cowley.

VII

(National Announcer)

(Film of factory and pickets)

Dispute at Chrysler factory.

VIII

(National Announcer)

Britain's largest monthly trade payments deficit ever.

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(Graph of deficit over recent months)

(Economics Correspondent)

(Background still of docks)

Figures very bad; reasons include floating pound, imports for industrial boom.

IX

(National Announcer)

Prime Minister and TUC leaders have been discussing the economy.

X

(National Announcer)

Agreement signed in Paris, between USA, North and South Vietnam, 'Vietcong'.

(Film: Kissinger signing; others signing)

XI

(National Announcer)

Princess Anne's wedding date fixed.

(Stills: Princess and fiancé; Westminster Abbey; Archbishop of Canterbury)

(National Announcer)

XII

(National Announcer)

Tribune Group of Labour M.P.s. say nationalisation must be included in election manifesto.

XIII

(Still of Chief-Inspector of Constabulary)

Crimes of violence are increasing.

XIV

(National Announcer)

Commons statement about terrorism in Northern Ireland.

XV

(National Announcer)

Plans to disperse some government offices.

(Map and list of areas, with numbers)

(Still of Ministry and new town)

XVI

(National Announcer)

School bus accident.

(Film of crashed bus, firemen)

XVII

(National Announcer)

General Gawon of Nigeria has arrived in Britain.

(Film of reception)

(Film of his wife at children's hospital)

XVIII

(National Announcer)

New safety material on runways.

Television

- xxix (Film of aircraft running into foam bed).
(National Announcer)
- xxix Rust makes car crashes worse.
(Film of test crashes of rusted and unrusted cars).
- xx (Weatherman)
(Maps)
- xxi Warm and sunny.
Nationwide titles: picture of baby in swing, lorry,
baby lifted, car crash, man on phone.
- xxii (Nationwide Announcer 1)
Later: Meet a man who talks to flowers.
- xxiii (Nationwide Announcer 2 (woman))
Later: Two new reporters - children - report
on toys.
- xxiv (Film of children)
(New Announcer 1)
'All that and more as you move in to your own
programmes, Nationwide.'
- xxv Titles: *Look East*
- xxvi (Local Announcer 2 (woman))
Decision at Peterborough dispute meeting.
(Film of meeting; voting)
Film of workers giving reasons for their vote.
Interview with union official.
Film of factory.
Interview with manager (office).
Interview with President of local Chamber of
Trade.
- xxvii (Local Announcer 1)
Work-to-rule at Wisbech; rail services disrupted.
- xxviii (Local Announcer 1)
Demonstration (film) against motorway plan.
- xxix (Local Announcer 1)
Claim of irregularities in local council election.
- xxx (Local Announcer 1)
Bird's Eye factories expanding (film).
- xxxi (Local Announcer 1)

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- xxxii A grave in Colchester desecrated. Black magic
suggested.
(Local Announcer 1)
- xxxiii Two men rescued from dinghy.
(Local Announcer 1)
- xxxiv Explosives found in pit in Cambridgeshire.
(Local Announcer 1)
- xxxv Norfolk deputation about by-pass.
(Local Announcer 1)
Huntingdonshire road accidents caused by uncut
grass verges.
- xxxvi (Local Announcer 1)
Peterborough Development Corporation selling
houses.
- xxxvii (Local Announcer 1)
Date of football match. (Still of captain)
- xxxviii Bishop of Ely arrives at a ceremony by boat.
Challenges another bishop to tug-of-war.
(Film of tug-of-war)
- xxxix (Local Announcer 2)
A young girl still missing.
(Still of policeman; still of girl)
(Film of road she walked on)
(Map of area)
- xl Reporter: New runway safety material.
(Film: aircraft tests new runway safety material)
Interview with pilot.
- xli (Local Announcer 2)
Beer-drinking speed record.
(Interview: how fast? how many? why? - 'to
break the record')
- xlii Rupert the Bear at Yarmouth.
(Film of man dressed as bear on beach with
children)
- xliii Closing titles: *Look East*.
- xliiv Regional weather map.
- xliv National weather map.

XLVI (Nationwide Announcer 1)
Reporter: pyramid selling; new legislation.
(Still of calendar)

XLVII (Nationwide Announcer 1)
Reporter: a community in Scotland where people talk to plants to make them grow; extraordinary success, no other explanation.
(Film of gardens)

Interview: director.
Interview: man who has seen an elf; the little people who live in plants.
Interview: gardener - he talks to plant.

Song: 'I dreamed a dream . . . of natural harmony.'
(Film of flowers)

XLVIII (Nationwide Announcer 1)
'Back with a bump': decentralisation of government departments.
Regional reporters: Glasgow, Newcastle.
(Film of existing offices)

Interview with junior minister involved.
Regional reporters asked for comment (3-way discussion).

XLIX (Nationwide Announcer 2)
Children (boy and girl) reporting on new toys; test them and give prices.

I Closing titles:
Film of flowers repeated with song, ' . . . natural harmony'.

Commentary

This is a characteristic British news and news-magazine sequence. It is more deliberately arranged than the American example in (a), and there is less apparently spontaneous reporting and commentary. The flow characteristics are strongly marked, e.g. II, XVIII, XL, or XLII, L. The more intensive use of visual material assists a different kind of flow, with corres-

pondingly less emphasis on the personalities of the readers (though in the magazine this emphasis is made). Within the flow, a characteristic set of priorities emerges, e.g. in IV to XIX. An item of scandal (IV) is placed first, followed by a group of items (V to VII) on industrial disputes. The most important item of general news (VIII) is then placed in a context indicated by this flow (though the direct commentary on it offers different reasons) and this underlying perspective is confirmed in IX. A related item, XII, occurs at a different and unconnected point. There is an interesting possible interaction, on a separate theme, between XIII and XIV. State ceremonies are dispersed between XI and XVII; accidents between XVI, XVIII and XIX (returned to in XXI, XXXV, XL).

There is a more general point about the overall emotional tone. Compare I, part of II, part of XXI, XXII, XXXVIII, XL, XLII, XLVIII, L with V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, XXVI-XXXVI, XLVI or again with IV, XIII or X, (XIII), XIV, XXXIX. The sequence XXXVIII-XLI is particularly interesting for its apparently extraordinary fluctuations, but the point is that this is contained - as are the other alternative normal sequences - by the fact of overall flow. A confirmation of this is given in the enclosure of the diversity and extreme unevenness of items within the playful emphasis of the initial XXI-XXII and the closing XLIX and L. This, essentially, is how a directed but apparently casual and miscellaneous flow operates, culturally, following a given structure of feeling.

(iii) *Close-range analysis of flow*
(a) (*Items XI-XXI from (ii) (a)*)

(Inset: still of Golden Gate Bridge)

Announcer 1 Well, there's still no progress to report on two major strikes in the San Francisco Bay Area today. The news from that Shell Oil strike at Martinez is - there is no news. All News Scene has heard unconfirmed rumours of negotiation not far away. Inside the plant supervisory employees are keeping the thing running smoothly, they say - in full operation as a matter of fact.

Strikers were also out today at San José Hospital, (Inset: still of hospital building and pickets) and late this evening News Scene had unfurnished reports that Engineers' Local No. 39 have also walked out.

(Medium: Announcer)

and in Martinez today too two doctors are back on the job after they had initially been fired by the County Human Resources Agency. The County Board of Supervisors has agreed to re-hire them and the terms of that negotiation were hammered out in an informal session over the weekend.

Announcer 2
(medium)

Legal proceedings are now going on against the Indians at Wounded Knee, and a man in prison in China for twenty years is a free man tonight. We'll have film stories on those and other events as News Scene continues.

Male Voice

(Film: music: cats walking in different directions) Chinese or Persian, Calico or American Blue, Angora or mixed, all cats want variety. And Little Friskies has six delicious high-protein dinners with a flavour that isn't artificial. It's made from real beef liver, real chicken, real seafood. (Cats eating)

That's Little Friskies, the best tasting high-protein cat dinners.

Young Woman

Male Voice

(Film: young woman at telephone, older woman putting dishes in cupboard; rattle of crockery) Will you please stop that racket?

When headache pain and the tension it can build bring out the worst in you, take Anacin. Compared to Anacin -

(Diagram: circle, with segment cut out) - simple aspirin tablets would have this much pain reliever. Anacin has -

(Rhythmic bleeps of sound; segment closes until circle is complete)

- all this extra strength to every tablet, rushing relief power to your headache. Anacin relieves headache and so its tension, fast.

(Film of women again; younger woman brings coffee to older woman; they sit down together) Anacin!

Young Woman I had the worst headache . . . (smiles)

(Model house)

Male Voice (2) If you own a house anywhere in the Bay Area, you're sitting

(Model lifts and gold coins pour out from front)

on a goldmine

Young Woman (2) (smiles) and Pacific Plan will help you get the gold out. If you need from 1000 to 15,000 dollars, you can turn your equity into instant

cash

(smiles invitingly)

by calling the girl at Pacific Plan. So, house-owners, dig into your white pages

(Still of telephone directory, focused on number) and get the gold out.

Young Woman (2) Call the girl at Pacific Plan today (smiles)

Woman (2) or tomorrow.

Male Voice (2) Home Owners

(Model house: gold coins pouring out. Metallic tinkle)

get the gold out.

Woman (with flower on hat) This Thursday is White Flower Day at Macy's. It's one of the biggest

one-day sales of the year, at all Macy's. (Waves) Don't miss it.

In international news today, the very good news

Announcer 2 coming out of the Republic of China because a man who had been there for an awful long time

(medium)

is finally out. Another prisoner of war free today, only this former prisoner

(Film of man at border post)

is ex-CIA agent J—D—.

He was a warrior of the cold war, he was captured in '52 in the People's Republic of China, on a spy mission. Today he arrived at Clark Air Force Base in Manila, a free man again on his way home to his sick mother.

The battle of Wounded Knee continues. The Sioux, who are holding a tiny piece of reservation, say they no longer recognise the United States Government

(Still of Indian, with headress)

they say they've seceded. Meanwhile the Justice Department is considering legal action and it is very tense and touchy at this moment in Wounded Knee.

(Still of French Château)

And in picturesque France Georges Pompidou is still President of the Republic. Most of the Gaullist support came from the conservative French countryside. Still the communist and socialist representation doubled.

(Still of hand and ballot-box)

They cut the Gaullist majority to sixty seats. Big and sweeping social reforms now predicted for the Republic of France after this election.

(Announcer: medium)

Some very tough words today from Vice-President Agnew here in San Francisco. He told an audience it's up to Congress to hold back spending if inflation is to be halted, and then he also attacked those who say the President is getting too strong and usurping powers from the Congress. That's just not true, according to (Film of meeting)

Agnew

Vice-President Spiro Agnew.

Some members of Congress, abetted by certain eternally despairing commentators and columnists, are working diligently to persuade the country that a constitutional confrontation (Applause begins; voice rises) is at hand.

(Loud Applause)

And to support this thesis the Congress, according to a Washington newspaper, the other day brought in a collection of scholars for advice on its Constitutional crisis with Richard Nixon, and was taught that there really isn't any crisis at all.

(Announcer: medium)

The Vice-President also wanted to say that he isn't aware that any Congress has ever felt sufficiently loved by a President to fully approve his exercise of power invested in him by the United States Constitution. Steve.

Announcer 3 (medium)

Well, we have more details now of that grisly murder in San Francisco last night in which the body of a man was discovered by police (Film of police in street) in a metal container this morning. The victim's throat had been cut . . .

Commentary

It is only as we come really close to the substance of what is spoken and shown that we see the real character of television flow. A newscast is, of course, a particular case, but the kind of flow which it embodies is determined by a deliberate use of the medium rather than by the nature of the material being dealt with. As in the earlier analysis ((ii), (a)) the lack of demonstrated connection between items is evident. Yet connections of another kind are continually used.

Television

... power invested in him by the United States Constitution. Steve.

Well, we have more details now of that grisly murder ...

This order is predetermined, but is handled in such a way as to suggest the continual arrival of reports. Most evident, perhaps, is a sense of the announcers spinning items along, following a rough schedule. They are clearly not reading from scripts (this is a specific differentiation in American television news) but they have certain cue formulas. At times these are of a distancing, placing kind:

... the very good news coming out of the Republic of China ...

... And in picturesque France ...

(In this latter case the phrase is determined, however curiously, by the illustration.) Over much of the actual news reporting there is a sense of hurried blur. The pace and style of the news-cast take some priority over the items in it. This sense of hurried transmission from all points is then in sharp contrast with the cool deliberation of the commercials. At one level the average length of a news item is in effect determined by the time-unit of attention which the commercials have established. Nothing is at all fully reported, though time had been found for the theft of a barn in a distant state. Yet the flow of hurried items establishes a sense of the world: of surprising and miscellaneous events coming in, tumbling over each other, from all sides. The events are caught as they fly, with a minimal and conventional interpretative tag. The most ordered messages, with a planned use of sight and sound, are the recorded commercials, which clearly operate in the same communicative dimension. Voices are used in both news and commercials to catch passing attention. Devices of repetition to sustain emphasis within flow are common to both:

The news from ... Martinez is - there is no news ...

Anacin ... Anacin ... Anacin ... Anacin ... Anacin ...

Get the gold out ... get the gold out ... get the gold out ...

Programming: distribution and flow

The Battle of Wounded Knee ...
... at this moment in Wounded Knee ...

The sense (in general, false) of instantaneous, simultaneous happening is similarly sustained:

today ... today ... today ... now ... fast ... today ...
or tomorrow ... don't miss it ... today ... coming out ...
today ... today ... at this moment ... today ... now.

It is indeed the day's news, but taken emphatically on the wing. If an interest can not be satisfied ('unconfirmed rumours', 'unconfirmed reports') it is nevertheless stimulated. In and through all this, certain nodal references of meaning and value are given emphasis:

strikes ... running smoothly ... fired ... retire ... free
man ... variety ... extra strength ... gold ... free man ...
sick mother.

The selected preoccupations are the dominant *internal* currents of what might seem, at first hearing (and there is usually only one) a miscellaneous, even casual, *externally* determined flow.

The implicit meanings and values of the commercials require a brief final comment. There is mutual transfer between their formulas and those of separate programmes. The encapsulated information of the news item is transferred to the mode of recommending a cat food: 'high protein ... isn't artificial'; compare 'tiny piece of reservation ... very tense and touchy'; 'still President ... big and sweeping social reforms'. The mode of the domestic serial interacts with that of the headache-tablet commercial, with the significant interpretation 'tension ... the worst in you'. The property-loan company relies on memories of the historical film (this is in California): 'sitting on a goldmine ... get the gold out'. The breeds of cat, in the cat-food commercial, are shown as in animal interest films. The 'instructional device' of the 'extra strength' in the headache tablet is interactive with educational television and diagrams.

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The model house with gold coins pouring out of it is interactive with children's entertainment television. The girl inviting a telephone call (from a money-borrower to a money-lender) uses the look and accent of a generalised 'personal' (partly sexual) invitation.

In all these ways, and in their essential combination, this is the flow of meanings and values of a specific culture.

5. Effects of the technology and its uses

A. CAUSE AND EFFECT IN COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS

Since television became a popular social form there has been widespread discussion of its effects. The most significant feature of this discussion has been the isolation of the medium. Especially in advanced industrial societies the near-universality and general social visibility of television have attracted simple cause-and-effect identifications of its agency in social and cultural change. What is significant is not the reliability of any of these particular identifications; as will be seen, there are very few such effects which come near to satisfying the criteria of scientific proof or even of general probability. What is really significant is the direction of attention to certain selected issues – on the one hand 'sex' and 'violence', on the other hand 'political manipulation' and 'cultural degradation' – which are of so general a kind that it ought to be obvious that they cannot be specialised to an isolated medium but, in so far as television bears on them, have to be seen in a whole social and cultural process. Some part of the study of television's effects has then to be seen as an ideology: a way of interpreting general change through a displaced and abstracted cause.

Cultural science, when it emerged as a method in early classical sociology, was concerned with the necessary differentiation of its procedures from those of natural science. In its central concept of 'understanding', and in its sensitivity to the problems of judgment of value and of the participation and

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involvement of the investigator, it was radically different from the assumptions and methods of the 'sociology of mass communications' which is now orthodox and which at times even claims the authority of just this classical sociology. The change can be seen in one simple way, in the formula which was established by Lasswell as the methodological principle of studies of communication: the question 'who says what, how, to whom, with what effect?'. For what this question has excluded is *intention*, and therefore all real social and cultural process.

Suppose we rephrase the question as 'who says what, how, to whom, with what effect and for what purpose?'. This would at least direct our attention to the interests and agencies of communication, which the orthodox question excludes. But the exclusion is not accidental. It is part of a general social model which abstracts social and cultural processes to such concepts as 'socialisation', 'social function' or 'interaction'. Thus socialisation has been defined as 'learning the ways and becoming a functioning member of society', but while it is clear that in all societies this process occurs, it is for just this reason an indifferent concept when applied to any real and particular social and cultural process. What the process has in common, in many different societies, is given a theoretical priority over just the radical differences of 'ways' and 'functioning', and over the highly differential character of being a 'member' of the society, which in practice define the real process. The abstract notions of 'socialisation' and 'social function' have the effect of conferring normality and in this sense legitimacy on any society in which a learning and relating process may occur. And when this is so, intention, in any full sense, cannot be recognised, let alone studied. To say that television is now a factor in socialisation, or that its controllers and communicators are exercising a particular social function, is to say very little until the forms of the society which determine any particular socialisation and which allocate the functions of control and communication have been precisely specified.

The central concepts of cultural science – understanding, value-judgment, the involvement of the investigator – have thus

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been excluded or circumvented. This explains the consequent emphasis on 'effects', and the dissolution of causes into abstract notions of 'socialisation' or 'social function' or into the false particularisation of a self-directing technology. It explains also the orthodox description of such studies as the study of 'mass communications'. What is really involved in that descriptive word 'mass' is the whole contentious problem of the real social relations within which modern communications systems operate. Its merely descriptive and assumptive use is a way of avoiding the true sociology of communications, yet it is orthodox over a very wide range and in theories and studies which are otherwise sophisticated. A particular version of empiricism – not the general reliance on experience and evidence, but a particular reliance on evidence within the terms of these assumed functions (socialisation, social function, mass communications) – has largely taken over the practice of social and cultural inquiry, and within the terms of its distortion of cultural science claims the abstract authority of 'social science' and 'scientific method' as against all other modes of experience and analysis. Against this confident and institutionalised practice it cannot be said too often that the work of social and cultural science is only secondarily a matter of methodological procedures; it is primarily the establishment of a consciousness of process, which will include consciousness of intentions as well as of methods and of working concepts.

Effects, after all, can only be studied in relation to real intentions, and these will often have to be as sharply distinguished from declared intentions as from assumed and indifferent general social processes. This will require the study of real agency, rather than of its apparent forms. As it is, however, the study of effects has mainly been rationalised in advance. It studies effects in 'the socialisation process', that is to say in the practice or breach of social norms – 'violence', 'delinquency', 'permissiveness', or in 'mass reactions' (a mass, to be sure, that is then classified into sectors) – the reactions of political or cultural or economic consumers, in voting, ticket-buying or spending. With this distinction however: that the latter studies have been mainly

financed by interested agencies (broadcasting organisations, market research and advertising agencies, political parties), while the former have been mainly financed by social-interest groups and political and cultural authorities. Some studies have escaped the definitions of interest which their true agencies have imposed; in some universities, while there has been hiving and blurring, there has also been some independent initiative. But very little has escaped the overall definitions, including the definitions of procedure, which are the real consequences of the social system and the ideology within which the inquiries are framed. If we are to begin to approach any real study of effects, we shall have to return to a scientific consideration of causes.

B. SOME STUDIES OF EFFECTS

The case of 'violence on television' is a useful example. Here the experimental evidence is extraordinarily mixed (see the useful summary in Halloran, *The Effects of Television*, 1970; pp. 54-64). In majority it supports the view that 'the observation of mass media violence' may be, while not a determining, a contributory factor to subsequent aggressive behaviour. A minority view is quite different: that the effect of observing violence on television is cathartic. A further minority view stresses the possibility of both provocative and cathartic effects. Useful attempts have been made to distinguish, as is crucially necessary, between different forms of violence, different levels of its portrayal or representation, and different groups of viewers. There has also been a necessary distinction between immediate and long-term effects.

It is important that this work should continue and be developed. But 'violence' is a notable example of the effects of the abstract concept of 'socialisation'. It is assumed, for example, that violent behaviour is undesirable, in that it contradicts the norms of accepted social behaviour. But it must be immediately evident, if we look at real societies, that this is not the case. Each of the societies in which this work was done was at the time engaged in violent action - some of it of exceptional scale and

intensity - which had been authorised by the norms of the society, in the sense of political decisions within normal procedures to undertake and continue it. At the same time, and for discoverable social reasons, certain other violent practices - notably 'violent protest' and armed robbery *within* the societies - had been identified and condemned. In what sense then are we to say that 'violence' is a breach of the socialisation process? The real norm, in these actual societies, would seem rather to be: 'unauthorised violence is impermissible'. This would depend on a precise set of distinctions, within a given social system, between approved and impermissible forms of behaviour, and at the level of this true agency the identifications would never be in doubt and would indeed be rationalised as 'law'. (The law may punish you if you refuse to kill in a foreign war; the law may punish you if you kill or assault in the course of domestic robbery or internal political struggle.) This rationalisation corresponds to a particular social structure.

But then, while it may at that level be clear to the agency concerned, it may also, as it enters the communication process, be far from clear not only to the viewers but to the producers of its representations. Such confusion in viewers may indeed be separately studied: that is a discoverable and important effect. But it is at the level of agency and production that the real practices, and their implicit or possible confusions, require analysis. The ordinary assumption seems to run: 'this society discourages violent behaviour; violent behaviour is constantly represented and reported on television; we need to study its effects on people'. But surely anyone looking analytically at those first two statements would feel the need to examine their quite extraordinary relationship. Of course the apparent contradiction can be rationalised: the controllers of television are indifferent and greedy, governed only by the profit that can be made from programmes which show violence. (At a further level of rationalisation the medium itself can be reified: 'television finds violence exciting'.) But this does not explain the odd relationship between 'discouragement by the society' and constant representation by a major social communications system.

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Are we to assume perhaps that the television organisations are outside the normal social structure? But in all the countries in which the research is done the control and ownership of television systems is centrally characteristic of general social control and ownership and (in part) authority. When this is realised, it would be as reasonable to say: 'this society encourages violent behaviour; violent behaviour is constantly represented and reported on television, its major communications system'. But the truth is that neither assumption will do. What we are really faced with is a contradiction within the social system itself. And it is then to the sociology of that contradiction that we should direct our primary scientific attention.

A different kind of problem arises when we look at studies of the effects of television on political behaviour. These have been usefully reviewed by Jay G. Blumler (*The Effects of Television*, pp. 70-87). The centre of the problem is that a given society defines political behaviour in its own terms: in Britain and the United States, for example, as voting or as rating of political leaders. These have the additional advantage that they are relatively easy to count. Early studies seemed to show, moreover, that television had little discernible influence on either. Later studies, while not controverting this, found some measurable influence on information about party policies and, though it remains difficult to interpret, on the persuasibility of those with initially low party-political motivations or attachments.

But while it is useful to know these findings, and to look for similar further work, the most important question to ask is about the causes of these definitions of political effects. It is true that there is now beginning to be some study of 'system effects', as distinct from effects on countable individual voters. But this, too, has normally been undertaken within the terms of the political model from which the initial definitions were shaped. Thus it has been observed, correctly, that during elections but also at other times of general controversy, television as a system has become the most evident area in which political argument is conducted. Television interviewers and commentators have become, in a sense, political figures in their own right, and there

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has been evident tension between them and orthodox (usually elected) political leaders. Yet to the degree that elected leaders depend, or believe they depend, on television coverage, this tension does not prevent leaders submitting themselves to more open and public questioning of their policies than has ever been the case in any comparable communications system. This much, at least, is clear gain.

Yet it remains true that this kind of effect is within the terms of a given political system and its definitions of political behaviour. The competitive assessment of leaders and through them (but normally only through them) of policies is taken as a norm. But this at once raises a question. In Britain at least, during the period of television as a majority service, this mode of political behaviour has in fact been declining, in the important sense that the proportion of people voting at elections has been steadily going down. In the same period, other forms of political behaviour – notably demonstrations and political strikes – have quite markedly increased. It would require a very different model of cause and effect to inquire into this. It could be argued that increased exposure to competitive assessment in these terms has weakened adherence to occasional election as a political mode, or even that (given other kinds of political stimulation by television – the reporting of demonstrations, the dramatisation of certain issues) it has had some strengthening influence on alternative modes. Hardly anything is known about this, for the important reason that the assumption of effect was made, initially, in terms of the functioning of a given system. Underlying orthodox investigation of the effects of television, whether on a matter like violence or on a quite different matter like voting, we can then see a particular cultural model, which tends to determine scope and method. What is usually asked about television is what influence it has by comparison with other influences. All these influences – television, the home, the school, the press, work – are assumed as discrete though then conceded to interact. Effects can then be measured, and techniques refined. But in an important sense there can be no inquiry about cause because the total social practice has been

either disintegrated into these separable factors, or – an important condition for just this separation – has been assumed as normal: the *real* process of socialisation or democratic politics or what may be. Thus effect is ordinarily studied at a tertiary level, as between competing or alternative factors, and in the breach or observance of given social, cultural and political norms. Yet just these factors and norms are themselves effects; they are the established institutions, relationships and values of a given order of society. Primary causes, in the given order of society, are then ordinarily displaced by a doubtful sphere of effects taken as causes, with the study of effects then becoming, in real terms, the isolable effects of effects.

The particular importance of this, in the case of television, is that it reinforces tendencies to think of a given cultural system – the intentions and uses of a technology – in limited or misleading ways. That is to say, it studies the symptoms of the operation of an otherwise unexamined agency or – for this is the position which the former position in part prepares – it studies an agency as a system, in extreme cases performing the final feat of abstraction when it is supposed that what is being studied is simply 'a medium', 'a technology', with its own quite internal laws of cause and effect.

C. THE TECHNOLOGY AS A CAUSE

Sociological and psychological studies of the effects of television, which in their limited terms have usually been serious and careful, were significantly overtaken, during the 1960s, by a fully developed theory of the technology – the medium – as determining. There had been, as we have seen, much implicit ideology in the sociological and psychological inquiries, but the new theory was explicitly ideological: not only a ratification, indeed a celebration, of the medium as such, but an attempted cancellation of all other questions about it and its uses. The work of McLuhan was a particular culmination of an aesthetic theory which became, negatively, a social theory: a development and elaboration of formalism which can be seen in many fields,

from literary criticism and linguistics to psychology and anthropology, but which acquired its most significant popular influence in an isolating theory of 'the media'.

Here, characteristically – and as explicit ratification of particular uses – there is an apparent sophistication in just the critical area of cause and effect which we have been discussing. It is an apparently sophisticated technological determinism which has the significant effect of indicating a social and cultural determinism: a determinism, that is to say, which ratifies the society and culture we now have, and especially its most powerful internal directions. For if the medium – whether print or television – is the cause, all other causes, all that men ordinarily see as history, are at once reduced to effects. Similarly, what are elsewhere seen as effects, and as such subject to social, cultural, psychological and moral questioning, are excluded as irrelevant by comparison with the direct physiological and therefore 'psychic' effects of the media as such. The initial formulation – 'the medium is the message' – was a simple formalism. The subsequent formulation – 'the medium is the message' – is a direct and functioning ideology.

There are of course specific characteristics of different media, and these characteristics are related to specific historical and cultural situations and intentions. Much of the initial appeal of McLuhan's work was his apparent attention to the specificity of media: the differences in quality between speech, print, radio, television and so on. But in his work, as in the whole formalist tradition, the media were never really seen as practices. All specific practice was subsumed by an arbitrarily assigned psychic function, and this had the effect of dissolving not only specific but general intentions. If specific media are essentially psychic adjustments, coming not from relations between ourselves but between a generalised human organism and its general physical environment, then of course intention, in any general or particular case, is irrelevant, and with intention goes content, whether apparent or real. All media operations are in effect desocialised; they are simply physical events in an abstracted sensorium, and are distinguishable only by their variable sense-ratios. But it is

then interesting that from this wholly unhistorical and asocial base McLuhan projects certain images of society: 'tribalisation' by the 'electronic age'; the 'global village'. As descriptions of any observable social state or tendency, in the period in which electronic media have been dominant, these are so ludicrous as to raise a further question. The physical fact of instant transmission, as a technical possibility, has been uncritically raised to a social fact, without any pause to notice that virtually all such transmission is at once selected and controlled by existing social authorities. McLuhan, of course, would apparently do away with all such controls; the only controls he envisages are a kind of allocation and rationing of particular media for particular psychic effects, which he believes would dissolve or control any social problem that arises. But the technical abstractions, in their unnoticed projections into social models, have the effect of cancelling all attention to existing and developing (and already challenged) communications institutions. If the effect of the medium is the same, whoever controls or uses it, and whatever apparent content he may try to insert, then we can forget ordinary political and cultural argument and let the technology run itself. It is hardly surprising that this conclusion has been welcomed by the 'media-men' of the existing institutions. It gives the gloss of avant-garde theory to the crudest versions of their existing interests and practices, and assigns all their critics to pre-electronic irrelevance. Thus what began as pure formalism, and as speculation on human essence, ends as operative social theory and practice, in the heartland of the most dominant and aggressive communications institutions in the world.

The particular rhetoric of McLuhan's theory of communications is unlikely to last long. But it is significant mainly as an example of an ideological representation of technology as a cause, and in this sense it will have successors, as particular formulations lose their force. What has to be seen, by contrast, is the radically different position in which technology, including communication technology, and specifically television, is at once an intention and an effect of a particular social order.

D. TECHNOLOGY AS AN EFFECT

If we cancel history, in the sense of real times and real places, we can conceive an abstract human nature which has specific psychic needs and which variable forms of technology and intercourse come to satisfy. This purely idealist model of human history may have variable specific culminations – the end of alienation, the rediscovery of the tribe – but within it technology is a simple human effusion, the extension of a limb or a sense. The destiny and the process can be believed in only if we assume a human essence waiting to come to realisation, in these ways, with inbuilt if not yet realised metaphysical purposes. The model can be related to history only by endless retrospect, in which by selection such a process can be generalised or demonstrated. Characteristically, in such a model, there will be no more history: a culminating age has arrived.

Any cancellation of history, in the sense of real times and real places, is essentially a cancellation of the contemporary world, in which, within limits and under pressures, men act and react, struggle and concede, co-operate, conflict and compete. A technology, when it has been achieved, can be seen as a general human property, an extension of general human capacity. But all technologies have been developed and improved to help with known human practices or with foreseen and desired practices. This element of intention is fundamental, but it is not exclusive. Original intention corresponds with the known or desired practices of a particular social group, and the pace and scale of development will be radically affected by that group's specific intentions and its relative strength. Yet at many subsequent stages other social groups, sometimes with other intentions or at least with different scales of priority, will adopt and develop the technology, often with different purposes and effects. Further, there will be in many cases unforeseen uses and unforeseen effects which are again a real qualification of the original intention. Thus an explosive may be developed at the command or by the investment of a ruling class, or by the investment or for the profit of an industrial enterprise, yet come to be used

also by a revolutionary group against that ruling class, or by criminals against the industrialist's property.

In other words, while we have to reject technological determinism, in all its forms, we must be careful not to substitute for it the notion of a determined technology. Technological determinism is an untenable notion because it substitutes for real social, political and economic intention, either the random autonomy of invention or an abstract human essence. But the notion of a determined technology has a similar one-sided, one-way version of human process. Determination is a real social process, but never (as in some theological and some Marxist versions) as a wholly controlling, wholly predicting set of causes. On the contrary, the reality of determination is the setting of limits and the exertion of pressures, within which variable social practices are profoundly affected but never necessarily controlled. We have to think of determination not as a single force, or a single abstraction of forces, but as a process in which real determining factors – the distribution of power or of capital, social and physical inheritance, relations of scale and size between groups – set limits and exert pressures, but neither wholly control nor wholly predict the outcome of complex activity within or at these limits, and under or against these pressures.

The case of television is an excellent example. We have seen that the complex process of its invention had specific military, administrative and commercial intentions, and each of these interacted with what were, for real if limited periods and in real if limited ways, scientific intentions. At the stage of transition from invention to technology, the process of its development came to be dominated by commercial intentions, though still with some real political and military interests. But then a primarily commercial intention acquired social and political intentions of a general kind, in notions of social training and social control which in part harmonised and in part conflicted with the driving commercial intention (the latter gaining ascendancy in the United States, though never an unqualified ascendancy; the former gaining but then losing ascendancy in

Britain, though again the loss is not unqualified). Yet as intention became effect another dimension opened. It was not only ruling or commercial groups who recognised the problems of communication in conditions of complex or of privatised mobility. It was also the many people who were experiencing this process as subjects. To controllers and programmers they might seem merely objects: a viewing public or a market. But from their own side of the screen there was a different perspective: if they were exposed by need in new ways, they were also exposed to certain uncontrollable opportunities. This complicated interaction is still very much in the process of working itself out.

Literacy had shown similar complications. It is interesting that at the beginning of the industrial revolution in Britain, when education had to be reorganised, the ruling class decided to teach working people to read but not to write. If they could read they could understand new kinds of instructions and, moreover, they could read the Bible for their moral improvement. They did not need writing, however, since they would have no orders or instructions or lessons to communicate. At most they might struggle to produce simple signatures, which would be occasionally required for official purposes. The full range of writing came later, with further development of the society and the economy. But it is what happened to reading that is really significant. For there was no way to teach a man to read the Bible which did not also enable him to read the radical press. A controlled intention became an uncontrolled effect. Yet the acquisition of literacy, then as now, almost always involved submission to a lengthy period of social training – education – in which quite other things than literacy or similar skills were taught; in which, in fact, values and norms were taught which became, very often, inextricable from the literacy.

The unique factor of broadcasting – first in sound, then even more clearly in television – has been that its communication is accessible to normal social development; it requires no specific training which brings people within the orbit of public authority. If we can watch and listen to people in our immediate circle, we

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can watch and listen to television. Much of the great popular appeal of radio and television has been due to this sense of apparently unmediated access. The real mediations will have to be noted, but again and again they are easy to miss. What is offered is a set with a tuner and a switch: we can turn it on or off, or vary what we are receiving. Throughout its history there has been this popular sense that broadcasting is a welcome alternative to the normal and recognisable social order of communications.

Many people who are aware of the manipulative powers of radio and television, or of its apparently inexhaustible appeal to children, react in ways which implicitly suppress all the other history of communication. Thus it is often indignantly said that television is a 'third parent', as if children had not in all developed societies had third parents in the shape of priests, teachers and workmasters, to say nothing of the actual parents and relations who, in many periods and cultures, intervened to control or to instruct. Against those real alternatives this switchable communication has profound attractions. Or it is said that people are exposed to propaganda by television, as if there had never been masters, employers, judges, priests.

It is interesting that many of the contradictions of capitalist democracy have indeed come out in the argument about television control. The British version of 'public responsibility' was an emphasis, in new terms, of the priest and the teacher, with behind them a whole dominant and normative set of meanings and values. The American version of 'public freedom' was open broadcasting subject only to the purchase of facilities, which then settled freedom in direct relation to existing economic inequalities. In each case the control theoretically lost by the switchable receiver was regained by the assertion of paternalist or capitalist ownership of transmission. This explains the realities of contemporary mediation, but it explains also the apparently irrepressible search, by listeners and viewers, for other sources. Many British working-class people welcomed American culture, or the Americanised character of British commercial television, as an alternative to a British 'public' version which, from a

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subordinate position, they already knew too well. In many parts of the world this apparently free-floating and accessible culture was a welcome alternative to dominant local cultural patterns and restrictions. Young people all over Europe welcomed the pirate broadcasters, as an alternative to authorities they suspected or distrusted or were simply tired of. The irony was that what came free and easy and accessible was a planned operation by a distant and invisible authority – the American corporations. But in local and immediate terms, as in the other cases mentioned, this did not at first greatly matter; a choice was being exercised, here and now.

Television has now been a majority service for a whole generation. It has had certain intended effects corresponding to certain explicit intentions, essentially declared by the variable character of television institutions. But it has also had unforeseen effects, among them the desire to use the technology for oneself. In the young radical underground, and even more in the young cultural underground, there is a familiarity with media, and an eager sense of experiment and practice, which is as much an effect as the more widely publicised and predicted passivity. Indeed, by prolonged use of a technology which had seemed to be contained and limited to commercial or paternal or authoritarian ends, many people – we do not yet know whether they are enough people – conceived quite different intentions and uses. This is the critical answer to the notion of a determined technology as well as the more ordinary notion of a technological determinism. For these new uses are at least as appropriate to the technology as the uses and intentions which have hitherto defined it. It is from this generation, raised on television, that we are continually getting examples and proposals of electronic creation and communication which are so different from orthodox television as to seem a quite new technology and cultural form. The town-meeting by television is a radically alternative definition of the relations between 'broadcasters' and 'viewers'. The multi-screen play is a radically alternative definition of the framed projection or the framed flow. Just as television was coming to seem a determined cultural form or a determined

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technology, there are these radically alternative definitions and practices, trying to find their way through.

How the technology develops from now on is then not only a matter of some autonomous process directed by remote engineers. It is a matter of social and cultural definition, according to the ends sought. From a range of existing developments and possibilities, variable priorities and variable institutions are now clearly on the agenda. Yet this does not mean that the issue is undetermined; the limits and pressures are real and powerful. Most technical development is in the hands of corporations which express the contemporary interlock of military, political and commercial intentions. Most policy development is in the hands of established broadcasting corporations and the political bureaucracies of a few powerful states. All that has been established so far is that neither the theory nor the practice of television as we know it is a necessary or a predicting cause. Current orthodox theory and practice are, on the contrary, effects. Thus whether the theory and the practice can be changed will depend not on the fixed properties of the medium nor on the necessary character of its institutions, but on a continually renewable social action and struggle. It is therefore to the immediately emergent problems of the technology and the institutions that we must now turn.

