FROM CYBERNETICS TO CULTIVATION ANALYSIS:
A MEETING OF MINDS

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Introduction

Intellectual ferment in the field of communication is giving birth to seemingly divergent points of views, paradigms, schools of thought and research traditions. Communication researchers and scholars are increasingly challenging and are also being challenged by various interpretations and perceptions of the field, at times compounded by paradigmatic myopia in the course of approaching the epistemological maze.
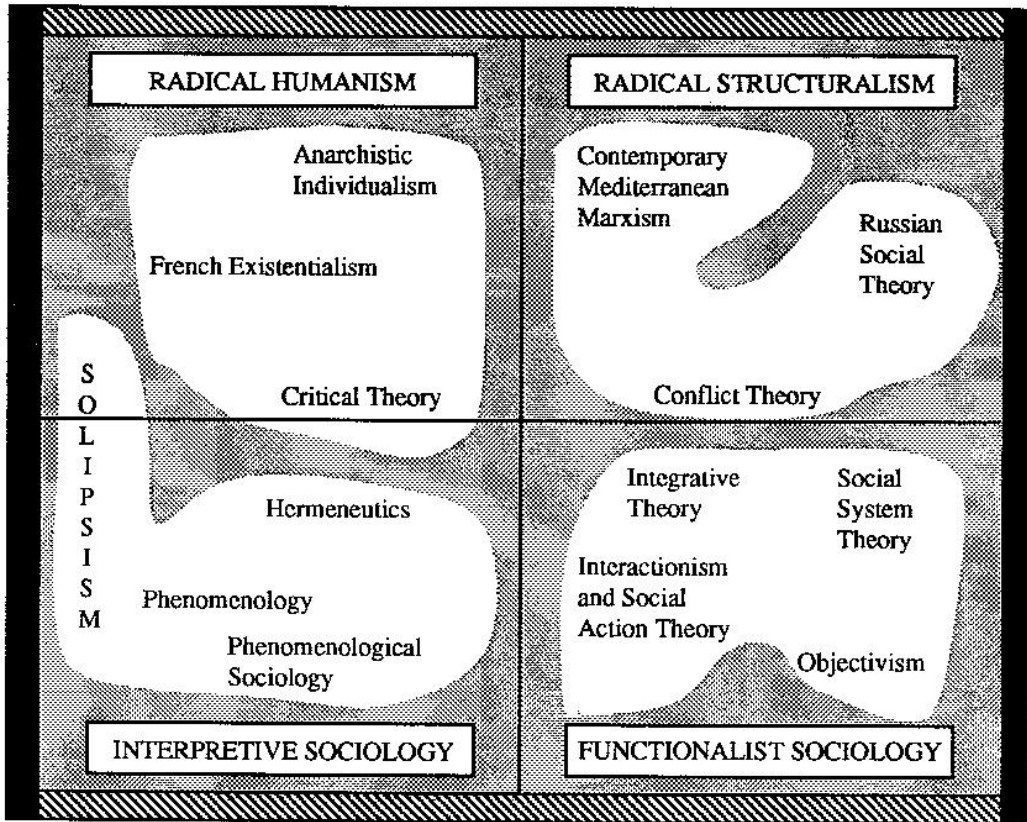
This paper attempts to compare and contrast the discourses of five communication scholars and researchers in the West--Lawrence Grossberg, George Gerbner, Klaus Krippendorff, Deane Neubauer and Paula Treichler. It also seeks to address their contemporary ideas and approaches that reflect the intellectual ferment in the field of communication. The selection of these five scholars does not in any way reflect a disregard for other known scholars and researchers but merely to highlight the meeting of these minds at one of several colloquia in a large mid-Western University in the USA. In doing so, there is an inclination on the part of this writer to draw from Burrell and Morgan's fourfold "typology for social science" (Rosengren, 1983) in order to identify the various approaches inherent in their "texts."

Overview of the Paradigms

According to Kaplan (1964, 118), a paradigm is a device for specifying meaning with respect to internal vagueness, being presented as the clearest instance of the general category. The "device" shown in figure 1 illustrates the subjectivist/objectivist dimension and the regulation/radical change dimension which in turn yield the four main paradigms: the radical humanist, the radical structuralist, the interpretive, and the functionalist. Within these different paradigms, one can identify the "niche breadth and overlap" of the different schools of thought, the various research traditions, and the "disarrayed" intellectual discourse.

Burrell and Morgan posit that the lines drawn between the cells represent absolute boundaries, but as Rosengren argues (1983, p. 187), the demarcation lines between the four cells of the typology are not as absolute. The outer dimensions in Figure 1 may also be more appropriately regarded as a continuum — within which the various schools of thought can find their different "nooks" or mingle together in harmony.

This is reminiscent of the empirical/non-empirical critical/administrative dichotomies that enhance the divergencies in perspectives and worldviews inherent in communication even today. Lazarsfeld, who was the first to label the two diverging viewpoints as "administrative" and "critical" research (Rogers, 1982, p. 125), did make an attempt to gain an adherence of minds between the two differing schools of thought. His effort in "building bridges" included a collaboration with Adorno, the "critical" researcher, in the late 1930's to do a study on radio and music. However, it ended because "Adorno ... (had) stress(ed) on pure speculation without the empirical information needed ... to obtain scientific status" (Lazarsfeld, cited in Rogers, 1982, pp. 139-140). On the contrary, McCluskie (cited in Rogers, 1982, p. 140) laid the blame on Lazarsfeld, the "administrative" researcher for his "insistence on subordinating critical theory to empirical research, rather than exploring what the schools could each contribute to the other."

RADICAL HUMANISM	RADICAL STRUCTURALISM
Anarchistic Individualism	Contemporary Mediterranean Marxism
	Russian Social Theory
French Existentialism	
Critical Theory	Conflict Theory
Hermeneutics	Integrative Theory — Social System Theory
Phenomenology	Interactionism and Social Action Theory
Phenomenological Sociology	Objectivism
INTERPRETIVE SOCIOLOGY	FUNCTIONALIST SOCIOLOGY

S O L I P S I S M

Legend :

■ Subjective/Objective Dimension

▨ Sociologies of regulation/radical change

Figure 1 : Burrell and Morgan's Typology

Interestingly Rogers himself alluded to the terms "empirical" and "critical" schools in spite of admitting to the gross oversimplification of the terminology (1982, p. 125). He concluded, however, that neither "empirical" nor "critical" communication scholars have a very accurate perception of each other. The main reason being that there is a lack of close contact between members of the two schools. Hence, the intellectual antagonism and avoidance. In some ways, the divergent views have enriched the field, but they have also bred intellectual arrogance and self-righteousness in defence of individual orientations.

Even with the superficial distinction between the "critical" and "empirical" schools, there are critical scholars who deny the nomenclature because oftentimes they do use empirical data in their critical analysis. As Grossberg said, "Critical research cannot be conducted without statistical method" (February 17, 1987). In the communication discourse, such arguments are now considered residuals of a dated polemic.

In relation to the Burrel and Morgan's typology, the same mistake of identifying a scholar with a particular label may easily be repeated. Paradoxically, the idea was developed as an attempt to move away from the simplistic dualism of critical versus empirical research. Even so, as Rosengren contends, the typology can be "a useful heuristic device for classifying much of today's social research" (1983, p. 202). By the same token, it is used in this paper as a framework to view the tendencies of each of the five scholars.

Customarily, the basic differences among most communication theorists are their epistemic beliefs as well as their methodological and ontological assumptions.

Table 1
Overview of Colloquia Speakers

Colloquia Speakers	Academic	Research	Theme of Paper
Krippendorff	Engineering (Germany) Communication (Univ. of Illinois)	* Content analysis * Systems theory * Application & critique of communication models of social phenomena * analysis, critique & development of qualitative/quantitative techniques of inquiry into communication	Radical Constructivism (A New empistemology for communication)
Neubauer	Political Science (Yale Univ.)	* Health Care * Mediation * Quality of life of the aged	Role of Silence in Communication
Grossberg	History Philosophy Communication (U. of Illinois)	* Critical theory * Politics of culture * Philosophy of Communication	Politics of Communication Research

Treichler	Languages &	* Linguistics	Communication
	Linguistics	* Medical Communication	& the Feminist
	(U. of Rochester)	* Feminist scholarship	Challenge
	Philosophy		
	(Antioch Coll., OH)		
Gerbner	Communication	* Violence & Terror	"Textuality"
	(U. of S.California)	in Media	of Storytelling
	Journalism	* Cultivation	in
	(U. of Calif.,	analysis	the past &
	Psychology	* Media Effects	present.
	(UCLA)	Studies	
	Folklore,		
	Literature		
	(U. of Budapest)		

Commonalities

One of the ways to negotiate meanings is by looking at commonalities rather than differences in people. In this case, however, the disparities seem to exceed their common-ness. Table 1 reflects the disparate fields of the speakers. Perhaps, one of the very few bondages that closes the communication gap is Communication. Even their academic background is typical of the multidisciplinary nature of communication scholars and researchers. While Krippendorf and Grossberg are alma maters of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaigne, Treichler is currently a faculty member of the same University. Except for Neubauer, the other four speakers — Gerbner, Krippendorff, Grossberg and Treichler — are members of the International Communication Association (ICA). Grossberg and Gerbner are members of the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR), where they may have crossed intellectual paths. Incidentally, there is a "stereotypification" that "empirical" scholars tend to be represented especially in ICA and "critical scholars in IAMCR (Rogers, 1982, p. 133).

Neubauer seems to be the only exception. He has a political science orientation, which may have accounted for his interests in the social movement of human communication, but he does not have a membership status in any of the Communication-related associations. So, the question that arises is what brought these scholars to a common challenge in the study of communication?

The Five Speakers Revisited:

Klaus Krippendorf. Krippendorf is described as being in the interface of the fringes. This is possibly due to his search for a merger of his mathematical and logical positivistic orientation and the participatory research approach that he admired in his research acquaintances. He ventures into the "new epistemology of communication" where he now "indulges" himself in radical constructivism. The reason being, that "all realities are within experiential constraints cognitively constructed" (Ernst von Glasersfeld, cited in Krippendorf's Cybernetics, 1986, p. 10). Krippendorff is rather pessimistic about bringing the different communication paradigms together because he believes that "sharing is a social myth," that sharing "in the usual sense of same, similar or overlapping cognitive representations between communicators is first of all difficult to establish" (Krippendorf, 1985, p. 25). In the paradigm of radical constructivism ("a paradigm of its own right"), he identifies five interconnected "imperatives," namely:

* Aesthetical Imperative

* Empirical Imperative

* Self-referential Imperative

* Ethical Imperative

* Social Imperative

These imperatives are described as parts of an integrated whole. As he posits, the empirical imperative limits the subjectivism or solipsism of the aesthetical imperative but on its own will always seek to reject the "non-viable constructions" particularly an "externally existing reality." Similarly, the self-referential imperative allows the "liberation from external determinisms" since "we are both cause and consequence of what we observe" (p. 29). However, given the autonomous nature of one's own construction of reality, Krippendorff argues that it is only "ethical" to grant the same autonomy, tolerance, empathy and respect to others in their individual constructions of reality. Finally, the social imperative calls for complementarity in communication but not at the expense of "restricting the subsequent freedom of choices" of construction (pp. 39, 41).

Through the radical constructivistic paradigm, Krippendorf suggests that aside from the fundamental level of subatomic particles such as electrons and protons, things do not really have "real" existence when they are not being monitored because our senses respond to impressions received from the world outside. As such, he seems to be converging toward an axiological form of rhetoric which blurs the distinction between knowledge of science and technology with the amalgamation of ethics, values and moral reasoning.

Deane Neubauer. To Neubauer, silence is a pregnant pause. He renders it meaningful "in the instrumental, ontological sense" (1987). He explicates the notion of recovering silence for the reveal of the "thought and the unthought", because it is an instrument of power in a discourse. The "wisdom" in "locating knowledge and understanding in thought itself" has its source from Foucault, a critical, non-Marxist, non-humanist, intellectual scholar, whom Neubauer refers consistently in his article *The New Politics of Mediation: Disclosing Silences* (1985).

He identifies several negative and positive silences imposed by the state, society and culture on the "powerless", namely the bureaucratic silence (state); the "unnoticed" words, speeches, and information inconvenient to the power brokers; the "imposed silences" of the information-rich societies on the information-poor; the non significant social narrative "left out of history"; "silence of the hideway" — associated with the capacity to avoid speech or noise; meditative silence (a philosophical and religious goal); "silent revolution"; and silences created by "iteration" and "inversion" (pp. 21-31).

Neubauer seems to fit Burrell and Morgan's description of the subjective "interpretive sociologist" (see Figure 1). He rejects the positivist/empiricist view of "truth" and relentlessly scans for knowledge of the "truth" — in this case, the truth of power is invested in language, and of the resultant silence. Henceforth, the "silent" audience (in the negative and positive sense) finds Neubauer immersed in the hermeneutics tradition of constructing the meaning structures of mediation. Within the context of Marxist theory (Grossberg, 1984, pp. 392, 399-340), the structural mediation (a hermeneutics approach) is one of the approaches to the methodology for the interpretation of cultural texts and messages.

Lawrence Grossberg. In contrast with Neubauer who chose to reflect on the microscopic level of language in "textuality," Grossberg takes a macroscopic view of Neo-Marxist critical theory ala Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. In addition, he argues in consonance with the Foucaultian notions of anti-elitism, anti-essentialism and anti-reductionism (1987), and anti-humanism. His anti-elitist

stance is similar to Krippendorf's worldview of the observer-observed relations, whereby the observers cannot escape from participating in the very phenomenon that they observe. As such, the observer should not treat the observed as "cultural inferiors" as if "he can see what others cannot see; he can understand what is in their best interest; and he can appropriate what technology they should use."

Grossberg contends that power is a network of complex relations, that power as "enablement" functions through different structures of power such as sexism, capitalism, ageism, racism and patriarchy. However, he indicts structuralism for shaping critical research with an abandonment of history, for "too easily dismissing the human subject" and for "too easily exceeding the nobility of power" (1987).

In his paper, *Strategies of Marxist Cultural Interpretation* (1984), Grossberg distinguishes ten approaches by which Marxist theorists respond to the problems within culture and society. Obviously there are other avenues to oversee the problems, one of which is the "empirical" strategy. However, Grossberg calls for the collapse of the radical distinction between the "critical" and "empirical" schools of thought because he believes that critical research cannot be conducted without statistical method, and neither can neutrality or objectivity of scientific knowledge be defined by the cultural habit of "privileged" groups of people (February 17, 1987). Like Krippendorff (1986) and Rosengren (1983), Grossberg also seeks to converge on a more complementary research perspective albeit Foucaultian, neo-Marxist or Gerbnerian.

Paula Treichler. If Neubauer included women as one of the *silenced* voices in America, Treichler exemplifies the "powerless" feminists who, in Foucaultian vision, will not allow themselves to remain the instrument of repression. Nevertheless, feminism has often been equated with sexual liberation and woman's liberation movement. As such, the feminist discourse is still looked upon with suspicion. To complicate matters, a person can be said to be an anti-feminist but not anti-women! In addition, a male may not be that willing to call himself a "feminist" since the movement is considered a woman's domain. Yet, even within the "theory" there exists a tendency to fragment women further according to race, nationality, socio-economic status, and other demographic characteristics. How and when would such a theory that is still beset with teething problems ever hope to be generalized and globally recognized?

Treichler believes that the feminist movement is an intellectual pursuit, and a cultural production. It is not a question of man's privileges versus woman's rights. Rather, it is a question of introducing gender as a core axiom, much like the Marxists had used "class" as a core axiom. To prove her point, Treichler alluded to the subject of gender in her cogent discussion of a bio-medical issue — AIDS. Without bringing up the goals of feminism, Treichler challenges the audience with her forthrightness and her articulation of sexuality that would have sounded very "unVictorian" and "unfeminine" years before. Again, given a "public" with a different culture and a different terministic screen, one wonders whether the values she portrays in her feminist rhetoric and her "current contests for meaning" might not remain just another "silence of the hideway."

George Gerbner. Gerbner has been credited for pioneering the so-called holistic "administrative" research on mass culture including the Cultural Indicators project conducted in the 1970's. His ideas behind this pioneering study on "the Mainstreaming of America" is an effort at constructing a dependency theory — dependency being one of the unconscious consequences of motivated exposure. However, he has been identified rather simplistically as an empiricist, a nomenclature resented by Gerbner since it dismisses the concerns he has for the betterment of society. It also overlooks the criticisms he has about "mainstreaming" and the cultivation effects of media. He admitted that with administrative research "there is no free choice but there are still some (genuine) interests involved." As Wander (1981) contends, cultural criticism does raise important questions but a number of obstacles exist, including social, cultural, political and economic implications of cultural products that are deemed "inappropriate" to a given research area or criticism (p. 498). Nonetheless, through such

research studies, Gerbner is at least able to represent the voice of the concerned public.

In *The Story Telling Animal,* Gerbner takes a retrospective view of "story telling." He combines the historical perspective of "story telling" with the enterprising world it presents. This certainly contradicts the notion of "empirical" studies as being ahistorical. In defence of scientific data, Gerbner (March 12, 1987) posits that:

1. We need to see how things work before we can deal with facts.
2. Facts are selected to conform to what society needs.
3. A decision has to be made on the choice of "stories of value," based on mythology, religion and philosophy.

In contemporary society, Gerbner perceives the television form of story telling as a "reincarnation of tribal religion by electronic means, a re-creation of mythology about life, a built-in formula which combines the three (above-mentioned) formulae into a totally integrated, demanding and highly-assembled factory line!" In addition, he describes television programs as "a ritualization of a non-selective nature; unique, because it is in the home and tuned on at an average of seven hours a day ... (that those) who tells the story in the first six years of life will dictate the child's future tastes." Regardless of age, television society is considered "a cultural, political and social mainstream" that is also highly volatile. He therefore emphasizes how and where society should position itself so as not to remain passive (or silent?).

Paradigmatic Orientation

Given the scholars' various written "texts" and oral discourse, and partially equipped with a piece of their life mosaic, this paper attempts to take a formistic stance by placing the five colloquia speakers in their appropriate "cells." This exercise is, nevertheless, treated with certain reservations since (to borrow Gerbner's words), articles are written for different occasions and at different times. The positioning is therefore made based on what the writer perceives to be her present worldview of the five scholars.

Drawing from Burrell and Morgan's typology it is interesting to note how the five differ to a slight extent in their approach to socio-cultural issues that are inextricably intertwined with the concept of communication. Firstly, of the four levels of assumptions about the nature of their "social" studies within the objective/subjective dimension, Krippendorff seems to be moving away from the ontological level of assumptions about realism/nominalism to the epistemological level of the dualistic positivism/antipositivism assumptions of human communication. Gerbner appears to be on the epistemological level; Grossberg is somehow merged in epistemology and methodology. With Treichler, there is a combination of methodology and an interest in the determinism/voluntarism of human nature; Neubauer also shares Treichler's level of dual assumptions about human nature.

On the regulation/radical change dimension, Rosengren (1983), identifies seven levels of assumptions about the nature of society (p.1887), including status quo/radical change, consensus/domination, solidarity/emancipation, and actuality/potential. To a large degree, everyone of the speakers share all the levels of assumptions in this dimension. As Rosengren contends, these levels are less neatly ordered into a clear-cut system, thereby making it rather difficult to ascertain the speakers' specific direction.

The four main paradigms yielded by the fourfold typology are the radical humanist, radical structuralist, the interpretive, and the functionalist. Using this typology and based on the four paradigms, the following assumptions are therefore made:

1. Treichler could be considered a radical humanist, a critical theorist leaning toward anarchistic individualism.

2. Krippendorff would be mid-way between radical humanism and interpretive sociology, but obviously moving away from solipsism.
3. Grossberg is more to radical humanism (although he admits to being anti-humanist) albeit some inclination towards interpretive sociology.
4. Neubauer, in contrast with Grossberg, is more in the interpretive paradigm and inclined toward radical humanism.
5. Gerbner is perhaps the only one who may be appropriately positioned within the functionalist sociology paradigm.

Conclusion

Values and evaluations do indeed mirror the way research is carried out, although admittedly, they should be minimized. These values and evaluations are evident in each of the speakers' discourse, although their "realities" of society may have been perceived and analyzed through different lenses. Each of the five scholars reflected his/her own vision of society, culture and the relationship between both, based on his/her individual *weltanschauung*. Krippendorf, with his background in engineering and communication, chose to reflect on the problematics of human affairs, especially on "the inquiry from human communication to therapy or the interactive design of one's own life." He chose to look at the problem from the cyberneticians' window of the world. Grossberg, the historian, philosopher, neo-Marxist (-feminist?), anti-humanist scholar, deliberates on the past in order to evaluate the present and with which to plot an ideal future. Neubauer, the political scientist, looks critically at the power relations and the ensuing silences that paradoxically "deafens" the societal environment. Meanwhile, Treichler, the feminist, decides to rock the patriachic boat by drawing attention to the gender problem. Finally, Gerbner provokes a complacent television generation into thinking about the "social realities" of violence and terror and what it does to manipulate young minds and future generations of "mainstreamed" heavy viewers.

The meeting of these minds indicates the need to look at the field of Communication not as an identifiable or non-identifiable academic discipline within the social sciences. What matters most is that the construction of the major communication highway is a reasonably effective endeavour with which to link culture, people, behaviour and society. Granted that each of the elements are not easily accessible. However, in that very notion of uncertainty, disparity, and non-accessibility lies the true challenge of human scholarship.

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