I feel compelled to respond to Eugene D. Tate and Kathleen McConnell's (1985) "Afterword and Comment" to the Canadian Journal of Communication's 1985 "Special Issue on Teaching Critical Communication Studies." Tate and McConnell misuse the work of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, misunderstand the problem of curriculum development, and miss altogether the validity and significance of Marx inspired criticism of "human communication" as both historical artifact and discipline of theoretical inquiry.

1. In "despairing" (why must our intellectual differences lead to psychopathological states?) that Professors Jhally, Saunders, Straw, and Mosco [see the Canadian Journal of Communication, 1985, 11 (1)] have written about what they teach rather than how they teach, Tate and McConnell insinuate that all discussions of what has traditionally been called "curriculum" (Hass, 1980, 4) are invalid. This attempt to call intellectual "fouls" over such a vast, on-going, and certifiably useful endeavor seems self-evidently absurd. That many universities offer graduate-level degrees in "Curriculum and Instruction" strongly implies that though "content" and "method" must ultimately be joined they are (1) analytically separable (even when the method is the message), and (2) that a choice of content does not prescribe a method of instruction or that a choice of method does not (except in the most extreme cases) necessarily control educational content. To crudely elide much of what has constituted educational thought in the name of "andragogy" or "learner centered problem solving techniques" (which here stands unsupported except by derisive sarcasm directed at those who would turn students into "ideological groupies" and which, on first glance, seems suspect of being solipsistic and neo-Platonic as well as ahistorical and apolitical) certainly cannot be justified by citing a series of scholar/teachers who have translated particular contents into simulations and other problem-solving formats or who have devised simulations, etc. and later found them to be educationally useful.

2. Tate and McConnell (especially page 128) equivocate on the crucial term "critical perspective." Most of the authors Tate and McConnell criticize use the term "critical" to mean an elaborate, materialist analysis of culture as a product of economic relationships and the ideate structures which justify those relationships (or hide them) and manage the contradictions which inevitably arise in them.
Tate and McConnell, on the other hand, use "critical" to mean vulgar intellectual individualism usually associated with a knowledge of classical conceptions of relevance and validity and a higher than normal degree of general skepticism. In both usages of "critical" the claim is made that criticism can "liberate" learners and develop in them greater than usual self-knowledge. These claims deserve systematic attention, not editorial confusion.

3. The "empirical" studies on the limited functions of the "lecture" cited by Tate and McConnell are exemplary social scientific nonsense. Charles Gruner has found in no fewer than seven studies, confirming the work of still other social scientists, that humor does not make a message more memorable or persuasive, or its source more credible (see as but one example Gruner and Lampton, 1972). And yet we know a comedian like Dick Gregory can take an audience from shrieking laughter to tears of empathy in a moment and that Johnny Carson on the "Tonight Show" from 1977 to 1980 belittled U. S. President Jimmy Carter and his family to the point where one could not continue to laugh with Carson and at the same time believe Carter was fit to govern. In the same way we know that there are some extra-ordinary lecturers (arguably the very best teachers of all) (Rubin, 1984) who dramatically strengthen students' critical abilities (by any definition). To assert that this is not so is to do violence to what for many of us has been a fruitful experience as lecturer and listener.

4. The people Tate and McConnell criticize for not being dialectical or interactive enough in their educational methods are inevitably dialectical and interactive according to the very communication theorists they cite and praise. Human relationships -- classroom relationships being one example -- are by definition and experience interactive phenomena. Perhaps they should be more reflexively interactive; that is, that the participants ought more self-consciously attend to the interaction which is taking place and the relationship which is being constructed. Many passages from Martin Buber and a few from Rosenstock-Huessy (including the latter's slogan, "I respond although I will be changed") might be cited to support this somewhat attractive position; but this would be a distortion of the work of both of these thinkers, an unnecessary limitation and an emptying out of what was for both the vital material agenda into the consciousness of the moment.

5. I, for one, infer from reading this "Special Issue" that the scholars under the cloud of despair in Tate and McConnell's comments really are sensitive to their students and profoundly "dialectical" in their approach to the classroom, albeit the dialectic of economic class. It is a grave error to potshcut and second guess the neo-Marxian critical theorists of human communication: though they are not all equally advanced in their analysis or talented in articulating their ideas, they are working in a complex and systematic way which can only be understood and effectively criticized from the inside. More important still is the role these critical theorists play in academic life today. Rosenstock-Huessy himself once remarked (Martin, 1982), perhaps
offhandedly, at the height of the Spanish Civil War that the "Communists are the only true Christians today." And so it is in the 1980's that the Marx-influenced thinkers are doing the best job of giving all the rest of us in higher education a way to say that when we look out on these bright, smiling faces in our classrooms we are in a very real sense not nearly so much developing human potential as fattening a class, not so much liberating as being linked by these lives to the industries of mayhem, repression, and social isolation.

6. The work of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy does not authorize the attacks of Tate and McConnell on the lecture. Many of the works of Rosenstock-Huessy come down to us in the form of transcribed and scripted lectures. Entire lecture courses that Rosenstock-Huessy gave at Dartmouth College are available for sale on audio cassette tape. Stories (legends) of Rosenstock-Huessy in the classroom make him out to have been something of a tyrant (though a loveable, forgiving, and apologetic tyrant). Rosenstock-Huessy stressed in all of his educational writings the necessity for authority, real authority predicated on relevant experience and genuine risk, in the classroom (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1970a, 1981a) and the absolute necessity of the elder generation teaching the younger generation with vigor and by example (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1970b, 1981b). Eugene Tate well knows that when the definitive dissertation is written on the educational thought of Rosenstock-Huessy it will scarcely treat the issue of lecture versus discussion (or simulation, etc.) and will focus instead on the expansion of education to adults and community settings, the education of people of different class backgrounds together, public service as an educational issue, education for complete communicative competence by in the temporalization of epistemology, the importance of schooling, and the school's transformation of the calendar.

7. It is plainly false to say that Rosenstock-Huessy, Rosenzweig, and Buber are the "only" seminal Twentieth-Century thinkers to criticize Aristotelian/Cartesian assumptions (Tate and McConnell, 1985, 126), nor would it be appropriate to say that all such criticism originates with them. Indeed, it is not at all evident why Aristotle and Descartes were linked in this way, not even slightly evident why Descartes and Aristotle (especially Aristotle who has so often renewed the rhetorical tradition in communication studies) must perish that we may think aright. In point of indisputable fact, almost every major figure in the so-called existential-phenomenological movement in philosophy and psychology has savaged traditional rationalism and "positivism," attacked Descartes by name, and energetically worked over the subject/object split. (See as but a few examples: Husserl, 1962, 91 - 132; Jaspers, 1955, 1964, 171 - 185; Gudorf, 1965, 19 - 33; Scheler, 1958, 84; Sartre, 1956; Ortega, 1933, 29 - 35; Berdiaev, 1938, 10 - 14.) Other intellectual traditions have made additional criticisms. In the "rhetorical studies" tradition of communication research in the United States, while Aristotle remains influential, Chaim Perelman's "new rhetoric" which begins on the very first page with an attack on Descartes is widely respected (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, 1 - 62);
in the line of scholarship Kenneth Burke's motion/action distinction is widely employed to restore to the human sciences what Cartesian positivism is thought to omit. The greatest shortcoming of the secondary studies on Rosenstock-Huessy is a preoccupation with and hence exaggeration of the novelty and precedence of his thought. It is both more modest and truer to say as Walter Ong, S.J. did (1960, 139), "It would seem inaccurate to view [Rosenstock-Huessy's] work as resulting from the 'influence' of Heidegger, Jaspers, Lavelle, Marcel, Denis de Rouge- mont, or even Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. He breathed the same air as these men, sensed many of the same questions; but one feels that he has made his own distinctive contributions to the climate of ideas." Rosenstock-Huessy was an original thinker of great force and range, but his work in epistemology, discourse typologies, the theory of revolution, and social change strategy cannot be divorced from the mainstream of Twentieth Century thought.

8. The Tate and McConnell essay reads as an exercise in squeamishness about dread Marxism. Rosenstock-Huessy would authorize these misgivings, though not in this tepid-equivocal retreat to a patently subjective andragogy. Rosenstock-Huessy would boldly set against Marxism the even more complex Christianity (though his own idiosyncratic version) to show that Marxism is a Christian heresy and like all heresies both robust with the truth and teetering on barbarism, devoid of the principle of paradox and the centering doctrine of human fragility. With Christ as the central critical figure, Rosenstock-Huessy stands over every complacent capitalist and every frivolous Marxist revolutionary, challenging both the arrogance of privilege and the arrogance of the dispensability of social order. Of course these are terms which are foreign to contemporary academic discussion, but if Rosenstock-Huessy's is an example of the examined life at all, it is of finding profundity in unpopular positions and having the courage to express these positions. In these terms, the real Rosenstock-Husseyian response to neo-Marxist educational thought is yet to be written.

REFERENCES


Martin, W. Personal communication with the author, 1982.


