
Phatic Communion with Satellite's Machine

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Phatic Communion with Satellite's Machine
Via Bob Dobbs
Bob Dobbs spoke as a member of a panel, following the screening of a documentary film, "The Ad and The Ego," Harold Boihem's humorous critique on media advertising, on July 27, 1996, as part of the Documental Film Series at Midnight Special Bookstore in Santa Monica, California.

Gerry Fialka: Bob, you worked with Marshall McLuhan. And he was perhaps the first to publish a book, in 1951, studying the effects of advertising. Now, Marshall said that everything man creates has services and disservices. In regards to Harold Boihem's film "The Ad and The Ego," tell us about the services of advertising.

Bob Dobbs: Let's note the letter McLuhan wrote to Ezra Pound, in 1951, explaining that George Orwell was a "duffer" for describing in 1948 a situation already having occurred in 1900 as nostalgia for 1934. What you have to understand is that advertising, as McLuhan said, is the greatest artform to ever happen; better than Beethoven, better than Mozart, better than Zappa, although he did not know of Zappa coming in, and better than Bill Clinton, today. The point is, you must understand that advertising is communication between machines! Machines came alive by 1967. Now, they're in an angelic state. So, advertising is communication between angels. And it has nothing to do with anthropomorphic humans. This is the ground which I work with. Now, repeat your question.

Gerry: McLuhan taught how everything - movies, TV, techno, etc. - has services and disservices...

Bob: No services and disservices for US! It's the services and disservices for MACHINES! Now, they obliterated themselves (their animation) by 1977, entering the angelic state. These ideas are approximated by Baudrillard. But he gets bogged down back in his determining about, and analysis of, machines communicating - the ecstasy of communication between machines. He did not understand the angelic state which occurred then. And, of course, we're now in a post-angelic state, but that's too complex for undergraduates. So, let's return to "The Ad and The Ego". This movie was a great celebration of the machine's unconscious - that once they'd killed themselves, these angels then celebrated the Akashic Records of what happened when they had an unconscious. They don't have an unconscious now. They are obliterated. They are post-angelic - they are collectively conscious! So, figure that one out!

Audience Member: Bob, the machines are angelic; why the responsive culture pattern, why the responsive culture change regarding certain machines?

Bob: That's where you enter the area of menippean satire, which is found in pre-classical Greek times, where cultures don't yet have a sense of Ego and personal identity. The polis lived in a state of irony, constantly. Primitive tribes, in our history - anthropomorphic history - manifest menippean salutation, menippean satire, menippean culture, menippean play-writing or ritual, menippean irony all of the time - extreme self-consciousness. So, why would machines - since they're now menippeanizing themselves because their angelic state disappeared by 1990 - why do the machine-angels become an Alternative Nation and are now satirizing what they did aesthetically? Because art is always a retrospective of creatively evolving perception. So, the machines are looking back upon the time when they had an unconscious and then, the loss of their unconscious creates great irony and laughter behind the scenes, for angels. Get it?

Audience: Yes. Your mechanoid angels are actually demons posing as angels.

Bob: Yes. In Finnegans Wake, Joyce wrote "my producers, are they not my consumers?" Yes, Shem and Shaun are twins, all things considered, are angelic and demonic simultaneously since 1977. So, yes, you have this duality which can't be conceptualized or imagined - i.e., this exemplifies the obsolescence of images. Images are obsolete, as are perceptions. These media critics in "The Ad and The Ego" film are so ridiculous talking about the battle between left-hemisphere verbality and right-hemisphere imagery when neither of them exist any longer. Remember, it's nostalgia for the angels to review the images as representing a time when images had a specificity. They currently have no specificity in our time when the din of media overload/overbyte blends them into a moire', a pun. Am I right? - Yes, deal with it!

Audience: You know, we wouldn't have all this culture-wreckage if we'd be creating, controlling more of our own.

Bob: That's right - where we have potential for the "making-process". A very important point! We're no longer matching, there's no communication. The excess of media-communications are a nostalgic effect. That's why we are obsessed with this image of the humans coming in after the dinosaurs - today the humans are the former angels, reincarnated in the anthropomorphic situation. So, everyone entering that show and looking human-like - they're androids. They are now the machines, reincarnating, doing that, creating a new thing. They have become gods, they have wiped out both the traditional God and the Devil! Now that's an amazing situation, but it is a fact!

Audience: What you're saying is all very interesting. But I had trouble understanding only about half of what you said.

Bob: No, you can't understand what I said because I'm speaking about something that's not communicable.

Audience: Okay, so will we arrive at a point where we simply understand and acquiesce to being advertisedly objectified? Or, will we share your/our enlightened insights with our mates in a self-education of resistance to...

Bob: Okay! Let's make a religion out of the phrase "phatic communication" which comes from Malinowski, the anthropologist. Phatic communication happens when you're walking down a hall at work and someone asks, "How're ya doin'?", and you don't literally describe how you're doing. You just answer, "How are you doin'?" You echo them only - that's phatic communication. Look up the word "phatic". It means a communication of general sociability. Seeing this film on advertising, we're watching machines engage in phatic communication. And if we played the tape back of everything you just said ("What am I gonna say with my associates, friends, and family?"), you're going to continue imitating machines - since that's all you can do - doing phatic communication. So, this event tonight, is the phatic communion by US in mimicry of what machines have archetypalized.

Audience: Why are we doing that? What's the point?

Bob: Why does someone say, "How're ya doin'?", and then they don't want to go into your answer? In reply, you say, "How are you doin'?", not wanting to go into their answer either.

Audience: We're being polite.

Bob: No, we "looka-beesy!" Remember when the apparition of Jesus showed up in an Irish tavern? The bartender phoned up the Vatican - VAT 69 was the number in the '60s - and he asked "What do we do, Pope?" He got the Pope on the line - "What do we do? Jesus is at the door, what do we do?" A long pause at the Pope's end, and then he said, "Looka-beesy, looka-beesy!" That's what the machines are doing. I can't say that WE even exist - we are below quark status. We are mu-mesons, ephemeral energy bodies! "We are not men, we are devo" - understand that, at best, we died. And the death march had begun in 1840 when the electric environment, which was a new vital field, came in.

Audience: So, how do we resurrect ourselves? I guess my...

Bob (pointing at the logo on his T-shirt): POSITONE! I'll tell you how we resurrect ourselves. This word "POSITONE" refers to a positive futuristic attitude - acknowledging the credibility of cold-fusion energy. Celebrate Pons and Fleischmann! Their breakthrough in fusion energy retrieves the merging of first and second Nature, which will break us through so we can vacate the city... I agree... (at this point Bob has raised his voice ever higher to exceed the simultaneous din of audience opinionating - verbal chaos intentionally evoked by Bob as he continues within the competition with his exegesis)... I agree with you.

Audience: I appreciate that, having seen people around me do this in the office - as thousands are killed in the Gulf War - a desensitization. So, are you saying we've been sold on these images? Thus becoming plastic "undergraduates" of your analysis...

Bob: The evidence is there! It's romantic to think that we are "plastic"! I tell you, we are sub-atomic! We are dead. But most people think they can't feel dead. So, let's say we're tiny, tiny, tiny mu-mesons. That's the situation! And we are stuck in this prison, or whatever you want to call it. The actors in the global theater are now the machines who then became angels. Now, what are WE? That's what is interesting - we created the machines. I don't believe we can define what we are - because somehow we appear to be here. Yet, this is only privately, in our individuated citadel of consciousness. In terms of communication, which is what a medium is - it's shared information, it's community - shared communities and archetypes are talking, but they're not now speaking to the thing that created them. I don't know what that original thing was. We're talking here about the deepest metaphysical question that ever happened! Right now!

Audience: I don't know what you're talking about?!

Bob: You can't know! But I'm describing to you the present. There is no meaning in "The Ad and The Ego" documentary. And I had the guts to "performance-piece" it for you, so you guys deal with it!

Gerry: It would help for people to study the McLuhan tenet that all media have services and disservices.

Audience: McLuhan's perception was that media resumed the sensory extension of man. Then, isn't advertisement part of that natural progression?

Bob: Yes, that's why it's the greatest artform.

Audience: So then, what's the debate?

Bob: There is no debate! Dialectics are obsolete. We are spectators.

Audience: Are we having a dialogue... or...?

Bob: We are welded into the Magnetic City. We are having perceptual input constantly. Yet we have no means to reflect, or become detached from it. We are inside the beehive honey.

Audience: What you're saying, then, is we need to break, and we need to step out of, and if you're going to step out of the audio-color matrix, then humanity must follow? I mean, according to McLuhan...

Bob: Yes. He advocated turning off TV. He then realized what he said - it being too late. And he cried. And he realized that by the '70s it was too late. He went to Mass every day. So, he realized the apocalypse of our situation - now! But what is happening is that cold-fusion energy is a miracle - because it'll give us more energy than is put in. So, over the next 50 years, humanity will gradually be able to move out of the cities and that prison, and situations will be set up where the usual energy production-consumption level was not possible before. Perhaps it occurred in Atlantis and Lemuria, but we don't know about that, yet. So, perhaps we're going to retrieve them. I'm giving you a positive futurism - a "positone" view. But right now you're in hell. And you may not be alive in 20 years to be there. But someone will be.

Audience: So there's no hope!

Bob: Hey, that is not my point of view. I am using English, an obsolete medium of expression...

Audience: You are saying there is no hope?

Bob: No! I just said there is hope - that cold fusion broke through, with Pons and Fleischmann over in Nice, France.

Audience: You are saying our survival will depend upon having to stop watching?

Bob: YOU have to - I don't! I've already arrived in the new situation. What you'd like to know is very hard to communicate. But my delivery must be kept as bad as possible to keep the numbers of my audience and devotees down. Because I haven't time to deal with everybody - you're on your own! (With audience stirring and voicing of catcalls, critically or phatically - Bob persists.) Yeah, yeah (sarcastically) - go home and turn off your TV and radio (then, a woman stomps out in dismay). Yeah, yeah - congratulations and go home!... I agree. I'll be over at your place later.

Audience: Where's Connie?

Bob (looking around the audience suspiciously): Who said that? Who said that? Connie - the answer - is in this audience. But, unfortunately, you cannot hear about her work, yet. There are government problems and the protocol is secret. I'll tell you though, on the record, the treatment for treating AIDS and many other diseases successfully is in this audience! But you're not able to find out about it for a while because you all live in a Mixed Corporate-Media Environment. And the truth collides with advertising - to define for you that environment you're approximately living in. So that's good!

Audience: A principle for social change is that of first evolving one's self; e.g., my own striving to control my own waste flow and conspicuous consumerism...

Bob: That's called electric autonomy. The environment allows you to have that. Because the machines have killed you off, you have no community. So, you have to deal with yourself. That's what's a mystery. But there's no one else you can effectually communicate to. That's why you're being polite, saying, "Oh, I'll let you do what you want". But you couldn't actually influence them anyway. Language communicates beyond or before understanding. That's the amazing thing about "the language" - language being the most fundamental of all technologies.

Audience: Moving away from the topic, what do you think of Marxism?

Bob: Marx was right. He was the greatest thinker of all time. THE END