

VILÉM FLUSSER On the role of art in the present situation.

(Notes for a lecture held at "Institut de l'Environnement", Paris, during a round-table on "Art and communications" in December 1972)

It is a duty of intellectual honesty to define the terms that are going to be manipulated in the course of the following exposition. I shall therefore define the terms "art" and "present situation" for the exclusive purpose of this talk, but I reserve the right to modify these definitions, should the development of my arguments so require. Let "art" be any communication of a private experience in the memory of a sender toward receivers through public channels manipulated in a way aiming at provoking private experience in the receivers. Let "the present situation" be one in which society is divided into two systems of culturemes, and in which there is a tendency toward an interruption of feed-back between the two systems. I shall defend a thesis according to which art has a specific, but problematic, role in the present situation. My arguments will be informed by the methods of the theory of communication, but existential connotations will hover in the background.

(1) Art as communication of what was private: The realm of the private, (as opposed to the realm of the public), is characterized by the concreteness and unicity of the elements it is composed of. Every element of that realm is an immediate experience, unique and incapable of repetition, be it passive (passion, suffering), be it active, (action, work). This is implied in the term "aistheton" (experience). There are theories according to which such elements are incapable of being communicated. All communication presupposed intersubjective and in some sense conventional codes, and is therefore public. Experience communicated is experience published, which means translated into a code, and such codification implies falsification in the sense that the private concreteness of experience is lost in communication. This is an aspect of the fundamental loneliness of man exemplified in such statements as "we are islands" and "the sentence "I have a tooth-ache" is devoid of meaning". If we stick to this type of theories it is relatively easy to show formally that any attempt at codifying experience leads necessarily to abstraction, (to the abandon of concreteness).

Now art aims at what is formally shown to be impossible: the communication of the concrete experience, the private. It aims at saying what cannot be said, at letting speak the unutterable, or however we want to put it. As a consequence we must conclude that every artistic statement, (every aesthetic message), can be shown formally to be nonsense. But we know from private experience, (and also from other considerations), that this is not so. There is a contradiction between formal analysis and experience, which may point to a limit of the field to which formal analysis can be applied. But it is equally possible to see the problem from a different viewpoint.

The admission of limits to formal, ("structural"), analysis is, itself, a movement in the strategy of structuralism. (Those who rejoice over the

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limits of the structuralist method do it, as a rule, prematurely.) For instance: Aesthetic messages can be shown formally to lack the concrete meaning they aim at. But ~~they~~^{it} can be shown by other means that they can have it. Therefore the codes in which aesthetic messages are communicated must be analyzed as to their structure, in order to discover this apparent contradiction.

Such an analysis will show that what characterizes aesthetic codes is the "connotating" function of the symbols they are composed of. Each symbol represents a more or less well defined parameter of significations within the code, and, inversely, each signification within the universe of the code is represented, within the code, by more than one symbol. In other words: aesthetic messages can be received, ("read", "interpreted", "decodified"), in various forms, equally "correct" within the more or less well defined parameters. They have various meanings, and in this sense such messages are "open". This openness of reception, (this "freedom of interpretation"), goes on in the private realm of the receiver. Therefore such messages acquire, in the memory of the receiver, a concrete meaning. It is in this sense that the openness of these messages is their aesthetic dimension.

Now a "classical" analysis of codes, (for instance an analysis by symbolic logic), will transform the symbols of the codes into "denotating" ones, which means that it will establish a bi-univocal relation between the code and its universe of significations. Such transformation will "close" the message in the sense that it will allow only one single, "correct", reception, (it will allow no interpretation). All connotation will then come to be a perturbation of the message, ("noise"), and the analysis will tend to eliminate it. With this it will have eliminated the aesthetic dimension of the message. It will thus have shown formally that the attempt at communicating a private experience was a failure.

In short: aesthetic messages do communicate a concrete experience, if they communicate between the private realm of the sender and the private realm of the receiver through the public channel of codes, composed of connotating symbols. The contradiction between the formal analysis of these messages and their actual reception can be formally shown to be merely apparent. But there is this problem: The public channel which mediates between the private realms in art presupposes a social consensus. The parameters of signification of the symbols that compose the aesthetic codes must be more or less well defined by such a consensus, or artistic messages become indeed nonsense. (This is the sense in which art can be said a "cultural phenomenon", and in which it is conditioned by history, geography, and by the social level of those who participate in it). To discover that consensus is to des-ideologize the artistic message, in that it is a discovery of the convention that establishes the parameters of its significations.

The consensus that establishes the codes can occur on various le-

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vels in the consciousness of those who use the codes both to emit messages and to receive them. For instance: the consensus which establishes the code of figurative painting, (which defines the parameter of signification of, say, certain lines signifying perspective), occurs at present on almost unconscious levels. The consensus which establishes the code of the Brechtian theatre, (which defines, say, the parameter of signification of slides in the background of the stage), occurs at present on almost wholly conscious levels. And the consensus which establishes the code of Gothic tapestry, (which defines, say, the parameter of signification of the unicorn), occurs at present on conscious levels, but may have occurred on almost unconscious levels in the Middle Ages. This implies that the participation in artistic communication, (the ability to emit and receive meaningful aesthetic messages), presupposes, (among other things), the more or less conscious learning of the codes in which they are communicated. The so-called "universal art" communicates its messages in codes established by consensus so deeply unconscious that it is believed to be inherent in man, but it can be shown, on analysis, that it is determined just as much by social factors as any other codes are. In sum: Though art is communication of what was a private experience in the memory of the sender prior to its emission, and will become a private experience in the memory of the receiver after its reception, it is still determined by public consensus.

(2) The present situation as one of decaying consensus: A "perfect" society, (from the point of view of theory of communication), would be one the participants of which would all participate in a consensus that establishes all the codes on all levels of consciousness in which all the messages of that society are communicated. In such an extreme situation there would be "perfect understanding" between all the participants of society, in the sense that everybody would be capable of understanding every message, though not necessarily in the sense that everybody would accept every message. In all actual societies, (except possibly the most "primitive" ones), there are always some codes which were established by a consensus not universal to that society, which means that there are always some messages which some participants of the society are incapable of understanding. (Not because such messages are too complex for some, as some others would make us believe, but because they are codified on the basis of a consensus in which some participants of the society do not take part.) In such cases one can speak of incommunicability within the society, (therefore not of "misunderstandings", but of "incapacity of understanding").

In Occidental society one can distinguish, for the sake of convenience, between three types of codes, (although such a distinction is merely schematic): codes that transmit messages which are used as models of knowledge, (for instance the scientific codes), codes that transmit messages which are used as models of behavior, (for instance the codes of technology), and codes that

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transmit messages which are used as models of experience, (for instance the codes of the arts). Such messages used as models are called "culturemes" and their sum total is called "culture". (For instance: a scientific proposition, a motor car and a painting are Occidental culturemes and part of Western culture.) There were periods in the history of Western society in which the consensus establishing the three types of codes was more or less universal, ("catholic", i.e. participated in by everybody). In such situations there was constant feed-back between the three types of codes, which means that messages communicated in one type of code could and were constantly re-codified in an other. (In this sense it may be said, for instance, that a scholastic ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ proposition, a sword and a cathedral are "Gothic" models.) This is no longer the case in the present situation.

One method to analyze the present situation from the point of view of theory of communication is the genetic one, and it may proceed, for instance, as follows: it may start from a situation in which Western consensus was more or less universal, and it may point out the various phases of the decay of the universal consensus. It may thus try to show that in the situation called the "Gothic" one there was a consensus which established most, (though not all) the codes through which Western society communicated. (The cabba-listic codes and the codes of witchcraft are examples of possible exceptions). It may try to show that this consensus created a system of channels that structured communications, (for instance the Church as a sender of models of knowledge, in constant feed-back with the peasantry as a sender of models of experience). It may proceed and try to show the decay of consensus on a high level of consciousness, and the conservation of consensus on the deeper levels of consciousness, which is called the Renaissance and Reformation. It may observe the coming about of codes which were not based on universal consensus, (like the codes of the natural sciences and of "academic" arts), and the change this provoked in the system of channels, (for instance universities and museums as senders of models of knowledge and experience with very little feed-back between each other, and almost no feed-back with other senders). And it may finally try to show the decay of consensus on deeply unconscious levels which characterizes the present situation. It may observe the coming about of codes which are based on a very highly conscious and very restricted consensus, (like the codes of the various specialisations in science and the various "avant-garde" artistic tendencies), and the coming about of codes which are based on a deeply unconscious, but nonetheless restricted consensus, (like the codes of mass communication). And it may observe the change this provoked in the system of channels, (for instance the total lack of feed-back between the senders of scientific and artistic messages and the receivers of messages communicated through the mass media). But there is a serious drawback to this method.

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The defect of the method is that it will tend to minimize that unprecedented revolution in the means of communication that became effective around the middle of this century, and that makes every comparison between the present situation and previous ones a very doubtful endeavor. Therefore, although a genetic approach to the problem is obviously illuminating, it is insufficient, if we want to seize the present situation in its historical uniqueness. Like in so many other fields, we must complete the genetic approach with a structural analysis of the problem.

If we consider the structure of the present situation from the point of view of theory of communication, we find that our society is divided into two parts that tend to communicate less and less with each other. The first part can be called the "élite" and participates in a consensus which establishes certain codes and creates certain types of channels of communication. The second part can be called the "masses" and participates in a consensus which allows it to receive certain messages codified by the élite and ~~manipulated~~ communicated through channels manipulated by the élite, but has so far not created any proper codes nor any proper channels of communication. This structure is a result of very recent means of communication, and is tending to result in two sets of culture systems with no communication between them.

An analysis of the communication structure of the élite will reveal the following picture: There is a deep-level consensus as far as the structure of all codes to be established is concerned. They are to be linearly progressive. (This might be called a "historical" or "processual" consensus.) This results in highly consciously established codes through which the participants of the élite communicate with each other. These codes tend to become ever more elaborate and difficult to learn, and the élite tends therefore to divide into ever more distinct and ever smaller communication islands, ("specialisations"). But the deep-level consensus permits transcodings between the islands. (The division between a "scientific" and a "humanistic" culture is a myth, and communicological analysis can show this.) The channels through which intra-élite messages are communicated are partly traditional, (spoken and printed language, technical instruments and works of art), and partly more advanced, (various computer languages, sophisticated apparatus and sets of scientific and artistic symbols). This structure permits a steady increase in the flow of models of knowledge and experience, but, for various reasons, limits the flow of behavior models. (This is an aspect of the so-called "crisis of values".) But the deep-level consensus also permits the establishment of codes destined to transmit messages to the masses, and not to transmit messages of intra-élite communications. These codes will be considered a little later.

An analysis of the communication structure of the masses will reveal the following picture: There is a deep-level consensus as far as the structure of all codes of communication is concerned: they must have a surface, ("image")

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structure if they are to have a meaning, (although this two-dimensional core of the codes may be accompanied by linear envelopments). (This might be called a "static" or "passive" consensus.) It can be shown that this consensus, (which represents a radical departure from Occidental consensus at least since alphabetic writing), is a result of programation by the mass media, and in this sense the masses are an extremely recent phenomenon in Western society. In other terms: the mass media are not, strictly speaking, media through which the élite communicates with the masses, (and still less are they media through which participants of the masses communicate with each other), but media through which the élite changes a part of society into masses. The codes of the mass media, (mostly audio-visual ones), are consciously elaborated by one of the specialized group within the élite, (the "technicians of communication"), but though they result from extremely complex manipulations they are very easy to learn. (They are structurally complex but functionally simple, and in this opposed to most of the codes that serve intra-élite communications.) The channels through which the messages in these codes are communicated are mostly highly sophisticated, (TV, films, illustrated magazines, supermarkets and so forth). In this structure there are very few senders, (all of them members of the élite), and an enormous number of passive receivers, (the masses). The messages can be shown to be all models of one type of behavior, (consumption behavior), although some may be masked as models of knowledge, (for instance vulgarized science), and some as models of experience, (for instance the arts of the masses).

The structural analysis of the present situation just offered is, of course, far too sketchy. It merely points to some of the results of analytical research, and touches all problems involved merely in passing. But it must serve the present purpose. The important aspect for this exposition is the fact that the decay of a deep-level consensus in our society, and the tendency toward the establishment of a new type of consensus, (the mass consensus), tends to result in two separate sets of culturemes that divide our present culture. On the one hand there are culturemes based on élite consensus, (like scientific statements, technical and administrative apparatus, and art exhibitions), on the other culturemes based on mass consensus, (like posters, gadgets and mass products, and sport competitions). They result in two types of man: the "value-free" fonctionnaire on the one hand, the consumer on the other. There can be no feed-back between the two, only the discursive communication from the fonctionnaire toward the consumer. This is a new type of totalitarian structure, and any comparison with previous totalitarian situations must fail, because mass media have no parallel in the past. It is important, however, to stress the fact that the decay of deep-level consensus has not yet reached the stage of actual division in the sense that most participants of the élite also participate in the masses. At

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present the division of deep-level consensus is not only a social phenomenon, (it divides society), but also a psychological phenomenon, (it divides the "program in the memory" of most participants of the élite). In this sense some sort of universal communication within the present society is still possible.

(3) The role of art in the present situation: Art was defined in this exposition as any communication of an experience that was private prior to its communication. This definition points to a dialectic that operates within art. All private experience is modeled by aesthetic messages received prior to the actual experiencing. (All experience is culturally conditioned.) And the models received were themselves thus modeled. This imposes on art as communication a dialogical structure. (Every aesthetic message is in this sense an answer to some previously received message.) Which means, (among other things), that the artist emits messages in search for an answer. The structures of the communications of models of knowledge and behavior are not, necessarily, dialogical in the same sense. (The scientist and ideologue may discourse their message.) In this sense there is no "history of the arts", as there is an history of science and politics, (or technology), because, being dialogical, art is not progressive. Nothing, in art, is ever overcome. The dialectic of art is a case of "negative dialectic", in the sense that there is no synthesis to it.

Now if it is true that aesthetic messages model our most private experiences, (if we love, suffer, dream, desire and act within such models), then one must admit that these models somehow inform that realm which we tend to call "the real". (In the sense that "real" is what we experience apparently immediately, but in fact through the models of aesthetic messages we were exposed to.) This is therefore the true function of art: supply models for the experience of the "real". To tell us who we are and what world we live in. It is in this sense that art "produces" reality, ("poiesis"), and that it is "dis-alienating". It is also in this sense that art is prior to science and the ideologies, (it models the "observational data" of science and the "world of given facts" that ideologies aim at changing).

Furthermore it is in this sense that the "real" is not something objectively given, but always given through the mediation of some intersubjective model. The intersubjectivity of the models is the result of a consensus which made it possible to codify the aesthetic messages used as models for the experience of the "real". In fact, in the last analysis, this is what every consensus that establishes codes is about: an agreement as to what will be considered "real" by a given society at a given moment. (This is what assigning significations to symbols means at the bottom.) The decay of consensus therefore implies the loss of agreement as to what is "real", (collective and individual alienation).

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Now such considerations reveal an ambiguous relationship between art and consensus. There can be no artistic message without a previous consensus, and there can be no consensus without an experience of the "real", which again depends on some previous artistic message. This ambiguity admits no solution, (no question asking for an "origin" does), and the question: "what came first, society or art?" is very probably meaningless, just like the parallel one: "what came first, codes or consensus?" (Because, of course, consensus is a meta-code, and requires a previous consensus.)

If there is a more or less universal deep-level consensus, the role of art in society is, seen from the point of view of theory of communication, not very problematic. It is to lift the deep-level consensus to higher levels of consciousness, and to make it ever richer. To "reveal" hidden realities, (in the sense of making an unconscious consensus conscious), and to enrich reality, (namely to propose new models for the experience of what was agreed to be "real"). This is why, individually speaking, art makes life meaningful and rich in such situations. And why, collectively speaking, art is in close feedback with the codes of knowledge and behavior, informing them with its models, and being informed by their models. In such situations art is, as if automatically, "pure", (in the sense of: articulation of a private experience), and "true", (in the sense of: observational), and "committed", (in the sense of: having an ideological dimension).

Put in a situation of decaying consensus like the present one the role of art is a problem. Let us try to describe the problem. At present there is not one art, but two: the art of the elite and the art of the masses. Each is meaningful only with its own territory, but most participants of the elite can also understand the messages of the art of the masses. Elite art, (both because it has no feed-back from the masses, and, being a "specialisation", very little feed-back from the elite itself, and also because it is linked in strong feed-back with the sciences with their progressively discursive structure), is in a ~~process~~ violent process of elaboration of ever new models of experience destined for very few receivers. It is characterized by a precipitated avant-gardism and its models, which are too short-lived to be effectively applied, contribute not to the dis-alienation, but to the alienation of the few who try to use them. The art of the masses, (being, in fact, a pretext for the communication of models of a consumer behavior), has a strongly alienating effect on its receivers, in the sense that it is false art, (it does not communicate the private experience of its sender), and in the sense that it conditions the receiver to consume material and ideal goods in which the sender, not the receiver, is interested. Now if the function of art is to dis-alienate, (to reveal "reality" and to enrich it), althou we have apparently two arts, we, have, in fact, no art at all at present.

Therefore the question "what is the role of art at present?" seems to

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pose no serious problem. Elite art works as one among the many specialisations and serves as one of the sophisticated codes through which participants of the élite communicate with each other. The art of the masses is one of the codes through which the élite manipulates the masses for the consumption of the products the élite is interested in selling. And there is no "art" in the traditional, (and possibly "superated") sense of that term. But the question does not end here.

Aesthetic messages are provoked, in any situation, by the human tendency, (inherent in all men and irrepressible in some), to communicate what is private. This tendency has to do with human loneliness, (which is, at the bottom, the human certitude of death in loneliness), and with the fact that men cannot accept this. In other words: aesthetic messages are provoked, in any situation, by the human attempt to communicate, in the face of loneliness and death, with other humans and thus in some way overcome his condition. In situations where there is some sort of deep-level consensus society supplies men with codes in which he can attempt such a communication, and also with the possibility to manipulate such codes within certain parameters according to his private experiences. In other words: in such situations some men can become artists. But in the present situation no such codes and possibilities are supplied by society, and to be an artist is a problem.

Elite art is a method by which some try to solve the problem. But they are necessarily frustrated for the following reasons: They cannot get the feed-back they aim at. Their manipulation of codes goes on in highly specialized levels which are almost totally unrelated to the deep-level mass consensus which sustains them. And the models they elaborate are almost totally unrelated to the situation they live in. The result is a sort of sterile alienation, which is accentuated by the fact that the channels of communication which are imposed on these people, (like exhibitions, concerts, expensive books in small editions and so forth), are hopelessly archaic, if compared to presently available means of communication. Art of the masses is another method by which some try to solve the problem. But it amounts to obvious prostitution, in the sense that it is a submission to those who own and manipulate mass media systems. In fact, instead of being a communication of a private experience, it is a subterfuge to communicate an imperative to consume certain products, including the would-be artist. But there may be other methods.

One such method is to accept mass consensus, in which a majority of the élite partially participates anyhow, not as the basis for existing mass media codes, but as the basis from which new aesthetic codes can be elaborated. This would be the obvious method for those who want to communicate their private experience in a way meaningful for practically all receivers, were it not for the following consideration: mass consensus is static and passive. It consents to receive messages, but not to emit them. It does not

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seem to permit the elaboration of any code, and this is, in fact, what is meant by "consumer consensus". This is probably the reason why one can detect so very few attempts to follow this method in the present situation. The other reason is that any aesthetic commitment to mass consensus is very difficult to distinguish from commitment to mass art and therefore may go on undetected. Nonetheless, a close observation of the present situation does reveal some attempts to follow this method, and they may supply an answer to the question whether art can have a specific, and decisive, role in the present situation.

If we analyse mass consensus as it articulates itself in mass media codes (or better: as it is articulated by the élite in mass media codes), we find the surface structure to be dominating. TV screens, show cases, posters, pages of illustrated magazines, this is the type of codes that dominate mass communication. Now surface codes are synchronical, which means their messages come "en bloc", and it is this that characterizes their reception. Therefore those who compare mass culture to neolithic culture, (also dominated by surface codes), are correct, and there is some similarity between mass society and a neolithic village. In this sense it is "pre-historic". And in this sense, also, it is a break from Occidental tradition. Élite codes, on the other hand, are dominated by linear structures. The printed line, and linear sequences of symbols, dominate élite communications. Now linear codes are diachronical, which means that their messages unfold in time, and it is this that characterizes their reception. And, ever since the invention of the alphabet, it is this that characterizes Western, historical, civilisation. In fact, Occidental, (and present élite consensus may be stated as follows: "Real is what becomes". Whereas mass consensus may be stated as follows: "Real is what can be swallowed".

But, of course, to call mass culture a "universal neolithic village" is wrong in the sense that, unlike in neolithic villages, in mass culture the consensus is a deliberate product of a historical élite consensus, made possible through historically developed means of communication. Therefore mass surfaces are unlike neolithic surfaces, (a poster is unlike a painted shield), in that the poster is a synchronisation of a diachronical "story", while the shield is a synchronic information that can be diachronized through "story telling". In this sense the neolithic village is "pre-historic", but mass culture "post-historic". This post-historical aspect becomes evident in codes like films and the TV, where the diachronical, ("historical") sound-track supports the synchronical, ("unhistoric"), screen surface. Now this post-historical character of mass consensus is, of necessity, the point of departure for a nascent new type of art in the present situation.

Post-historical can mean, from the point of view of theory of communication, two things: it can mean a return to the surface and an abandon of the line, or it can mean an absorption of the line by the surface. Present mass media exemplify the first meaning of the term. They are the abandon of the "Gutenberg galaxy", and an attempt at analphabetisation through television.

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And some experiments with magnetoscopes, (and other similar experiments), exemplify the second meaning of the term. They try to lift the line into the surface, and thus, so to speak, alphabetize television. If we were to call, in a sort of short hand, surface communication an "imaginating" one, and linear communication a "conceptual" one, then mass media abandon concepts for images, and experiments like these try to create imaginative concepts. If, instead of "imaginating" we were to say "mythical", then mass media tend to substitute concepts by myths, and experiments like these try to use myths for conceptual communication. In other words: starting from the same consensus, mass media and these experiments tend to two entirely different post-historical situations.

Now if we try to examine these types of experiments in the light of what was said about art at the beginning of this section of this paper, we may find that they represent tendencies that may play a decisive role in the present situation. Art was said to supply models for what we tend to call the "real". These experiments try to do so, in that they try to provide us with models for our private experiences of what we can no longer accept to be "pro-casual", but for what we have no model. Art was said to "produce" reality and to be dis-alienating. These experiments try to supply us with means to experience what we can call "real", and therefore with means to again accept something as "real". Art was said to be in an ambiguous relationship with the consensus, which, again, was said to be a deep-level agreement as to what shall be considered real. These experiments may, exactly because they start from mass consensus, result in a new more or less universal consensus, a deep-level agreement as to what shall be considered real in the future. The sciences cannot do so, because they do not touch the deep levels of consensus, (in that their messages cannot be "imagined"). Ideologies cannot do so, because they start from facts which are no longer accept as such by the deep-level mass consensus. But these experiments, if they were to succeed, may supply the sciences with models for observation, and ideologies with facts that can be changes through the application of values. In short: these experiments, if they were to become the true art of our society, might result in a new communication structure.

What is so new, (and so problematic) about these experiments can be resumed in the following manner: They no longer tell stories, but are models of experience pure and simple. Their means of communication are no longer traditional material, (like canvas, or words, or musical sounds), but are the media of mass communication. And these media are not used as channel of communication, but as material to be manipulated in order to become a means of communication. Therefore they do not result in "works of art" in the traditional sense, but in ephemorous "programs". They use codes which they themselves elaborate and propose to the receivers on the basis of deep-level mass consensus. Therefore there is a serious difficulty of decodification. (But this is quite different from the difficulty involved in elite art: such messages

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cannot be decodified by participants in mass culture, because they do not participate in their deep-level consensus). And, finally, their messages are so open, (their symbols so connotating), that the parameter of interpretation becomes confusing. (In this, they are the exact contrary of present mass communications, which transmit messages denotating neatly consumer behavior patterns).

Therefore it is very problematic whether these experiments will ever result in an art in the radical sense of the term: a communication of private experience models to dis-alienate man individually and collectively. But one thing seems to be certain: either they will become our art, and in that case the whole structure of communications will be changed, and with it our being-in-the-world. (For instance: TV will become a channel for dialogue, and society will become a market place, in the sense of a truly political space for the exchange of messages and the elaboration of new ones.) In that case art will have played a decisive role in the present situation. Or they will fail to become our art, and be absorbed into elite art. In that case the division between elite and mass culture will become even stronger, and we shall be drifting toward a totalitarian post-historical situation structured by the consumer myths broadcast through mass media and manipulated by value-free administrators. In that case art will have played a subordinate, but nonetheless important, (alienating), role in the present situation.