

Double-Edges of Change

You see, I am merely overcome by a certain weariness and sadness when I hear people talking about the power of the "media" and what it (sic) can do to redeem the sins of mankind, particularly those that have for so long taken place in our schoolhouses. I am weary and sad for two reasons: first, because I know that good intentions do not justify the encouragement of ignorance and evil; and, second, because I know that one kind of ignorance and evil does not cast out (or neutralize) another kind of ignorance and evil.

As a humanist, I do not believe that we - as a nation, a people, a world - will find our way out of our present confusions by means of any type technology. No, not even communications technology. More incidentally, neither do I believe that video and education possess any sort of natural affinity for one another - any more than I believe that books or films are related by their nature to the task of teaching and/or the difficult art of learning. If books, films - or video - are to reside comfortably in the world of schooling (and they may not), they will have to accept the morals, codes of civility, aims and philosophies of that world and be adapted, by men and women, to these ends. Left alone, they will do nothing by themselves; they are not inhabited by ghosts. Fed and spread by the merchants of mass culture and pop fashion, they will inevitably die in the schoolhouse. I have, over the years, watched countless "brave, innovative forward-looking" programs of televised education die in countless schools and colleges since the day I

finished writing Teach With Television.

You see, in that miserable book, I forgot to tell those early, bright-eyed educational video enthusiasts one thing: that one must know oneself before he sets out to revolutionize anything. (I should have recalled this from my considerable study of great revolutionists; but I had forgotten.) Self-knowledge yields humility, and only the humble possess the capacity to understand the double-edged weapon of innovations: that capacity to destroy what is valuable on one side, and to cut a path to nowhere on the other.

As I grow older, I grow more stubborn. Certainly, I still believe that video may one day make its contribution to American education - on all levels. But it will be a contribution, not a take-over. It will also be a different contribution, I think, for different types of teaching and learning under different circumstances and at different times. Just how, why, what, when and where is a difficult matter to foresee, requiring maturity, wisdom and experience. I think it is a problem for teachers - certainly not for "media specialists" or people trained to "think video." I think, also, that in every individual instance, its solution (possibly a prudential decision not to teach with television) starts at home: in the good sense and honest humility of those of us who are brave - or mad - enough to face fellow humans in the role of teachers and attempt, however feebly, to help them to civilize themselves, which is about the most one may ask of any teacher of any subject anywhere.

Now, fire up those vidicons, kids. And good luck.

Implications of the New Television for the Open Classroom

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Since the mid-1960s, a growing number of elementary schools in North America have been adopting the practices of the open classroom to create activity-centered environments responsive to the needs of individual children. During this same period, the half-inch video movement has been growing at a similar rate. Seldom, however, have the two movements met.

In most classrooms, including open classrooms, video is usually used only as a projection device. Reports of children actively using video in their curricular activities are still hard to find. This is because the video movement has developed largely

outside of and frequently in opposition to formal institutions. Educators, as representatives of formal institutions, have not seen the potential of video for curriculum development. What little documented evidence there is on the application of child-created video in the elementary school does not appear to have reached the classroom teacher. He has for too long been unaware of how video can be used to achieve learning goals, especially those which characterize the open classroom.

Most proponents of the open classroom hold these goals in common:

- 1) The curriculum will reflect the contemporary