Censorship in the Media

The principle of freedom of expression in the press, book publishing and broadcasting has been one of the hard-won battles in human history. Without this freedom, a democratic society could not exist. Yet every community and nation has to make painful decisions about what will or will not be communicated. Libel and privacy are obvious examples. Otherwise our societies would virtually disintegrate. Does freedom of speech have limits? If so, how do we decide on these limits?

New forms of censorship are always creeping in. Currently it is insinuated that consumer protection groups such as Action for Children's Television in the United States are censors in disguise. ACT itself is accusing the fundamentalist religious group, Moral Majority, of censorship goals. What are the norms for judging who is a censor?

This issue reviews some of the profoundly new patterns of thinking about freedom and censorship that have emerged in the last generation and the debate that surrounds the new logic for defending freedom of expression.

REVIEW ARTICLE

I: Current Patterns of Thought on Censorship

Censorship and Obscenity, ed. by Rajeev Dhavan and Christie Davies. (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978).

The chapters by Dhavan and Davies together provide a helpful "map" of the continuing debate and research on censorship. Their framework is applicable not only to obscenity but other questions such as violence in the media and political censorship.

Dhavan cites two major lines of argument in the obscenity issue: 1) that concerned with upholding *community standards* and *protecting* various classes of individuals within the community from interests pushing pornography and 2) the libertarian tendency which emphasises the *freedom* and the *right* of *individuals* to express themselves and to develop their personalities as they wish.

The community standards tendency argues that many individuals need more than personal discretion to protect themselves. Underlying this is an assumption, much questioned by recent research, that permissiveness, in itself, produces an attitude of moral laxity which is bound to affect attitudes of responsibility and which may lead to sexual crimes. A more liberal statement of the standards argument is that even if most people can protect themselves they still might be confused, misled or have their privacy invaded by the indiscreet, aggressive advertising of the porn pushers. The broadest argument would be that at least children are not sufficiently mature to protect themselves. Others argue that literary standards are degraded by pornography or that the aesthetic appearance of cities need protection if there are indiscriminate posters, sex shops, etc.

The libertarian tendency argues that there really is no common societal consensus or standard and that attempts to apply a blanket protection of the community restricts individual artistic creativity and the right individuals to read or see what they like in privacy.

Christie Davies proposes that the gradual shift from a community standard to a libertarian position regarding obscenity censorship is not so much a result of liberalised legislation — in fact legislation in Britain and the U.S. is ambivalent — but a gradual change in cultural attitudes toward censorship. Juries and judges are now more reluctant to convict in obscenity cases, and this signals to writers, publishers and producers a continually broadening horizon of public tolerance.

Davies notes a profound shift in the reasoning both *for* and *against* censorship from a "moralist" to a "causalist" position. Formerly, the moralist seeking to protect community standards argued that sexual permissiveness is evil in itself and appealed to God's law, some understanding of natural universal law or personal disgust. The moralist libertarian, on the other hand, would argue that censorship, per se, violates a person's inherent right to freedom of expression. Davies suggests that the

American Constitution is essentially a moralist document, and that appeals to the First Amendment generally lead to a moralist position.

Today, both protectionists and libertarians are likely to debate in casualist logic, namely, on the grounds of *effects* caused by either restriction or permissiveness. In a society with ever less consensus on moral philosophy, both sides seek proof of the pragmatic, utilitarian effects: harm to personal safety, severe personality disorders, public security, aesthetic standards, protection of property, etc. While moralists tend to be more concerned with the *internal* intentions of authors, the conscience and happiness of users and the longer-term integration of family and society, the casualists tend to be more concerned with the immediate *external*, observable behaviour.

Once the argument begins to appeal to behavioural science research to prove effects, there is a spiraling debate that draws former moralists into an ever more exhaustive quest for the maze of possible effects. When the American Civil Liberties Union found in 1967 that they could no longer prevent censorship by appealing to the First Amendment on moralist grounds, they chose to go causalist and to call for scientific studies into effects.

In Davies' view, the moral elite of a country has generally moved toward causalist-effect arguments while the general public has tended to remain moralist. Bureaucratic administrators looking for clearly applied norms and pragmatic uncontroversial solutions have recently favoured the causalist logic while writers, artists and producers tend to be essentially moralist.

Davies would admit that not everybody fits neatly into a moralist or causalist line of reasoning, And it may be that ultimately moralists are just as concerned with effects, but in a much broader, humanistic and cultural values sense.

II: "Effects Research" and Media Policy

Behavioural scientists are sought out in the debate on "effects" precisely because they provide "casual" models of how human behaviour functions and of what influences specific behaviours. They also provide a supposedly more controlled sociological or psychological method for proving or disproving certain "cause-effect" relationships. The chapter of H.J. Eysenck in *Censorship and Obscenity*, "Psychology and Obscenity", provides an overview of this kind of research.

A Psychological Model of the Effects of Pornography
Eysenck emphasises the seemingly obvious but often forgotten fact that there are wide personality variations in the reactions to pornographic material due to innate characteristics, early childhood experiences and cultural differences. He detects in his research two basic personality dimensions relevant to pornography: 1) degree of libido or *sexual desire* — ranging from aggressive, extrovert interest in sex and pornography to prudishness and sexual shyness; and 2) degree of *satisfaction* — ranging from a strong experience of satisfaction to neurotic disgust. These dimensions seem to be unrelated. Strong sexual desire does not necessarily mean high satisfaction, and pornography may be equally attractive to the sexually satisfied and dissatisfied. Since no set of rules can satisfy both the more extreme "puritans" and "libertarians", some policy compromises are important.

Eysenck also notes that recent research has provided a much needed correction to the primitive view of sex as a biological instinct like hunger or thirst. In this view pornography does not stimulate sexual appetite, but is just one more outlet for an instinctual urge. In fact it is now clear that sexual appetites are in large part socially acquired, often with little relationship to biological and physiological needs. Thus, Eysenck suggests that the increase of sexual stimulus in our society is not simply a response to sexual needs, but a conscious decision about the kind of society we want.

Who Uses Pornography?
In his chapter in *Obscenity and Censorship*, "Pornography in Denmark", B. Kutchinsky proposes that interest in pornography has a socially-conditioned natural history that periodically rises and subsides in waves. He notes a wave of pornography in 18th and 19th century Europe largely among the affluent classes. In Denmark a porno wave began in the early 1960s with literary pornography and then gradually evolved toward the more popular, explicit and bizarre. Initially, as the public debate on censorship developed, there was increasingly broad consumption by the curious. After some years, however, "pornography has found its very modest place: as something quite indifferent to most people, as entertainment and a spice in the daily life of a minority — and perhaps as important as their daily bread to a small handful of individuals".[1]

Kutchinsky and Eysenck outline a similar pattern of users of pornography based on factors of strength of sexual desire and the degree to which these desires can be satisfied in a social context: 1) the great majority of *"ordinary people"* superficially exploring to satisfy a temporary curiosity, especially when there is a more permissive porno wave; 2) steady users, those who have stronger sexual desires but suffer from a "socio-sexual deficit" — the *sexually lonely* or those whose sexual abnormalities made them sexually lonely; and 3) relatively heavy users, those with strong sexual desires but who are *sexual extroverts* with an unusual and varied interest in sexual matters and activities.

Does Pornography Influence a Rise in Criminal Offences?
Kutchinsky and others cite the evidence of the Denmark experience where virtually all obscenity statutes were repealed in 1969. In that country, parallel with the rise in the use of pornography, there were substantial decreases in all reported sexual crimes except rape which remained relatively unchanged. There is widespread agreement in the research literature that removal of censorship does not lead directly, in overall statistics, to an increase of sexual offences.

Indeed, studies of a possible direct relationship between the use of pornography and sex crimes have shown that adolescent exposure to erotica is significantly less for all deviant and offender groups in comparison with non-deviant, non-criminal groups regardless of social class, education and socio-ethnic background. Eysenck cites clinical studies of early family backgrounds of offenders which suggests that sex offenders come from more repressive homes with punitive or indifferent parental responses to children's sexual curiosity and interest. However, there is little evidence regarding the effect of exposing children to pornographic materials, and Eysenck observes that one could hardly argue that erotica is an adequate substitute for proper school and parental guidance in sexual education.

Also, there is no firm evidence to conclude that removal of censorship would, in itself, actually *reduce* rates of sexual offences.

Does Pornography Have No Significant Effect?
Experiments of exposure of individuals with apparently normal personality ranges to erotic films or other pornography indicate that there are no significant long-term changes in sexual activity or changes in sexual standards or moral attitudes. The major effect has been that most people became "sick and tired" of pornography.

However, Eysenck points out that relatively short, laboratory exposure of fairly experienced people, usually of good education and mentally non-pathological, may be of relatively limited value. "The crucial question is what exposure would do to youngsters of poor education and with slightly pathological make up",[2] And here there is little real information.

Eysenck strongly questions the argument that pornography or violence in the media has no important effect on the emotions or behaviour. Most advertisers do not, in practice, believe this. He raises objections on the basis of psychological evidence of desensitisation and modelling. Individuals exposed to pornography over a long period of time in normal social contexts are likely to build up greater tolerance of permissiveness and reinforcement of existing attitudinal tendencies. The validity of sexual information ordinarily found in pornographic material is also questionable.

Eysenck concludes that pornography does not have just *one* set of consequences; what is good for one person may be bad for another. There is little evidence about the broader, longer-range personal or cultural effects. He cites the majority report of the President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography in the U.S. as one example of too hasty generalisation on insufficient evidence and superficial interpretation of existing data.

After reviewing the research Eysenck hesitates to favour decidely either censorship or permissiveness. The real question, he suggests, is "what kind of society do we want?" Some sort of compromise may be necessary which allows greater freedom for the type of pornography which has to be sought out and is often hidden, but less freedom for the type that is so public that a person cannot easily avoid it. Although compromises are open to the accusation of hypocritical "zones of tolerance", this may at least avoid the extreme reactions and periodic swings to either permissiveness or puritanical censorship.

III: The Socio-Cultural Sources of Censorship and Permissiveness

Erotic Communications: Studies in Sex, Sin and Censorship. George N. Gordon. (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1980).

George Gordon moves out of the behavioural effects literature to take a much broader look at the contemporary culture of erotic communication. In his view, "Whatever changes have occurred in the erotic climate in the West during the past generation, they are the inevitable side-products ... of the technological culture that produced them."[3]

Science and technology have weakened the search for happiness and ultimate meaning in a religious system centred on a transcendent God and have drained the mysticism out of religion. Eroticism is perhaps the only insistent avenue of mysticism that remains intact in the world we know, its metaphysic reaching into every significant aspect of culture. At the same time, our technological environment has made instrumental technique the norm of every human action. In the contemporary search for what "works", our genitalia provide "just about the only reliable and warm comfort available that affirms our status as sentient animals or as human beings, whichever you please".[4] For Gordon, contemporary permissiveness is not a plot of libertarians, the commercialised mass media or dirty old men, but only the fact that in a practical age, erotic communications are the most intensely practical sort of communications in the modern world. This is the real reason for the vanishing censor.

A New Socio-Political Religion

Gordon opposes censorship of erotic communication of any sort under nearly all circumstances. But he balks at the attempts of some to find in obscenity the highest form of literary genius and human creativity. Whether a novel is good or bad depends more on literary skills than on its eroticism. He rejects even more strongly the proposal of some philosophers to make erotic communication a new religious system and a new metaphysic of ultimate meaning.

Gordon also questions the tendency in some liberal circles to equate the progressive introduction of erotic communication in the mass media as a new form of socio-political liberation. In the battle against Victorian hypocrisy, sexual repression and prudishness, the opponents of obscenity censorship have taken up the classic thesis of John Stuart Mill on freedom of political speech and have extended it to erotic communication. Mills argued that removal of censorship of political speech was essential for opening up the natural process of liberal political and economic progress. It is now proposed that freedom of erotic communication will also mean the amelioration of a host of inequalities and cultural irrationalities. In Gordon's analysis, the presupposition in this argument is an emphasis on the perfection of human existence through the natural sexual givens of human nature rather than through what is learned — a concept akin to Rousseau's natural man. But to emphasise the given in human nature as the norm of culture is to deny the primacy of human intelligence and the possibility of genuine human change or social progress. It is to remove human culture from the realm of reasonable questioning, and it is a retreat from the liberal ideal of socio-political change.

Gordon would admit that every generation probably has to liberate sexuality from the taboos imposed by the past generation — in whatever form these may take — but he would prefer to defend erotic communication against censorship on some basis such as personal privacy, not in terms of a new socio-political religion or dogma that generates its own type of censorship.

The Mind of the Censor

Whitehouse. Michael Tracey and David Morrison. (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979).

Tracey and Morrison, in their analysis of Britain's National Viewer's and Listener's Association, provide one of the few systematic sociological studies of a national movement toward media censorship. The NVALA, led for years by a remarkable former schoool teacher, Mary Whitehouse, appears to find its support largely among more fundamentalist religious groups and presents a profoundly religious rationale.

The NVALA came into existence in 1963 when the BBC, in order to gain back its audience from the Independent (commercial) Television channel, changed from its rather staid programming largely defensive of traditional values to lively, often satirical, comedy and drama appealing to a younger audience. The change was a success in terms of critical acclaim, in winning the hearts of younger more radical producers, and in growth of audience for the BBC. But it brought a vociferous reaction from a more traditional constituency, and these formed the NVALA.

As a teacher of art and sexual education in a secondary school, Mary Whitehouse was alarmed at the sexual attitudes she detected in the school children and which she believed to stem from their exposure to television. She felt that the values presented in the new BBC programming were totally opposed to her emphasis on sexual education as a broad preparation for family life.

When letters and interviews failed to influence BBC officials, Mary Whitehouse and a few friends began to rally mothers in a "Clean Up TV" campaign that intended to protect from the "New Television" that most conservative of social institutions, the family. In her account, "Nothing seemed left but for the ordinary women of Britain to take matters into their own hands and to make it quite clear to the BBC that we were prepared to fight for the right to bring up our children in the truths of the Christian faith and to protect our home from exhibitions of violence".[5]

Indirect Censorship

Over more than fifteen years of action the NVALA, like many consumer protection groups, has officially rejected censorship and has opted instead to mobilise a mass movement of "ordinary decent people" to pressure broadcasting into programming consonant with their ideals. However, a major goal has been to establish an independent Viewers and Listeners Council, representing largely the NVALA type of constituency, which could have a direct influence in the programming of all broadcasting in Britain. The NVALA is generally judged to have little significant impact on broadcast content, but it does make writers and producers more cautious. Moreover, constantly emerging in NVALA's statements is a desire for a total religious revival in England, a kind of theocracy which would leave little space for other minorities.

A number of sociological theories attempt to explain how movements such as the Moral Majority in the U.S. or the NVALA come into existence. One explanation is that middle-class groups which are losing traditional socio-political status in a culturally diverse urban society try to restore their social power through moral and cultural influence.[6] Tracey and Morrison reject such a theory for the NVALA.[7] It is primarily

a move to protect the traditional environment of child rearing — the home, the school and the church — from hostile external values. Since broadcasting is a major point of external penetration of the protected environment, it is broadcasting that becomes a major target for moral reconstruction movements.

The Educative Function of Censorship Law
Obscenity and Public Morality. Harry M. Clor.
(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969).

It is generally assumed that the law simply reflects the desires and values of the people and is derived from cultural standards. On this basis libertarians would argue that you can't legislate morality and that the law should change with changing social norms and fashions.

Clor builds a strong case to show that, in fact, there is an interactive relationship between the decisions of public authority and cultural norms. The law does affect desires and shapes values and the decisions of judges do in fact influence public standards and provide moral guidance.

Clor cites the conclusions of anthropologist, Margaret Mead, that every known society has some public standards and exercises some explicit censorship in the area of sexual behaviour. He then emphasises that maintaining common, public standards requires at least some coordination and someone to make authoritative decisions. Public opinion, the family, the church or other cultural institutions may generate values and exercise strong social controls. But in contemporary society, these institutions do not have the recognised society-wide authority to make decisions, especially in regard to the public media. If public authority does not exercise some regulative function, private groups tend to step in and there is more likely to be an extreme puritan or libertarian imposition.

In Clor's view, censorship law and the decisions of judges is largely preventative and educative. In so far as judges define and clarify public standrads their role is educative.

Clor's analysis puts a great deal of responsibility on judges to know and interpret community standards, and he provides a lengthy section on how judges can so interpret public standards and exercise a liberal but not necessarily libertarian leadership.

IV: How Television is Censored

Television, Censorship and the Law. Colin R. Munro. (Westmead, Farnborough, Hants., England: Saxon House, 1979).

Detailed descriptions of the actual extent and procedure of censorship in particular nations are the necessary information base for legal and philosophical discussions of censorship. Munro provides a thorough analysis of the legal and administrative structure of censorship in British TV and describes just how external or internal pressures were applied in dozens of cases of censorship.

There appears to be more censorship in TV than in the press or in any other medium largely because TV has become the most important mass medium of the nation. With fewer alternative channels, TV is under pressure to respect the consensus of a broad spectrum of tastes and moral norms. However, most censorship in both the BBC and Independent (commercial) Television (ITV) is done within the broadcasting organisation or in response to subtle external pressures. This internal censorship is done to prevent alarm in government circles, political parties, the puritan lobby or any other specific interest group and to ward off possible direct intervention. Both the BBC and ITV prefer pre-broadcast consultation with their internal advisory councils, which represent politicial parties, the churches, economic interests, etc.. Munro gives the example of a private showing of a documentary on prison conditions to a group of prison officials to eliminate the possibility of a protest from that group.

If the "British establishment" does have external control, it is largely in the appointments to the Board of Governors of the BBC and the corresponding board of the Independent Broadcast Authority (supervisory commission of ITV). These boards in turn select with great care the directors and key administrators of the respective broadcasting systems. Consequently, in such sensitive issues as Northern Ireland, the government has quietly indicated to the governors and directors that reporting and documentaries are to present the government point of view, and the directors have acquiesced by laying down strict rules to programme producers.

Munro proposes that the problems of censorship in TV may be at least partially solved by the multiplication of channels through cable or satellite so that specific tastes and norms can be catered to beyond the consensus. Interestingly, in British broadcasting history, the innovative exploratory phase of the BBC in the 1960s was at least partially sparked by competition with ITV. In the same competitive spirit, some drama and documentaries that are rejected by ITV as too controversial have been accepted and broadcast by the BBC, and vice versa. If multiplicity of channels really brings diversity and competition, then there might be greater freedom of communication.

V: Two Contrasting Political Philosophies of Communication

Disenchantment: Meaning and Morality in the Media. John Phelan. (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1980).

In Phelan's view, public media policy in America is a confused se-saw battle between competing interest groups and a maze of ad hoc codes created in response to the group that can muster the best public relations — all drifting without guiding principles or goals. Characteristic of this confusion, the consumer protection groups such as Action for Children's Television, whose concerns are putatively moral, are forced into an identity as one more lobby defending themselves with the same amoral *realpolitik* as other special interest groups. As good liberals, they abhor censorship, but end up appealing to direct government regulation to attain their otherwise laudable objectives of improving the often distorted reporting and degrading public entertainment.

Behaviourist or Humanist Approaches to Media?

In Phelan's analysis the root of the confusion is the causalist logic that underlies debate on media policy. The media are evaluated not in terms of the intrinsic entertainment, artistic or truth value, but in terms of the *instrumental effects* they have. Does content influence buying habits, the integration of the family, better health, law and order, getting better jobs? This evaluation by *effects* rather than by the *meaning* of drama, news and documentary is reinforced by an almost exclusive reliance on social psychological research which has its background in studies of marketing, public opinion and diffusion of innovations. This research pre-supposes a stimulus-response model of motivation — getting people to do specific, measurable things such as picking a box off a shelf, tugging a voting lever or coming forward for Christ. The less thinking, the better.

If a play such as Shakespeare's Othello were evaluated according to the effects norm, one would never ask about the artistic intent of the author or how the drama opens up new worlds of human meaning and value. Rather, you would ask whether minority groups were offended or whether it caused violence or sexual crimes. Here are the seeds of censorship. Ever since Plato feared the corrupting influence of poetry in his utopia, censors have always been more concerned with the instrumental effects than with truth and beauty as values in themselves.

Phelan pleads for a critique that gives primacy to the humanities because the humanities tradition provides us with concepts for understanding the media as an expansion of human experience, opening up worlds of ideas, ideals, hopes and values worth living for.

The Need for a Public Philosophy

Phelan argues that the discussions on media policy make no progress and public interest media groups are lured into the trap of censorship because of the logic of the market model of morality. It is difficult to impute moral responsibility to media organisations because these are simply corporate machines programmed for technical efficiency and profits. The public interest groups have accepted the argument of advertisers that whatever the statistical majority of the market wants is the morality of the day. Government encourages consumer protection groups to become lobbyists by giving them special status as lobbies, and the current politics of minority rights movements invites consumer groups to seek direct government regulatory intervention rather than build consensus around moral principles. The appeal to behavioural science to decide by proving effects, usually brings only counter studies with other facts. In the end, policy is determined by the group best able to pressure the government — a kind of might makes right — and censorship enters in under the guise of government protection of that interest group.

Phelan believes that the only way out of this vicious circle of ad hoc solutions is to raise the discussion to the logic of the *public philosophy* in the sense of Walter Lippmann's use of the term. The public philosophy is not a set of formulas to be memorised, but a way of posing questions about media policy which leads to the corporate moral commitment of the community to agreed-upon values. It appeals to the common good of a community as wide as the human family, not just to bargaining among special interests. The method of the public philosophy argues that human judgement, by studying the experience of history and of different national and cultural contexts, can arrive at common conceptions of public values and can provide at least common objectives and general principles of policy.

Phelan is less clear on how discussion of the public philosophy can be carried on between powerful media corporations, a government closely linked with the corporate economy and countervailing consumer protection groups. But at least, by lifting the debate to the level of broader principle, there is more hope of protecting the media users and less powerful minorities.

The "Social Responsibility" Thesis

Responsibility in Mass Communication, Third Edition. William L. Rivers, Wilbur Schramm and Clifford G. Christians. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980).

This book is an important reflection of American thinking because it takes, as its basic framework, the concept of social responsibility proposed by the landmark report of the Hutchins Commission on the Freedom of the Press in 1947. It also reflects the ethical ideal typical of most schools of communication and the ideal, if not the practice, of most media professionals in America.

Social responsibility in this book means above all the responsibility of media owners and professionals to provide the public with adequate and accurate information for the functioning of a liberal democracy. It attempts to balance the libertarian thesis of the absolute right of media owners with the public's "right to know". It proposes that government intervention to control the abuses of power by media owners and other forms of external censorship can be avoided if media owners and professionals recognise their responsibility to the public and regulate themselves. The authors argue that an atmosphere of media responsibility will be achieved by developing a personal professional ethic in the education of media personnel, by encouraging individuals to demand better media service and by providing direct channels of public criticism of media abuses.

A Pragmatic Media Ethics

The authors tend to locate responsibility in individual rights and in the duty of each person to act on the basis of his or her conscience. They accept the individualism and competing interest groups typical of Western liberal democracies. There is a distrust of a personal ethics linked too closely with the overarching values of a strong cultural consensus whether that consensus be expressed in a utopian state, ethnic "tribal" nationalism, an all-encompassing "cultural" church or, the concerted power of corporate economic interests. The authors do not expect some central broadcasting authority to educate tastes to a higher culture, but accept mass popular entertain-

ment as the artistic genre of the common man. They will not wait for philosopher kings to fashion a generally accepted pattern of public values, but are content to seek more practical solutions to each abuse of responsibility on the basis of particular issues. At times this may be inconsistent, but it is the most workable system in the face of rapid change in pluralistic, individualistic societies.

The authors admit that the Hutchins Report did not give social responsibility a thorough moral foundation, and it is difficult to spot such a clear statement of underlying moral philosophy emerging in this book. But it is likely that the social responsibility ethic will continue to function with even the most loose and eclectic philosophical backgrounds because of its essentially individualistic, pragmatic understanding of responsibility to the public.

The Individual vs. Corporate Power
The authors rather optimistically expect responsible media to develop from the aggregate of individual acts of moral courage and personal conscience within newspaper and broadcasting organisations. Likewise, the recommended form of public pressure is the aggregate of individual protests of the "little people", especially letters to the editor, station directors, etc. "The more individual the letter is, the better." Organised

public interest media watchers are treated with a certain distrust as too negative or as exercising too much power.

On the whole, the authors never seriously discuss the limits of what the individual media professional or media user can do in the face of the amorality and corporate power of the culture industries of today. One senses in the book a wistful looking back to the small-town America of a bygone age when the individual perhaps could be a direct influence.

Footnotes

1. Berl Kutchinsky, "Pornography in Denmark — A General Survey", in *Censorship and Obscenity*, ed. by Rajeev Dhavan and Christie Davies (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), p. 125.

2. H.J. Eysenck, "Psychology and Obscenity: a Factual Look at Some of the Problems", in *Censorship and Obscenity*, p. 165.

3. George N. Gordon, *Erotic Communications: Studies in Sex, Sin and Censorship*. (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1980), p. 288.

4. Ibid.

5. Michael Tracey and David Morrison. *Whitehouse*. (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979), p. 42.

6. J.R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972).

7. David E. Morrison and Michael Tracey. "American Theory and British Practice: The Case of Mrs. Mary Whitehouse and the National Viewers and Listeners Association," in *Censorship and Obscenity*, pp. 37-54.

Current Research on Censorship of the Media

AUSTRALIA
Pat O'Malley (Monash University, Clayton, Victoria — Melbourne) is comparing defamation laws and press control in capitalist and communist states. Recent publications include "Capital Accumulation and Press Freedom: 1800-1880" in *Media, Cuture and Society*.

GERMANY
Heinz-Dietrich Fischer (Sektion für Publizistik und Kommunication, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Postfach 102148, Universitätsrasse 150, 4630 Bochum 1 (-Querenburg), Germany) is preparing a reader on "Communication Control in Germany from the 15th to the 20th century (Verlag Saur KG, Munich) and a book, "Political Press in Germany: 1480-1980" (Droste Verlag, Dusseldorf, 1981) which includes chapters on problems of media control and the struggle for press freedom.

GREAT BRITAIN
The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (2 Amen Court, London EC4M 7BX) publishes FOCUS on Political Repression in Southern Africa which regularly reports on restrictions on the press and on individual freedom of expression in South Africa and Namibia.

M.B. Latey (102a Philbeach Gardens, Earl's Court, London SW5 9ET) studies censorship in Eastern Europe and contributes to *Index on Censorship*.

Colin Munro (Dept. of Law, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ) has recently published articles on "The Separation of Power: Not Such a Myth", *Public Law*, 1981 and "The Control of Advertising in British Television", *Journal of Media Law and Practice*, 1980.

Ben Pimlott (Dept. of Politics and Sociology, Birkbeck College, University of London, Malet St., London WC2) has published extensively on the press and censorship in Portugal (Chapters in *Newspapers and Democracy*, cf. bib. in this issue; with Jean Seaton in *Modern Portugal*, (University of Wisconsin Press, 1981). He is currently writing, with Jean Seaton, on the BBC and left movements in Britain.

Geoffrey Robertson, London Barrister and chairman of the Commission of Enquiry into the (British) Press Council, (1 Dr. Johnson's Buildings, Temple, London EC4) is preparing a comprehensive textbook on *The Principles of Media Law* (for Weidenfeld Publications) and will update his book, *Obscenity* (Weidenfeld, 1979). Other recent publications include, "The Future of Film Censorship", *British Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1980, and the forthcoming, *The People's Court: A Study of the British Jury System* (Quartet).

Philip Schlesinger (School of Social Sciences, Thames Polytechnic, Riverside House, Beresford Street, London SE18 6BU) is currently researching the state control of the media in Britain and Italy and has a forthcoming article in *Social Research*, 1981, "Terrorism, the Media, and the Liberal-Democratic State: A Critique of the Orthodoxy".

Peter Taylor (BBC, Lime Grove Studios, London W12 7RS) has published *Beating the Terrorists* (Penguin, 1980) which includes an account of the problems in trying to report British security policy in Northern Ireland. He continues to write on censorship and Northern Ireland for Amnesty report and other publications.

Writers and Scholars Educational Trust (21 Russell St., Covent Garden, London WC2B 5HP) publishes *Index on Censorship* and is a major international centre for study of problems of censorship. Staff includes specialists on censorship in major continents and regions of the world.

UNITED STATES
Fred R. Berger (University of California, Davis CA 95616) is currently completing a book on the freedom of expression based on the moral theory of John Stuart Mill as a philosophical underpinning for freedom of expression. The book will stress a theory of rights and justice as central to political morality and will apply this thesis to a number of practical issues such as racism and sexism in the media, conflict of free expression and right of privacy, access to the media and corporate control of the media.

Maurice Cullen (School of Journalism, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824) continues study of problems of censorship and freedom in liberal democratic societies, and has a forthcoming book, *Bulwark of Liberty: The Struggle for Freedom of the Press in the Early America*.

Jane Curry (Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University, 420 W. 118th St., New York, N.Y. 10027) is completing with Joan Dassin an international comparative analysis of institutionl and implicit censorship in Eastern Europe. She is also studying the relationship between political systems and censorship processes, perceptions of professionals on the question of information control and the techniques journalists have used to evade censorship in Poland. Forthcoming publications: *Dissent in Eastern Europe* (Praeger, 1982); and (with Joan Dassin) *All the News Not Fit to Print: Press Control Around the World* (Praeger, 1981).

Joan Dassin (Institute of Latin American and Iberian Studies, Columbia University, 420 W. 118th St., NY 10027) is completing a study on *Press Censorship and the Ideology of the Brazilian Military State, 1964-1978*. With Dr. Jane Curry she is editing a volume on censorship under diverse economic and political systems, *All the News Not Fit to Print: Press Control Around the World* (Praeger, 1981).

Michael Emery (California State University (Northridge), 14701 Whitefield Ave., Pacific Palisades, CA 90272) is studying the danger of increasing control of information in new communication technologies as large corporations dominate cable and videotext systems. This research is incorporated into his latest edition of *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media* (Prentice-Hall, 1978) and *Reading in Mass Media: Concepts on Issues in the Mass Media*.

The Freedom of Information Center (Box 858, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri 65205) carries on activities of research, publication and documentation in the area of censorship and freedom of the press.

Fund for Free Expression (Room 1303, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, 10017), the U.S. associate of Writers and Scholars Educational Trust and *Index on Censorship* (London) is studying problems of free flow of scholars to U.S. from other parts of the world.

Ralph E. McCoy (University of Southern Illinois, Carbondale, IL 62901) is writing two articles, "Censorship" and "Theodore Schroeder" (leading free speech lawyer) for the projected *Encyclopedia of Unbelief* ed. by Gordon Stein (Greenwood Press). He is also joint editor with Robert B. Down of the revision of *First Freedom* (American Library Association).

John M. Phelan (Center for Policy Studies in Ethics and Communication, Fordham University, NY 10458) is developing a new programme to examine models of communication ethics and the application of these models to policy formation for government, industry and the media at the national and international level. A central focus of this programme will be freedom of information and censorship problems.

The recent research of **Frederick Schauer** (Marshall-Wythe School of Law, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA 23185) on the philsophical foundations of the principles of free speech and press will appear in the forthcoming *The Philosophy of Free Speech* (Cambridge University Press, 1982). He is also exploring the relationship between free speech and democratic political theory, specifically, a theory that ties the principle of free speech to distrust of the motives of a censoring government.

PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

Who Decides What to Communicate?

The question of freedom and censorship in the media is awesome because it implies nothing less than deciding what *should* be communicated. Should there be absolute freedom to communicate anything? Should a certain degree of privacy be maintained? Should the integration of the family or the nation be protected? As Prof. Eysenck has suggested (cf. Review Article), we are virtually deciding what kind of society we want.

Two broad themes appear to be running through the debate and research on censorship: 1) What are appropriate legal and institutional procedures for deciding what we want to communicate? That is, how can we give wide access to all interested groups, but at the same time reach compromises between conflicting interests? 2) What are valid methods of getting the necessary information for deciding what we want to communicate? Are we to rely mainly on the behavioural sciences? The humanities? Political philosophy? Or some combination of all of these?

Institutional Guarantees of Free Expression

In the question of institutional procedures for deciding what we want to communicate, there are at least four debated "principles" which call for clarification and research.

The first is the "principle of minimum government intervention". There is wide agreement that the coercive, policing power of the state is so threatening to creative personal expression that decisions on what to communicate should be left exclusively to individual conscience or to norms of cultural or professional consensus. One or other interest group frequently manages to use the power of government censorship for its own interest. Once controls begin, they multiply endlessly, and, in the end, censorship is never effective. Yet some would argue that individual or minority rights must be protected by government authority and that only government authority can back up "the educative function of law" which shapes the kind of society we want.

The "diversity principle" proposes that the diversity of public channels in itself will ensure that all groups will find some adequate medium of expression and that the public "right to know" will be satisifed. It will no longer be necessary to "protect" certain minorities or defer to all tastes. Such diversity is more evident in the press than in the electronic mass media. However, is not the concentration of control of the media eliminating the possibility of this diversity? Some argue that the multi-channel possibilities of cable and satellite transmission will bring diversity to the electronic media. But will not the laws of economics drive them toward a single mass market?

A third major area of debate is what might be called the "buffer principle". With all sort of groups protesting that the media are not serving their interests, we need a buffer institution to prevent one group from dominating the media and to ensure acceptable compromises. Should media administrators or representative citizens' councils decide on controversial programming, or should we simply accept whatever the market will bear?

A fourth set of questions revolves around the "protection and privacy principle". Under the assumption that the less censorship there is the better, what are the limits to indiscrimate, high-pressure porn marketing or extremist political groups?

The Need for Comparative, International Research

In the search for answers to these questions, comparative and cross-national studies may be the most productive approach. Although mechanisms guaranteeing freedom of expression are much related to specific social and political contexts, every country or cultural region tends to have its blind spots and distortions due to the domination of particular powerful interests — large corporations, political parties, or traditional cultural elites. The debate also tends to get caught up in the myopia of its own age. As George Gordon notes, in particular historical contexts, a libertarian generation expends its energy exorcising the devil of Victorian puritanism only to have a new puritan generation correct the libertarian excesses. Such comparative cross-national research may be one of the best approaches to developing the public philosophy suggested by John Phelan that gives us broader socio-political and historical perspective.

A Marriage of Behaviourists and Humanists

In the discussion of the second major theme — what kind of information is valid for deciding what we want to communicate — there is obviously need for a more balanced, interdisciplinary approach. Is social psychology a beast or a darling? We lack a clear understanding of the respective contributions and limitations of the behavioural sciences, the humanities, personal ethics and public philosophy.

At present there may well be too great a reliance on the behavioural sciences in the censorship debate. Sociology and psychology are valauable in exploding popular but simplistic "one-factor explanations" of media effects. For example, the belief that exposure to pornography in itself is the cause of criminal offences, the disintegration of the family, etc. With more sophisticated and controlled studies of factors influencing human behaviour, we at least can see how complex the relationships are. Usually we tend to conclude that pornography might be *one* factor of *one* type of behaviour for *one* group of individuals if it is linked in the right way with many other factors under very specific circumstances.

Because behavioural sciences are so complex, tentative and narrow in their applications, they must be used in broad policy discussions with great caution. Also, scientific method is concerned with discovering existing relationships and it uses relatively deterministic models of what *is*. But human behaviour is also influenced by what *could* and *ought* to be, that is, by ideals and values that continually transcend the existing situation and continually create new cultural patterns.

Precisely in questions of freedom of expression, the relative limitations of the behavioural sciences need to be balanced by the broader perspective of the cultural sciences and the humanities which take into consideration the purposive *meaning* of human behaviour.

Robert A. White, Editor

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