

Marshall McLuhan

The Medium is the Message

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1911-1980

- McLuhan was a Canadian academic, a literary scholar whose studies of the effects of advertising and of print media blossomed into a new discipline of media studies
- Far from being an ardent technophile, his attitude toward technology was decidedly ambivalent!
- McLuhan's insights into the effects of media on our culture—and ourselves!—grow more useful every year

What Is A Medium?

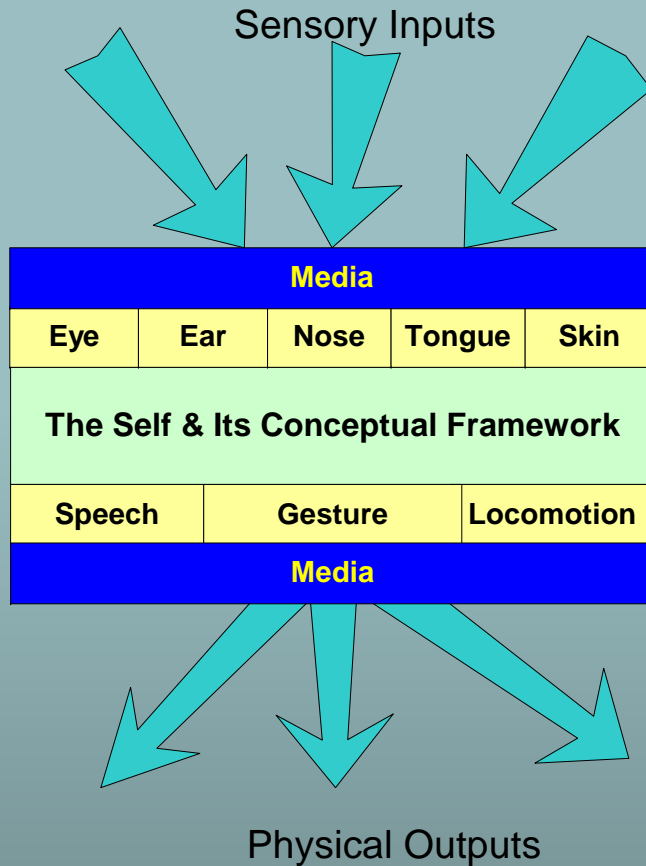
- According to McLuhan, *media* are the extensions of our senses, our bodies, and our minds
- As the caddisfly larva manufactures its “shell” of stones, the bird its nest, the spider its web, *Homo sapiens* manufactures media to protect him/herself from the world
- There is a price, however—media also deprive us of direct experience of the world!



The Mediation Of Experience

- McLuhan believed that media form the all-important *ground* against which all our perceptions and actions are *figure*
- Because they “mediate” all human experience, media play a vital role in determining the conceptual framework of a society or culture
- Only recently have media begun to change at a rate fast enough to be detected by those experiencing their effects!

Media And The Self



As carriers of information, media magnify, filter, and distort inputs to all our senses

A McLuhanesque View Of The Self

Media strengthen, refine, and distort our outputs

The Medium is the Message

- The content of the media was not as important as the effect that the medium itself had on human minds and culture
- The social change that is brought about by the medium is the message.
- The message is never the content because the content is always the old medium.

An Example: The Impact of the Printing Press

- Literacy
- Made information available to the masses
- Schools started
- Regional dialects became standardized
- Latin replaced by national languages
- The Age of Reason and the Renaissance
- Destroyed Feudal Power System and led to Democracy