Jack Paar mentioned that he once had said to a young friend, "Why do you kids use 'cool' to mean 'hot'?" The friend replied, "Because you folks used up the word 'hot' before we came along." It is true that "cool" is often used nowadays to mean what used to be conveyed by "hot." Formerly a "hot argument" meant one in which people were deeply involved. On the other hand, a "cool attitude" used to mean one of detached objectivity and disinterestedness. In those days the word "disinterested" meant a noble quality of fairmindedness. Suddenly it got to mean "couldn't care less." The word "hot" has fallen into similar disuse as these deep changes of outlook have developed. But the slang term "cool" conveys a good deal besides the old idea of "hot." It indicates a kind of commitment and participation in situations that involves all of one's faculties. In that sense, one can say that automation is cool, whereas the older mechanical kinds of specialist or fragmented "jobs" are "square." The "square" person and situation are not "cool" because they manifest little of the habit of depth involvement of our faculties. The young now say, "Humor is not cool." Their favorite jokes bear this out. They ask, "What is purple and hums?" Answer, "An electric grape." "Why does it hum?" Answer, "Because it doesn't know the words." Humor is presumably not "cool" because it inclines us to laugh *at* something, instead of getting us emphatically involved in something. The story line is dropped from "cool" jokes and "cool" movies alike. The Bergman and Fellini movies demand far more involvement than do narrative shows. A story line encompasses a set of events much like a melodic line in music. Melody, the *melos modos*, "the road round," is a continuous, connected, and repetitive structure that is not used in the "cool" art of the Orient. The

art and poetry of Zen create involvement by means of the *interval,* not by the *connection* used in the visually organized Western world. Spectator becomes artist in oriental art because he must supply all the connections.

The section on "media hot and cool" confused many reviewers of *Understanding Media* who were unable to recognize the very large structural changes in human outlook that are occurring today. Slang offers an immediate index to changing perception. Slang is based not on theories but on immediate experience. The student of media will not only value slang as a guide to changing perception, but he will also study media as bringing about new perceptual habits.

The section on "the medium is the message" can, perhaps, be clarified by pointing out that any technology gradually creates a totally new human environment. Environments are not passive wrappings but active processes. In his splendid work *Preface to Plato* (Harvard University Press, 1963), Eric Havelock contrasts the oral and written cultures of the Greeks. By Plato's time the written word had created a new environment that had begun to detribalize man. Previously the Greeks had grown up by benefit of the process of the *tribal encyclopedia.* They had memorized the poets. The poets provided specific operational wisdom for all the contingencies of life—Ann Landers in verse. With the advent of individual detribalized man, a new education was needed. Plato devised such a new program for literate men. It was based on the Ideas. With the phonetic alphabet, classified wisdom took over from the operational wisdom of Homer and Hesiod and the tribal encyclopedia. Education by classified data has been the Western program ever since.

Now, however, in the electronic age, data classification yields to pattern recognition, the key phrase at IBM. When data move instantly, classification is too fragmentary. In order to cope with data at electric speed in typical situations of "information overload," men resort to the study of configurations, like the sailor in Edgar Allan Poe's *Maelstrom.* The drop-out situation in our schools at present has only begun to develop. The young student today grows up in an electrically configured world. It is a world not of wheels but of circuits, not of fragments but of integral patterns. The student today *lives* mythically and in depth. At school, however, he encounters a situation organized by means of classified information. The subjects are unrelated. They are visually conceived in terms of a blueprint. The student can find no possible means of involvement for himself, nor can he discover

how the educational scene relates to the "mythic" world of electronically processed data and experience that he takes for granted. As one IBM executive puts it, "My children had lived several lifetimes compared to their grandparents when they began grade one."

"The medium is the message" means, in terms of the electronic age, that a totally new environment has been created. The "content" of this new environment is the old mechanized environment of the industrial age. The new environment reprocesses the old one as radically as TV is reprocessing the film. For the "content" of TV is the movie. TV is environmental and imperceptible, like all environments. We are aware only of the "content" or the old environment. When machine production was new, it gradually created an environment whose content was the old environment of agrarian life and the arts and crafts. This older environment was elevated to an art form by the new mechanical environment. The machine turned Nature into an art form. For the first time men began to regard Nature as a source of aesthetic and spiritual values. They began to marvel that earlier ages had been so unaware of the world of Nature as Art. Each new technology creates an environment that is itself regarded as corrupt and degrading. Yet the new one turns its predecessor into an art form. When writing was new, Plato transformed the old oral dialogue into an art form. When printing was new the Middle Ages became an art form. "The Elizabethan world view" was a view of the Middle Ages. And the industrial age turned the Renaissance into an art form as seen in the work of Jacob Burckhardt. Siegfried Giedion, in turn, has in the electric age taught us how to see the entire process of mechanization as an art process. (*Mechanization Takes Command*)

As our proliferating technologies have created a whole series of new environments, men have become aware of the arts as "anti-environments" or "counter-environments" that provide us with the means of perceiving the environment itself. For, as Edward T. Hall has explained in *The Silent Language,* men are never aware of the ground rules of their environmental systems or cultures. Today technologies and their consequent environments succeed each other so rapidly that one environment makes us aware of the next. Technologies begin to perform the function of art in making us aware of the psychic and social consequences of technology.

Art as anti-environment becomes more than ever a means of training perception and judgment. Art offered as a con-