

16 · The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication

In our society one can invent and perfect discoveries that still have to conquer their market and justify their existence; in other words discoveries that have not been called for. Thus there was a moment when technology was advanced enough to produce the radio and society was not yet advanced enough to accept it. The radio was then in its first phase of being a substitute: a substitute for theatre, opera, concerts, lectures, café music, local newspapers and so forth. This was the patient's period of halcyon youth. I am not sure if it is finished yet, but if so then this stripling who needed no certificate of competence to be born will have to start looking retrospec-

tively for an object in life. Just as a man will begin asking at a certain age, when his first innocence has been lost, what he is supposed to be doing in the world.

As for the radio's object, I don't think it can consist merely in prettifying public life. Nor is radio in my view an adequate means of bringing back cosiness to the home and making family life bearable again. But quite apart from the dubiousness of its functions, radio is one-sided when it should be two-. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him. On this principle the radio should step out of the supply business and organize its listeners as suppliers. Any attempt by the radio to give a truly public character to public occasions is a step in the right direction.

Whatever the radio sets out to do it must strive to combat that lack of consequences which makes such asses of almost all our public institutions. We have a literature without consequences, which not only itself sets out to lead nowhere, but does all it can to neutralize its readers by depicting each object and situation stripped of the consequences to which they lead. We have educational establishments without consequences, working frantically to hand on an education that leads nowhere and has come from nothing.

The slightest advance in this direction is bound to succeed far more spectacularly than any performance of a culinary kind. As for the technique that needs to be developed for all such operations, it must follow the prime objective of turning the audience not only into pupils but into teachers. It is the radio's formal task to give these educational operations an interesting turn, i.e. to ensure that these interests interest people. Such an attempt by the radio to put its instruction into an artistic form would link up with the efforts of modern artists to give art an instructive character. As an example or model of the exercises possible along these lines let me repeat the explanation of *Der Flug der Lindberghs* that I gave at the Baden-Baden music festival of 1929.

[Brecht then repeats the second, third and fifth paragraphs of 'An Example of Paedagogs'.]

This is an innovation, a suggestion that seems utopian and that I myself admit to be utopian. When I say that the radio or the theatre 'could' do

so-and-so I am aware that these vast institutions cannot do all they 'could', and not even all they want.

But it is not at all our job to renovate ideological institutions on the basis of the existing social order by means of innovations. Instead our innovations must force them to surrender that basis. So: For innovations, against renovation!

['Der Rundfunk als Kommunikationsapparat' in *Blätter des Hessischen Landestheaters*, Darmstadt, No. 16, July 1932]

NOTE: There are one or two earlier notes on the radio by Brecht, including a set of 'Suggestions for the Director of the Radio' published in the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* of 25 December 1927, which proposed the live broadcasting of law cases and Reichstag debates, as well as an increased proportion of interviews and discussion programmes. He also suggested, apparently as a new idea, that composers should be invited to write for the radio.

The present essay was published in the programme of the theatre that had first staged *Mann ist Mann* in 1926, and is headed 'From a report'. It is not known whether, when or to whom Brecht delivered this.

17 · The Question of Criteria for Judging Acting

(Notes to *Mann ist Mann*)

People interested in the ostensibly epic production of the play *Mann ist Mann* at the Staatstheater were of two opinions about the actor Lorre's performance in the leading part. Some thought his way of acting was perfectly right from the new point of view, exemplary even; others quite rejected it. I myself belong to the first group. Let me put the question in its proper perspective by saying that I saw all the rehearsals and that it was not at all due to shortcomings in the actor's equipment that his performance so disappointed some of the spectators; those on the night who felt him to be lacking in 'carrying-power' or 'the gift of making his meaning clear' could have satisfied themselves about his gifts in this direction at the early rehearsals. If these hitherto accepted hallmarks of great acting faded away at the performance (only to be replaced, in my view, by other hallmarks, of a new style of acting) this was the result aimed at by the rehearsals and is accordingly the only issue for judgment: the one point where opinions can differ.