



Taking McLuhan Seriously

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The media theorist Marshall McLuhan is often dismissed as a trendy television pundit of the 1960s, even if one who occasionally resurfaces with each new media revolution: the internet, smartphones, the cloud. My view is that McLuhan is actually one of the most important figures in the 20th century humanities, one whose basic teachings are still far from exhausted or even understood. In this lecture I will focus on the important features of McLuhan's "tetrad" theory, according to which all media (that is, all human products) have a fourfold structure of enhancement, obsolescence, retrieval, and reversal. This theory will be examined, and its strengths and weaknesses addressed.

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