

## **A Dedication to Professor L. Brooks Hill**

When we dedicate International Communication Studies (Bates, please italicize this) XII-2 to Professor Brooks Hill, the first president of the International Association of Intercultural Communication Studies, we, members of the association, are reminded of his personal friendship and academic leadership that he has shown in trying to make this organization a better one. To all of us, he has always been a reliable colleague.

Since he entered the academic community, indeed, Professor Hill has been strongly conscious of his profession both as a scholar, a co-worker, and a teacher. An experienced and conscientious researcher in the field of human communication, he has never stopped asking himself if his subject area is worth his efforts and if his students become better human beings as a result of exposure to him and his ideas about human communication.

Professor Hill is often disappointed with his students answering about their communication studies defensively and evasively. A strong believer that we in communication are typically at the substantive heart of behavioral and cognitive studies, he always challenges himself to answer what we can offer.

To him, human communication is fundamentally the symbolic process of developing, presenting, and adapting messages in meaningful ways for a wide variety of purposes. Aware of the fact that these processes can be studied in their own right, he is even more concerned with the use of concepts and principles of human communication to help people address myriad human problems of which communication is an essential part. Despite its essentiality, Professor Hill will not presuppose that communication is a causal factor in any human problem, but he will conclude that communication is a concomitant manifestation of all human interaction, a *sine qua non* of all social life. In this regard, he reasons, communication provides a powerful body of data for the analysis of human problems and difficulties. In a parallel fashion, he will never argue that communication is the solution of any problem, but he always concludes that communication may provide access or otherwise facilitate resolution of these problems.

When he discusses his discipline with students and colleagues alike, he likes to use the term "perspective." Assuming a perspective, he says, is seeing how what you are about to do fits into a broader scheme of things. Actually, committed to a life of mind, he has been developing the concept of a "communicative perspective" all his life. To Professor Hill, a communicative perspective reflects not only how he perceives the communication processes but also the broader scheme of things into which he fits the processes.

As we have put aside our methodological differences, struggled to integrate our knowledge, and are gradually becoming more visible in our consideration of public issues in the last decade or so, Professor Hill believes it is much easier to assume a communicative perspective than it was when he began his career. He finds his students much receptive to it. When they ignore or falter when trying to use a communication perspective in his class

assignments, he considers it his task and change to help them see the social problem of concern in terms of communication, even though the available literature on the problem may disregard the communicative aspects.

With careful nurturing, he likes to see his students gradually arrive at the point of apprehension when, all of a sudden, "it" dawns on them; "it" is the centrality of communication. A heuristic communicator with students, he has often observed that students from all different majors can be shocked to discover the essentials of communication to the nature and practice of their chosen fields. "Once the communication perspective is seen," he emphasizes, "you become unable not to use it." At this stage students begin to seek out more communication phenomena to enrich their newly found perspective.

Professor Hill further ponders that a communication perspective naturally entails the dynamic principles of interaction and contextualization. Communication occurs between people and within contexts, and communication studies must deal with these realities. Students quickly realize that a communication perspective may help them in their family life, in their interpersonal relations, their small group tasks, and is directly correlated with organizational/professional success.

Granting that communication provides us a unique perspective through which we can understand the varied human problems, he also warns against an unwillingness to admit that like any social science our substantive concerns are shared by a lot of disciplines. "Our uniqueness," he believes, "resides less in what we know than in our potential for using effectively what we know." No matter how exclusive we make our research and conferences, Professor Hill states, we cannot escape the delightful infringement on our turn. The question becomes, then, do we have anything to offer that is better than what others outside our discipline might provide? His answer is: yes, we do, but we often do not behave so. Actually a communication perspective is his answer.

A devoted educator throughout his career. Professor Hill likes to tell his students that "if this afternoon I could snap my fingers and have you as I would like you to become, what would you be like?" "First," he offers, "I want you to be proud of your choice of an outstanding subject area. Second, I want you to check any defensiveness you might have about your area and convert that defensive energy into a proactive offensive for education of the uninitiated." "Third," continues he, "I want you to develop a strong response to the question, what can you contribute to the problems of the world? Fourth, I want you to help me formulate a clearer statement of what a communication and/or intercultural communication perspective involves and how that differs from other areas of study." "And finally," Professor Hill concludes, "I want you to realize that your successful answers to these questions and use of those answers will necessarily involve your subjective involvement." Although these remarks are originally given to his students, we consider them addressed us.

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