

## Speech, Humanitas Luncheon

*When Arthur Hiller, Jim Moser, John Furia, Charles Williams and I announced the Humanitas Prize in this room five years ago, we did so because we were convinced that television has a vast untapped potential to enrich its audience, to help its viewers grow and develop and become the fully conscious, sovereignly free, interiorly centered, deeply rooted, lovingly sharing persons God made them to be.*

*You're all aware, I know, that we are not born fulfilled persons. We become fulfilled persons through a rigorous and demanding process of growth.*

*We were convinced, and we are today even more convinced, that television has a unique contribution to make this process, that its capacity to facilitate human growth is surpassed only by that of the human family itself.*

*But, you may be saying, "Aren't you asking too much? TV in America is a commercial medium. It's an entertainment medium. How can it be used to humanize its viewers?"*

*This is a legitimate question. But it does have an answer, an answer which, I think, is exemplified in the programs you have created and for which you are being honored today.*

*I think they demonstrate definitely that entertainment and human enrichment are not only not incompatible. They complement and fulfill one another. An entertainment program which does not also enrich lacks substance. It is superficial and escapist. As entertainment, it is very incomplete, and ultimately, unsatisfying. And a program which attempts to be humanizing but which is also dull is not really enriching anybody.*

*Let us not forget that authentic entertainment is a human value in itself. We all need it. But let us also not forget that learning and sharing and growing are exciting. They are fun.*

*Somehow or other we've gotten the idea that the very opposite is the case. It must have been the way the schools were run when we were kids. But now, in our maturity, it's important for us to know this is not so. Growing can be a very satisfying experience.*

*Just look at the derivation to the two words most often associated with entertainment—  
delight and enjoyment.*

*Television delights when it casts light into the dark corners of the human condition and helps its viewers answer more fully those questions with which, late at night, we all wrestle: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? What am I supposed to be doing with this life of mine? What does it all add up to anyway?*

*Television gives enjoyment when it occasions joy in its viewers, when it feeds and stretches their minds, frees their imagination to take a romp, stirs their hearts with challenge and warms them with compassion.*

*When television affirms the dignity of the human person, probes the meaning of human life, enlightens the use of human freedom and reveals to each person the common humanity of every other person, so that the viewer is challenged to reach out in love to all his or her brothers and sisters in the human family, then television is a source of joy for its viewers. They feel joy—they enjoy themselves because they have been enriched. Which is just another way of saying television fulfills its humanizing potential by helping its viewers fulfill theirs.*

*I know you are convinced of this. It shows in what you have created.*

*I'm glad to see Norman Lear and his Tandem and TAT creative teams with us today. Week after week, your shows are very funny. But they also say some very important things about the way men and women relate to one another.*

*The same can be said of Danny Arnold, Tony Sheehan and Reinhold Weege. Your Barney Miller series is first class entertainment. But it also reveals so much about the human condition.*

*I'm glad to see Carol and Nigel McKeand back with us today. Your Family series takes us inside its characters. We come to understand them. In the process, we also come to understand ourselves. I like that.*

*The specials were particularly strong this year. They afford the writer and producer a unique freedom to enrich as well as entertain their audiences. Over the years, Hallmark has excelled in this field. So has EMI. We're glad to see Jim Aubrey and Ron Lyon, David Susskind and Time Life Associates also place strong entries in this field this year.*

*But what is it which characterizes humanizing drama? Honesty, I think, first and foremost.*

*Of all the animals, we are unique because we have an interior life. We can reflect upon ourselves. We can decide how we will relate to the world around us. And we can choose to explore the even more fascinating world within ourselves. In each of us, there is this zone of awareness, this field of consciousness, this arena for choice. We are creatures of depth.*

*Any drama that pretends to be human must concern itself with the interior life, the depth dimension of its characters.*

*Sometimes, these characters will find themselves torn by conflicting inner forces. At other times, they will be in conflict with each other. This should not surprise us. Tension and conflict are part of drama because they are part of life.*

*But the resolution of conflict, within the individual psyche or between human beings, is more a matter of inner choice than of exterior action.*

*It is possible to choose violence to resolve conflict. But the person doing so almost always dehumanizes himself in the process. To portray the violence without portraying the dehumanization that flows from it is to distort reality. It is to deceive one's audience.*

*Human drama will also, of course, concern itself with the dynamics of human intimacy, with the fascinating process in which two human beings decide to stand opposite each other, open to*

*each other. The dramatist with human sensitivity will, I think, find the touching of souls of more theatrical interest than the coupling of bodies.*

*You hear a lot of talk these days about how much sex there is on TV. Is there too much? I think it all depends on what kind of sex you're talking about.*

*Sex which is human, real and honest, sex which concerns itself with the fusion of souls as well as of bodies, sex which enables a man and a woman to say to each other, "I love you. I want to share myself with you. Only with you. Forever."*

*I don't think there's too much of this kind of sex portrayed on TV. But this kind of sex is hard to write. You know that. And it's hard to act. And it takes a lot of time to shoot it right.*

*And this may be why so much of another kind of sex is portrayed on TV—casual sex, superficial sex, sex which involves the body but not the soul, which is more a biological release than a personal love gift of self, sex which is portrayed as of no greater significance than brushing your teeth or taking a shower.*

*I think there may be too much of this kind of sex portrayed on American TV because there is so little of this kind of sex in real life. No doubt, some people do jump in and out of bed with each other, but they always leave something of themselves behind when they move on. To portray casual sex without portraying the spiritual emptiness that flows from it is also, in my opinion, to distort reality and mislead one's audience.*

*So I think we have to look at how we portray human life and make sure we are being true to life as it really is.*

*When I look at American TV, I also have other concerns.*

*As I look around this room, I see no black faces. And no brown faces. And most of the women here are wives of the finalists. I think that should concern us all.*

*Ours is a small world, all of whose peoples are interdependent on one another. Yet an eighth of the world's peoples, almost ½ billion people, suffer from chronic malnutrition. And at certain times of the year, that number rises to almost one billion. These starving men and women are citizens of our world. They are our brothers and sisters. Yet we seldom see them portrayed on American TV. Is the reality so depressing, so frustrating, so fraught with guilt, that we, the creative community in Hollywood, can't deal with it? Yet if we don't, and if we don't help our fellow citizens deal with it, how will this catastrophic situation ever be remedied?*

*I am also concerned with the pessimistic view of the human situation which seems to characterize so much of American television. I am not advocating Pollyanna, but I think we should ask ourselves why those who watch a great deal of television are more inclined to be paranoid and cynical, less inclined to be trusting and open.*

*Where, in particular, in American TV, do we find positive contemporary role models for our young people? In the 1960s it may have been necessary to load the deck with anti-heroes to offset the naïve romanticism so prevalent then. But the wheel of history has turned. And now I think our people need to be reminded of the grandeur, courage and generosity of which they are capable. It may just be that we need a hero or two to emulate, someone to make us proud to be human beings.*

*But enough of these reflections.*

*Let me conclude by saying that the shows you have written, directed and produced have in the opinion of the judges, made a significant contribution to the human welfare of the American viewing public. In our opinion, they are profoundly humanizing programs. In the name of the executive committee of the Human Family Institute and of its Board of Trustees, I congratulate you. In my own name, I'd just like to say that I wish we had nine prizes to give today. You're all winners. Congratulations again.*