



WILBUR SCHRAMM
AND NOAM CHOMSKY
MEET HAROLD INNIS

MEDIA, POWER, AND DEMOCRACY

ROBERT E. BABE

Wilbur Schramm and Noam Chomsky
Meet Harold Innis

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Media, Power, and Democracy

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To James Winter and Edward Comor, esteemed colleagues and friends
and
For every man, and woman, “for all seasons”

“If a man love the labour of any trade, apart from any question of success or fame, the gods have called him.”

—Robert Louis Stevenson

“To love truth for truth’s sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world and the seed of all other virtues.”

—John Locke

“A history of the past is worthless except as a documented way of talking about the future.”

—Kenneth Burke

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Introduction

HAROLD INNIS

Harold Adams Innis (1894–1952) was originator or co-originator of two schools of thought. In the late 1920s and through the 1930s, he co-founded and became the most prolific expositor of the *staples thesis* of Canadian economic development, also known as the *Toronto School of Economics*. Then, in the last decade or so of his abbreviated life, he inaugurated *medium theory*,¹ sometimes called *The Toronto School of Communication*,² thereby qualifying also as a co-founder in North America (with Wilbur Schramm) of communication/media studies. Such remarkable achievements induced political economist and staples theorist Mel Watkins to exclaim that Innis is “without doubt the most distinguished social scientist and historian, and one of the most distinguished intellectuals, that Canada has ever produced.”³

Watkins is far from alone. John Bonnett enthuses that “Innis is among the most profound thinkers Canada has ever produced,”⁴ while Daniel Drache pronounced that “Harold Adams Innis remains far and away Canada’s most brilliant political economist.”⁵ Similarly, according to Donald Creighton, “It would be difficult to think of another Canadian scholar whose stature equals or approaches that of Harold Adams Innis.”⁶ For James Carey, meanwhile, “Innis’s work . . . is the great achievement in communications on this continent.”⁷ Finally, according to Neil Postman, Innis was “the father of modern communication studies.”⁸

Rarely is high acclaim unanimously given, and Innis certainly has had detractors. Foundational mainstream media scholars in the United States particularly were prone to dismiss Innis curtly as a “media determinist”⁹ and as a “technological determinist,”¹⁰ or (more commonly) to ignore him entirely. More recently, Menahem Blondheim belittled Innis’s work as being “more like a bag of tricks played on his fellow scholars” than serious scholarship, attesting further that Innis’s texts abound with “inconsistencies . . . from non-sequiturs in the reasoning to glaring contradictions between interpretations, between data, and between data and interpretation.”¹¹ British scholar, Richard Collins, likewise detected little merit in Innis’s work, declaring:

[Innis] does not link his magpie collection of fascinating facts with his major propositions, does not demonstrate to the reader the necessity of his conclusions. . . . For a skeptical reader, Innis offers only a set of take

or leave it dogmas, the arbitrariness of which is camouflaged by a thick frosting of sparkling information—facts lining the nest of an intellectual magpie and concealing the fundamental intellectual disorderliness of Innis's system.¹²

On August 12, 2006, the late Hanno Hardt inadvertently planted the seed which became this book. Hardt invited me to prepare a paper for *Javnost-The Public* on Innis as one of the “lost or forgotten” media scholars.¹³ I was taken aback by the invitation. To that point I had not thought of Innis as being either “lost” or “forgotten.” In Canada, actually, there was then (and continues to be) a good deal of Innis-related scholarship. In addition to a steady stream of academic articles and books about or drawing heavily on Innis,¹⁴ Alexander John Watson's magisterial biography of 2006 particularly stands out among the others.¹⁵ Also seminal are Robin Neill's “intellectual biography,”¹⁶ and “reminisces” by Eric Havelock¹⁷ complete with introduction by Marshall McLuhan.¹⁸ Innis-inspired anthologies¹⁹ and reprints of his famous media/communication books with new introductions by established scholars were then, and continue to be, published. Moreover, Innis's essays have continued to be compiled for publication,²⁰ and media/economic work in the style of Innis is not uncommon.²¹ In Canada, Innis has neither been forgotten nor lost, and he remains, for some, one of the most—if not *the* most—distinguished of Canadian scholars.

But, take away the books published in Toronto and Montreal, the demonstrable interest in Innis wanes considerably. Indeed, six years prior to Hardt's invitation, I had myself noted that the trajectory Innis set for media/communication studies in Canada differed fundamentally from mainstream American media/communication scholarship.²² Glancing through mainstream histories of media/communication thought by American scholars, one finds scant reference to Harold Adams Innis.²³ Innis does not even appear in the Index to Bounds and Jajmohan's anthology on “neglected media critics!”²⁴ Even those few American scholars who seem to have based substantial portions of their work on an Innisian foundation acknowledge little, if any, indebtedness to Innis.²⁵ As Ronald Deibert remarks, “Innis has been ‘canonized’ in Canada but largely ignored in the U.S.”²⁶

There were, of course, exceptions, the major one being James W. Carey (1934–2006). Carey's article, “Harold Adams Innis and Marshall McLuhan,” first appeared in 1967²⁷ and has frequently been reprinted since; arguably, that piece opened up Innis's media/communication scholarship to *Canadian* media scholars, for to that point Innis's media work had been largely overlooked even in Canada. Through the years, Carey continued to publish usually compelling articles expounding upon or extending Innis's thought.²⁸

That being said, Carey's treatment of Innis, I will argue, was partial or selective. In any event, Carey's championing of Innis fell largely on deaf ears in America—for reasons to be elaborated on in this book.

It should be added that Marshall McLuhan, even prior to Carey's work, frequently claimed to be "a disciple" of Harold Innis. While McLuhan's deference and homage undoubtedly increased awareness of Innis as a media theorist, McLuhan was not what one would call a gracious writer. In fact, McLuhan's scholarship during the 1960s was suspect for many,²⁹ quite possibly detracting from any praise he bestowed.³⁰ In any event, McLuhan's version of *medium theory* differed substantially from Innis's, even to the point of antithesis!³¹

Although McLuhan and Carey provided the invaluable service of familiarizing much larger audiences with the name, Harold Innis and with some of his media/communication thought, the intent in this book is to present a broader, fuller, more complete (one might say, a no-holds-barred) representation of Innis's media writings.

A number of questions ran through my mind while responding to Hanno Hardt's request. Is Innis's stature in Canada as a revered media/communication scholar warranted by his work, or is it more a case of Canadian scholars championing a native son? How can one *test* whether Innis warrants the acclaim he has received and receives in Canada? If his acclaim *is* warranted, why has he not achieved much recognition abroad, particularly in the U.S.? What might Innis have contributed to international media/communication scholarship had celebrated non-Canadian scholars been more inclined to consult/confront him? What might Innis have learned (or Innisian scholars today learn) from such confrontations/comparisons? And what is/should be Innis's legacy for the first quarter of the twenty-first century?

In attempting to provide some answers to these questions, not only do I make full use of Innis's hitherto neglected *Political Economy in the Modern State* and other seldom cited writings, I also draw attention to Innis's more controversial positions that have been largely overlooked. Furthermore, I juxtapose Innis's thought on select media/communication topics with that of two well-known American scholars, Wilbur Schramm and Noam Chomsky.

WILBUR SCHRAMM

Writing in the mid-1990s, renowned American media scholar, Everett Rogers, asserted that Wilbur Schramm (1907–1987) "was the founder of the [communication study] field." Rogers explained that Schramm "set in motion the patterns of scholarly work in communication study that continue to this day."³²

Elsewhere, Rogers extended his homage, proposing (with co-author Steven Chaffee) that Schramm was not merely “the founder of communication study . . . in America, but in the world”³³—a more contentious proposition, certainly, unless and until one understands that by *communication study* these authors (consistently with Schramm) meant quantitative, empirical, experimental, social scientific approaches to detecting and measuring *media effects*—a narrow definition, certainly, for what is otherwise a wide ranging, interdisciplinary, even speculative and philosophical field of inquiry. Given that definition of *communication study*, however, Rogers and Chaffee certainly had justification to accord Schramm with worldwide founder status: in no other country than the United States was the foundational mainstream scholarship so driven by (and confined to) positivistic, quantitative, experimental methods, and Schramm (as documented in this book) certainly played a foundational role in that regard. In England, by way of contrast, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, E. P. Thompson, and Stuart Hall all largely eschewed quantitative approaches,³⁴ as did the Frankfurt School of Germany,³⁵ postmodern theorists in France,³⁶ and, of course, Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan in Canada. For thirty years at least, however, quantitative, experimental methodology typified the American mainstream. Arguably, it still does.

Intellectual historian, Timothy Glander—in most ways critical of Schramm’s contribution—is another who acknowledges that Schramm “is widely considered to be the individual most responsible for the development of the field of mass communication research in the United States.”³⁷ Likewise, Christopher Simpson—another critic—remarks that Schramm “is widely credited as the single most important definer of U.S. mass communication studies of his day.”³⁸ According to mainstream intellectual historian Jesse Delia similarly, Schramm was “the most important figure in the development of mass communication within the journalism tradition—and arguably in the history of communication research;” Delia then astutely added, however, that Schramm’s influence was heightened by “his role in institutionalizing communication research in American higher education,”³⁹ a point echoed by Jefferson Pooley, for whom Schramm was “almost single-handedly responsible for the mass communication field’s institutionalization.”⁴⁰

Among admirers and critics alike, then, Schramm’s influence was and still is regarded as seminal. And that influence stemmed not only from his scholarship, but also from his administrative and editorial endeavors and acumen.

To the best of my knowledge, Schramm and Innis to this point have never been compared, even though it seems self-evident that they should be, given their foundational status in their respective countries and the fact they were nearly contemporaries. Perhaps one reason for this absence is that comparing Schramm and Innis would inevitably afford Innis

greater attention and status than the mainstream of U.S. scholarship is inclined to give—calling attention thereby to a radically different, if not indeed antithetical, mode of media/communication research.

To attain greater insight into the merits (and demerits) of Innis's scholarship, it seems essential to compare and contrast it with what it is not. Schramm is an ideal subject for that inquiry.

NOAM CHOMSKY

While reading Innis's long out-of-print *Political Economy in the Modern State* for the first time several years ago, two thoughts ran through my mind: first, how different Innis is from the template fixated by James Carey, Marshall McLuhan, and their derivatives. And, second, *Noam Chomsky!*

Mel Watkins writes that Chomsky may well be “the greatest intellectual of the English-speaking world.”⁴¹ The *New York Times* famously proclaimed him to be “the most important intellectual alive”—albeit on account of his linguistics, *not* his media/communication scholarship.

Sometimes tributes come from the most unexpected of quarters: having just attended three Chomsky lectures at Columbia University in December 2013, Stanley Fish effused that he had just seen and heard a master at work: “The term ‘master class’ is a bit overused,” wrote Fish, “but I feel no hesitation in using it here. It was a master class taught by a master, and if someone were to ask me what exactly is it that academics do, I would point to these lectures and say, simply, here it is, the thing itself.”⁴²

Noam Chomsky is author or co-author of over one hundred books (many of them compilations of speeches, interviews, and previously published articles). He has been an invited lecturer at some of the world's most prestigious universities. In 1969, for instance, he delivered the John Locke lectures at Oxford, in 1970 the Bertrand Russell Memorial Lecture at Cambridge, in 1972 the Nehru Memorial Lecture in New Delhi, in 1977 the Huizinga Lecture in Leiden,⁴³ in 1988 the Massey Lectures at the University of Toronto, and in 2013 the John Dewey Lectures at Columbia University. He was the most cited living scholar between 1980 and 1992 (according to the Arts and Humanities Citation Index), and in an international survey (2005) was voted the world's top public intellectual.⁴⁴ He is the eighth most cited author, living or dead—just behind Plato and Sigmund Freud.⁴⁵ He has been awarded honorary degrees by many universities, including the American University at Beirut (2013) and my own—The University of Western Ontario (2000).⁴⁶ In May 2013 Chomsky received the 11th Annual Human Rights Award from Global Exchange. At MIT, although now retired, Chomsky is Institute Professor, and MIT offers an endowed Chair bearing his name.

However, it is an understatement that not everyone is appreciative of Chomsky's work. *The Anti Chomsky Reader*, possibly the most vitriolic of all, compares Chomsky to L. Ron Hubbard, maintaining he is a "cult figure."⁴⁷ According to the book's editors, Chomsky has "a deep disregard of, and contempt for, the truth; a monumental disdain for standards of inquiry; a relentless strain of self-promotion." Moreover, he makes "notable descents into incoherence" and displays "a penchant for verbally abusing those who disagree with him."⁴⁸ There are a plethora of other accusations also, too venomous and egregious to bear repeating here.

Richard Posner, another critic (albeit more moderate in tone than the preceding), acquiesces that Chomsky has had an "immensely distinguished academic career"; Posner then asks, in effect, given such excellence, why would Chomsky waste so much time doing political-economic studies?⁴⁹

Some professors write as public intellectuals out of passionate conviction, a felt duty to "bear witness" regardless of the likely impact of their public-intellectual work. How else to explain the enormous volume of Noam Chomsky's political writings . . . which have taken a great deal of time away from his immensely distinguished academic career and yet have received little public attention, much of it derisory?⁵⁰

By Posner's account, then, Chomsky's political-economic analyses of media, communication, and knowledge production/education, do not constitute part of his "immensely distinguished academic career" and have received little public attention. Robert Barsky, Chomsky's biographer, somewhat similarly notes: "Most of [Chomsky's] criticisms of American policy, past and present, are [left unmentioned] in the mainstream press," as well as being largely ignored by "instructors and professors who teach history or politics [in the U.S]."⁵¹

One may begin to sense a pattern. As just seen, Innis became renowned in Canada as the country's foremost academic on account of his work in economic history (the staples thesis), in consequence of which he was even named president of the *American Economics Association*—the only Canadian residing in Canada, to my knowledge, to be so-honored.⁵² But, moving to political-economic studies in media and communication in his last decade, like Chomsky (albeit much more moderately) Innis was ignored and maligned in the United States by the media/communication and political science mainstreams.⁵³ These similarities alone, one might think, warrant closer scrutiny of Innis alongside Chomsky. In any event, it is surely of some interest to compare the thinking of two scholars who have been identified (albeit not unanimously) as being the foremost thinkers that their respective countries have produced—especially given that their research interests overlap so much.

PLAN FOR THE BOOK

Part I is devoted to Innis—to his life and his thought. It comprises the next six chapters. I begin in chapter 1 by briefly covering essential ground well-known to Innis aficionados—albeit, hopefully, adding some new insights along the way. In chapter 2, however, and in the second half of chapter 3 and thereafter, I depart significantly from the Carey-McLuhan and the largely contemporary understanding of Innis, breaking (I believe) significant new ground with regard to Innis's positions and intentions.

Parts II and III, address, respectively, the media writings of Wilbur Schramm and Noam Chomsky, albeit always in the context of Innis's thought. Although Schramm in one sense is the American analog of Innis (or Innis the Canadian analog of Schramm), both being the scholars who did most to inaugurate media studies in their respective countries, *what* they inaugurated is largely antithetical. Schramm only infrequently alluded to Innis, and when he did it was either derisively or to misinterpret what Innis said. Innis referred to Schramm by name even less. But, as developed below, it is likely Innis would have rejected most of Schramm's scholarship. By comparing Schramm and Innis, key questions and issues—some quite ancient, others quite contemporary—come to the fore regarding scholarship in general and media scholarship in particular: practicality vs. search for truth; political economy of scholarship; hidden agendas in scholarship; scholarship undertaken at the margins vs. at centers of power; linear vs. dialectical thinking; medium theory vs. media theory; the role of experts, education, media, and persuasion in democratic society; education as indoctrination; and much else.

Chomsky is another story altogether. Differences certainly abound between Chomsky and Innis: in his scholarship, if not in his personal life, Innis was a pessimist and in some ways an arch-conservative; he was an anti-democrat disinclined to put much stock in the intellectual prowess of the broader public. On the other hand, he definitely was not one with an authoritarian predisposition regarding governance. In contrast, Chomsky (at least until recently⁵⁴) has been an optimist; he is a progressive, a democrat, and an egalitarian. These differences are real, and many readers of this book initially might consider these disparities to be of such magnitude that these scholars could share little if any common ground. The present author emphatically disagrees. I will argue in this book that their commonalities overwhelm their differences, and moreover that these commonalities go a long way to explaining their disrepute and/or neglect within mainstream American scholarship.

The final chapter is intended to be suggestive regarding the relevance of Innis for an age of network capitalism. The claim made there is that Innis's work, far from being obsolesced by the arrival of digital media, is now more relevant than ever. Innis was prescient, his writings foreshad-

owed and anticipated much that is important to our contemporary condition. Innis also is suggestive of root causes for our current malaise; his methods of analysis remain fecund; and he is suggestive of individual and collective strategies in response.

NOTES

1. Joshua Meyrowitz likely originated the term, *medium theory*. It entails “the historical and cross-cultural study of the different cultural environments” as induced or supported “by *different* media of communication.” Therefore, it is distinct from *media theory*, which proposes laws or tendencies that apply to all media—for instance, the “law of minimal media effects.” See Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), and part II of the present book.

2. Rita Watson and Menahem Blondheim, editors, *The Toronto School of Communication Theory: Interpretations, Extensions, Application* (Toronto and Jerusalem: University of Toronto Press and The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2007). Also, Donald Theall, “The Toronto School of Communications,” May 31, 2003, <http://imfpu.blogspot.ca/2011/03/toronto-school-of-communications-by.html> (accessed December 29, 2013). According to Theall, who studied under McLuhan, the most prominent members of this “school” were Marshall McLuhan and Edmund Carpenter; he relegates Innis and Eric Havelock to mere “forerunner” status.

3. Mel Watkins, “The Innis Tradition in Canadian Political Economy” (1982; reprint, *Staples and Beyond: Selected Writings of Mel Watkins*, edited by Hugh Grant and David Wolfe, Introduction by Wallace Clement (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 212.

4. John Bonnett, *Emergence and Empire: Innis, Complexity, and the Trajectory of History* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2013), 4.

5. Daniel Drache, “Celebrating Innis: The Man, the Legacy, and Our Future,” in Harold Innis, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change: Selected Essays*, edited by Daniel Drache (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), xiii, xvi.

6. Donald Creighton, *The Passionate Observer: Selected Writings* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980), 145.

7. James W. Carey, “Space, Time, and Communications: A Tribute to Harold Innis,” in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 142.

8. Neil Postman, *Technopoly* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 9.

9. Everett Rogers, *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 486, 499. John Durham Peters remarks that “fear of technological determinism blocks the path of inquiry,” the epithet being so stigmatizing that many scholars refuse even to read work by anyone whose character has been besmirched by the label. See Peters, “Two Cheers for Technological Determinism,” *Conference on Media Histories: Epistemology, Materiality, Temporality*, Columbia University (March 2011), <http://vimeo.com/25591045> (accessed February 18, 2014).

10. Scott R. Olson, “Mass Media: A Bricolage of Paradigms,” in *Human Communication as a Field of Study: Selected Contemporary Views*, edited by Sarah Sanderson King (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 71–72, 77. In Canada, too, Innis has occasionally been referred to as a technological determinist—most notably by Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English Canadian Historical Writing 1900–1970* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), 93, 94, 98, 102.

11. Blondheim, “‘The Significance of Communication’ According to Harold Innis,” in *The Toronto School of Communication Theory*, 54–55. Also Blondheim, “Harold Adams Innis and his Bias of Communication,” in *Canonic Texts in Media Research*, edited by

Elihu Katz, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes, and Avril Orloff (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 158.

12. Richard Collins, "The Metaphor of Dependency and Canadian Communications: The Legacy of Harold Innis," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 12, no. 1 (1986): 14.

13. Hardt's special issue is *Javnost - The Public* 13, no. 3 (2006). My contribution is "Innis and the News," 43–56.

14. See, for example, A. J. Watson's listing of about thirty articles which he described as a "cross-section only." Alexander John Watson, *Marginal Man: The Dark Vision of Harold Innis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), note 7, 432–33.

15. Watson, *Marginal Man*. Also, Paul Heyer, *Harold Innis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Donald Creighton, *Harold Adams Innis: Portrait of a Scholar* (1957; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978). Also works cited immediately below in notes 16, 17, and 18.

16. Robin Neill, *A New Theory of Value: The Canadian Economics of H. A. Innis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

17. Eric Havelock, *Harold A. Innis: A Memoir*, with a Preface by Marshall McLuhan (Toronto: Innis Foundation, 1982).

18. See also the biographical sketch by Alexander Brady, "Harold Adams Innis, 1894–1952." *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 19, no. 1 (February 1953): 87–96.

19. See particularly *Culture, Communication and Dependency: The Tradition of H. A. Innis*, edited by William H. Melody, Liora Salter, and Paul Heyer (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1981); and *Harold Innis in the New Century*, edited by Charles R. Acland and W. Buxton (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1999).

20. Daniel Drache, editor, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change: Harold A. Innis, Selected Essays* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995). Also, *The Idea File of Harold Innis*, with an Introduction and edited by William Christian (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); and *Essays in Canadian Economic History*, edited by Mary Q. Innis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956).

21. For instance, Judith Stamps, *Unthinking Modernity: Innis, McLuhan and the Frankfurt School* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 2001); Arthur Kroker, *Technology and the Canadian Mind: Innis/ McLuhan/Grant* (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1984); and Ronald J. Deibert, *Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia: Communication in the World Order Transformation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

22. Robert E. Babe, *Canadian Communication Thought: Ten Foundational Writers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); also Babe, "Innis and the Emergence of Canadian Media Studies," *Global Media Journal, Canadian Edition* 1, no. 1 (2008): 9–23. http://www.gmj.uottawa.ca/0801/inaugural_babe_f.html (accessed October 13, 2012).

23. "Innis" does not appear in the Index of Wilbur Schramm's *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America: A Personal Memoir*, edited by Steven Chaffee and Everett Rogers (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997); nor is he referenced in Schramm and Porter's *Men, Women, Messages, and Media* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982). Nor does he appear in the Index of Schramm's *Mass Communication*, (1960; 2nd edition Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972). Innis is not referenced in *Theories of Mass Communication* by Melvin DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach (5th edition, White Plains, NY: Longman, 1989). There is a single page notation for Innis in Schramm and Roberts's mammoth (1000 page) tome, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (revised edition, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971). Jesse Delia made a one sentence reference to Innis in his lengthy review of the literature, claiming that Innis came "to communication from an obscure branch of economic history" in order to continue the type of institutional analyses and social histories pioneered by the Chicago School; see Delia, "Communication Research: A History," in *Handbook of Communication Science*, edited by Charles R. Berger and Steven H. Chaffee (Sage: Newbury Park, 1987), 37. More recently, however, Innis's importance is acknowledged: see Peter Simonson, Janice Peck, Robert T. Craig, and John P. Jackson, "The History of Communication

History," in *The Handbook of Communication History*, edited by Peter Simonson, Janice Peck, Robert T. Craig, and John P. Jackson (New York: Routledge, 2013), 13–57. Innis's essay, "The Bias of Communication," moreover, was named one of the "canonical texts" in media studies by the editors of an anthology bearing that title, although the commentary by Blondheim is anything but flattering; see *Canonic Texts in Media Research*, edited by Elihu Katz, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes, and Avril Orloff (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).

24. Philip Bounds and Mala Jagmohan, editors. *Recharting Media Studies: Essays on Neglected Media Critics* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008).

25. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); James R. Beniger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Elizabeth L. Eisenstein mentions Innis once in her monumental *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-modern Europe*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

26. Ronald Deibert, "Between Essentialism and Constructivism: Harold Innis and World Order Transformations," in *The Toronto School of Communication Theory*, 32. In Québec, however, (as in the U.S.) "the resonance of [Innis's] work is virtually non-existent." See Daniel Salée, "Innis and Quebec: The Paradigm That Would Not Be," in *Harold Innis in the New Century*, 196. See also Alain-G. Gagnon and Sarah Fortin, "Innis in Quebec: Conjectures and Conjunctures," in *Harold Innis in the New Century*, 209. Although interesting and important, this issue is beyond the scope of the present book.

27. *Antioch Review* 27, no. 1 (1967): 5–39.

28. Several of these are collected in two editions: James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); and Eve Stryker Munson and Catherine A. Warren, editors, *James Carey: A Critical Reader* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

29. See, for example, Raymond Rosenthal, *McLuhan: Pro and Con* (New York: Penguin, 1969); and G. E. Stern, editor, *McLuhan Hot and Cool* (New York: Dial, 1967).

30. See particularly McLuhan, "Foreword," in H. A. Innis, *Empire & Communications*, revised by Mary Q. Innis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), v–xii; and "Introduction," in Harold A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), vii–xvi.

31. See Babe, "Innis and the Emergence of Canadian Media Studies."

32. Rogers, *A History of Communication Study*, 29.

33. Steven H. Chaffee and Everett M. Rogers, "Wilbur Schramm: The Founder," in Schramm, *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America*, 127; emphasis in original. (Accepting Rogers' declarations at face value would imply that close study of Schramm's work would reveal key positions and methods of other pioneering mainstream scholars, too—Elihu Katz, Robert Merton, Daniel Lerner, Ithiel de Sola Pool, Paul Lazarsfeld, even Everett Rogers himself).

34. Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (1990; 3rd edition, London: Routledge, 2003); also Robert E. Babe, *Cultural Studies and Political Economy: Toward a New Integration* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

35. David Berry, editor, *Revisiting the Frankfurt School: Essays on Culture, Media and Theory* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012).

36. Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

37. Timothy Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research During the American Cold War: Educational Effects and Contemporary Implications* (2000; reprint, New York: Routledge 2009), 135.

38. Christopher Simpson, *Science of Coercion: Communication Research & Psychological Warfare 1945–1960* (New York: Oxford, 1994), 54.

39. Delia, "Communication Research: A History," 75.

40. Jefferson Pooley, "The New History of Mass Communication Research," in David W. Park and Jefferson Pooley, editors, *The History of Media and Communication Research* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 45.

41. Watkins, "The Intellectual and the Public: A Neo-Innisian Perspective on the Contemporary English Canadian Condition" (1994; reprint, *Staples and Beyond*), 254.

42. Stanley Fish, "Scholarship and Politics: The Case of Noam Chomsky." *New York Times*, December 9, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/10/opinion/fish-scholarship-and-politics-the-case-of-noam-chomsky.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (accessed November 2, 2014).

43. NNDB, "Noam Chomsky." <http://www.nndb.com/people/590/000022524/> (accessed October 12, 2014).

44. Duncan Campbell, "Chomsky Is Voted World's Top Public Intellectual." *The Guardian*, 18 October 2005. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/18/books.highereducation> (accessed January 4 2014).

45. NNDB, "Noam Chomsky."

46. *Wikipedia* lists thirty-nine universities that have awarded Chomsky with an honorary degree. "Noam Chomsky" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noam_Chomsky (accessed October 12, 2014).

47. Peter Collier, "Introduction." *The Anti Chomsky Reader*, edited by Peter Collier and David Horowitz (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 1974), vii.

48. *Ibid.*, ix. Chomsky himself remarked, "I get called anything. I'm accused of everything you can dream of: being a Communist propagandist, a Nazi propagandist, a pawn of freedom of speech, an anti-Semite, liar, whatever you want." He then added: "That's all a good sign. I mean, if you're a dissident, typically you're ignored. If you can't be ignored, and you can't be answered, you're vilified—that's obvious; no institution is going to help people undermine it. Noam Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky*, edited by Peter R. Mitchell and John Schoeffel (New York: The New Press, 2002), 205.

49. Richard Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 66.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Robert F. Barsky, *Noam Chomsky: A Life of Dissent* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1997), 153. One of the interesting exceptions to the rule that mainstream scholars studiously ignore Chomsky's media/communication work is the critique of the *Chomsky-Herman Propaganda Model* provided by Kurt and Gladys Lang, complete with rejoinder by Chomsky and Herman, and the Langs' riposte thereto. See Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, "Noam Chomsky and the Manufacture of Consent for American Foreign Policy," *Political Communication* 21, no. 93 (2004): 93–101; Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, "Reply to Kurt and Gladys Engel Lang," *Political Communication* 21, no. 93 (2004): 103–107; and Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, "Response to Herman and Chomsky," *Political Communication* 21, no. 93 (2004): 109–111.

52. John Kenneth Galbraith, born in Canada, was an *ex patriat* when so honored.

53. It is worth remarking here that Chomsky's media scholarship has received much more favorable attention in Canada than in the U.S.—yet another parallel with Innis! The motion picture, *Manufacturing Consent*, was produced by Canada's National Film Board, and *Necessary Illusions*, originating as the Massey Lectures at the University of Toronto, was broadcast on and published by CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation). Black Rose Books of Montreal has been a major publisher of Chomsky's work, including (with Edward S. Herman) *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, the publication history of which is reviewed in part III.

54. Noam Chomsky, "The End of History?" *In These Times*, September 4, 2014. http://inthesetimes.com/article/17137/the_end_of_history (accessed September 6, 2014). Here Chomsky is quoting Arundhati Roy. Many thanks to my former student, Jordan Coop, for drawing my attention to this article.

I

Introducing Harold Innis

ONE

Foundations

THE EARLY YEARS

Harold Adams Innis was born near the village of Otterville in rural southwestern Ontario, on November 5, 1894. He grew up in a devoutly Baptist home situated on a dairy farm, where reading materials were scarce—mostly the Bible and *Family Herald*.¹ For primary education he attended a one-room schoolhouse.

As a child and youth, Innis was immersed in the cycles of nature. In his teens he helped fund his education by hunting and trapping.² In his maturity he proudly described himself as a “dirt economist” who visited the regions about which he wrote to gain familiarity with the landscape and talk to the miners, trappers, lumberjacks, fishers, and so forth.³ Famously, in the summer of 1924, he canoed with a friend 2,000 miles in the northern Canadian wilderness as part of his research into the fur trade.⁴

However, as well as evoking Innis’s rustic beginnings and lifetime preoccupation with material, lived conditions (as opposed to abstract, mathematical theorizing),⁵ the phrase, *dirt economist*, can connote also his commitment to what biographer John Watson calls a “hinterland perspective.”⁶ About 1920, newly arrived at the University of Toronto, Innis decided to develop a distinctively “Canadian” economic theory on grounds that theories developed in older, richer, industrialized countries (England, the United States, and France) distort understanding if and when applied, without qualification, to emergent, peripheral ones. Innis maintained that economic history and economic theory should be closely integrated: that theory should *explain* history, and history should be a means of *testing* theory.⁷ These were (and remain) far from mainstream positions.

Another important aspect of Innis's early years was his religious zeal. A series of vignettes provided by John Watson, Donald Creighton, and Carl Berger illustrate this well: in his early teens, Innis attended church every Sunday and participated in Baptist youth activities. As a university student, his "favourite entertainment" was attending talks by visiting evangelical preachers.⁸ His career goal prior to the so-called Great War was to enter the ministry.⁹ Upon enlisting in the armed services in 1916, he confided to his sister, "If I had no faith in Christianity, I don't think I would go."¹⁰

But the war took its toll. He spent "eight months in the mud and lice and rats [in the trenches] of France."¹¹ In addition to witnessing deaths and injuries first hand, grim as that must have been, Innis was himself seriously wounded in France in 1917.¹² After eight months convalescence, he returned home, not just an invalid but a psychological casualty. Watson writes that although "it would take his physical wound seven years to heal, his psychological wounds would last a lifetime."¹³ In the late winter of 1937, according to his biographers, Innis experienced a "mental breakdown" which his friend, Donald Creighton, described as "grave";¹⁴ John Watson writes that Innis was "bedridden during the month of March 1937."¹⁵

The changes to Innis's outlook resulting from the war were manifold. Before the war, he had actively sought out preachers; after the war, preaching for him was an "obscenity."¹⁶ Far from anticipating a career in the ministry, by the war's end Innis viewed the church as another "agglomeration of power . . . to be profoundly distrusted."¹⁷ Now a "converted pacifist,"¹⁸ Innis's perhaps largely dormant penchant for anti-authoritarianism rose to the surface.¹⁹ He regarded with contempt civil servants and those university professors who flocked to comfortable offices in Ottawa to make wartime "contributions."²⁰ One senses that Innis's war experiences—particularly their disconnect with the rosy, patriotic pictures propagated by church and state to induce enlistments—were major factors instilling in him lifelong aversions to illusion and to abstract (mathematical) theorizing, and implanted in him also a compulsion to seek the truth regardless of costs.

Despite the agnosticism of his mature years, Innis's early religious zeal, according to Creighton, had lifelong consequences: "a strict sense of values and the feeling of devotion to a cause"; also a belief in the intrinsic worth of the individual,²¹ and [in keeping with his Baptist upbringing] a distrust of hierarchies, organizations, and dignities.²²

In 1918, MA in hand, Innis journeyed to the University of Chicago to take summer courses in political economy, intending to enter law school in Toronto that fall. Enthused particularly by the iconoclastic teachings of maverick economist Frank Knight (1885–1972), Innis abruptly changed course, remaining at Chicago to pursue a PhD. Under the supervision of economic historian C. W. Wright, he prepared a dissertation on the histo-

ry of the Canadian Pacific Railway. In the late summer of 1920, Chicago's doctoral requirements completed, he joined the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto as a lecturer.

INNIS AT CHICAGO

Innis's time at Chicago merits further consideration. His friend, J. B. Brebner, recalled that his two years there "formed him in so far as so independent a mind could be moulded."²³ Let us take a look particularly at two of the major influences.

Frank Knight

Frank Knight (along with Jacob Viner) is often credited with establishing the *first* Chicago School of Economics—as distinct from the *neoclassicism* of later Chicagoans such as Milton Friedman, George Stigler, Ronald Coase, and Gary Becker. Unlike those later neoclassical economists, Knight did not base his advocacy of free markets on high theory or abstraction. Nor did he presume ubiquitous competition and flexible prices with everything tending toward equilibrium and optimality. Rather, Knight's conservative libertarian prescriptions were based on deep skepticism. He presumed that (as one interpreter put it) "we simply are not smart enough to control one another's economic choices . . . that the power of human reason [is insufficient] to improve the human condition."²⁴ Also, unlike the later Chicago School, Knight denied that economics is, or ever can be, value free: "Reality is not what is logical, but *what it suits our purposes to treat as real*," Knight claimed. "Reality is the sum of the factors which condition purposive activity, including purposive thought."²⁵ In this regard, we may detect a foreshadowing of Innis's career-long concern with "biases" (i.e., misunderstanding). As an aside, (and developed particularly in chapter 2), Innis certainly departed, however, from Knight's position with regard to truth and objective value.

Knight also maintained that on account of human impulsiveness and irrationality, economic theory is of very limited use—even regarding *economic matters narrowly construed!*²⁶ (Members of the contemporary Chicago School, again, would be aghast at that proposition,²⁷ but Innis adopted it wholeheartedly). Innis considered economics to be (in Carl Berger's words) a "frail instrument for understanding,"²⁸ and once quipped: "But let me warn you that any exposition by an economist which explains the problems and their solutions with perfect clarity is certainly wrong."²⁹

In fact, Innis went *beyond* Knight in his skepticism, charging that when small countries adopt economic theories developed in richer, industrialized ones, they open themselves to "a new form of exploitation."³⁰ The

mainstream economics discipline, is *crafted* to benefit the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor and frail,³¹ Innis believed. He declared: “The bias of economics makes the best economists come from powerful countries.”³² The task of the honest scholar (as opposed to the sycophantic “expert”), according to Innis, is to sift through the biases, distortions, and platitudes of mainstream scholarship to expose mainline doctrines and analyses for what they really are—tools to enhance elite power and to exploit: “We need a sociology or a philosophy of the social sciences and particularly of economics, an economic history of knowledge or an economic history of economic history.”³³

After he left Chicago, Innis remained “in constant contact”³⁴ with Knight.

Veblen

Thorstein Veblen was another skeptic who impacted mightily on Innis at Chicago. Innis has even been called, “the Canadian Veblen.”³⁵ Innis’s exposure to Veblen, however, was indirect as that iconoclastic malcontent had been eased out of Chicago years before. Innis, though, attended a “small, informal group,”³⁶ inaugurated by Knight to discuss Veblen’s work even though (or perhaps because) Veblen was by then an outcast so far as respectable mainstream economics circles were concerned—undoubtedly in part because he published “devastating attacks on the established economic theories”³⁷ and belittled mainstream economists as being “mere taxonomists.”³⁸ Innis accepted Veblen’s major contention that economics *should* entail the study of processes of institutional growth and decay,³⁹ although he clearly rejected Veblen’s recommendation that engineers become society’s governors. Like Veblen, Innis maintained also that technologies (“industrial arts,” in Veblen’s terminology) are key factors shaping values.⁴⁰

In 1929, the year of Veblen’s death, Innis published both a tribute to Veblen and an annotated bibliography of his writings—courageous acts, given the “anti-Veblen campaign [that had] plagued American universities for a quarter of a century.” As Horace Gray recounted, “Some faculty men lost their posts for suspected Veblenism, others were denied appointments and promotions.”⁴¹ Despite this, Innis pronounced that Veblen’s contributions equaled those of the beloved Adam Smith—a heresy of gargantuan proportions!⁴² Innis’s public endorsement of Veblen, incidentally, occurred *before* he had attained recognition as an established scholar, and must be considered very courageous—whether or not one agrees with Innis on Veblen.

Mary Quayle

Highly significant also with regard to Innis's time at Chicago was his meeting Mary Emma Quayle, a student who attended his winter 1919 course in elementary economics. Although her primary interest was literature, they fell in love and married in 1921. They raised four children.

Mary Quayle certainly influenced Harold Innis's scholarship. For one thing, Harold collaborated with Mary to produce "the first textbook of Canadian economic history." *An Economic History of Canada* (1935)⁴³ served "an entire generation as their introduction to Canadian economic history."⁴⁴ Moreover, after Harold's death, Mary assisted in preparing revised editions of *The Cod Fisheries* (1954) and *The Fur Trade in Canada* (1956). She also assembled the collection of Innis's papers published under the title, *Essays in Canadian Economic History* (1956). And, in 1972, she revised and edited a new edition of *Empire and Communications*.⁴⁵

Chicago School of Social Thought

The term, "Chicago School," sometimes denotes not economics at Chicago, but rather the "Chicago School of Social Thought"⁴⁶ or "Chicago Sociology," whose members include John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, Robert Park, and Charles Cooley. For James Carey, those four, plus journalist Franklin Ford, *inaugurated* "scholarship on communication . . . in the United States."⁴⁷

Innis was at Chicago when both Park and Mead were on staff. Marshall McLuhan suggested that Park exerted a strong influence on Innis.⁴⁸ Others have noted, however, that no record exists of Innis ever meeting Park—or Mead, for that matter. Even more significantly, perusing Innis's footnotes and bibliographies one detects how assiduously he avoided referencing Dewey and Park. Blondheim suggests that Innis was likely quite familiar with both authors, but disagreeing with them, chose to ignore them.⁴⁹

The Chicago School is treated briefly in part II with regard to the origins of Media Studies in the United States.⁵⁰ The essential point for present purposes is that the Chicago School's influence on Innis seems to have been slight to nonexistent.

INNIS AT TORONTO

Phase 1: The Railway

At Toronto, an immediate priority for Innis was revising for publication his doctoral dissertation on the Canadian Pacific Railway. However, soon after completing that project he grew dissatisfied, even to the point of rejecting its main contention—namely, that the CPR had *countered*

“natural” economic and political forces running north and south. In his preface to *The Fur Trade in Canada*, indeed, Innis proposed instead that Canada had emerged “not in spite of geography, but because of it.”⁵¹

It is no mere accident that the present Dominion [of Canada] coincides roughly with the fur-trading areas of northern North America . . . The Northwest Company was the forerunner of the present confederation . . . “The lords of the lakes and forest have passed away” but their work will endure in the boundaries of the Dominion of Canada and in Canadian institutional life. . . . The fur trade permitted the extension of the combination of authority and independence across the northern half of the continent.⁵²

*Phase 2: Staples*⁵³

With his paper, “The Teaching of Economic History in Canada” (1929), and his book on the fur trade (1930), Innis presented his version of the staples thesis, which would preoccupy him for portions of the following decade. According to Mel Watkins, “the staple approach to the study of economic history . . . is Canada’s most distinctive contribution to political economy.”⁵⁴

W. A. Mackintosh of Queen’s University (Kingston, Ontario) actually inaugurated staples studies in 1923 with his article, “Economic Factors in Canadian History.”⁵⁵ However, Mackintosh’s version differs fundamentally from Innis’s. According to Mackintosh, staples enabled “pioneer communities [such as Canada] to come into close contact with the commercial world” and thereby “leave behind the disabilities of a pioneer existence.”⁵⁶ For Innis, to the contrary, the important point about staples was not growth, but dependence⁵⁷: “The economic history of Canada has been dominated by the discrepancy between the centre and the margin of western civilization.”⁵⁸ And again, “Canada has never been self-sufficient and her existence has depended primarily on trade with other countries.”⁵⁹ Specifically, “agriculture, industry, transportation, trade, finance, and governmental activities tend to become subordinate to the production of the staple for a more highly specialized community.”⁶⁰

When a staple is the leading economic sector of new (“developing”) countries, Innis maintained, it skews or *biases* development. A task of *authentic* (as opposed to “kept”) economists, consequently—again according to Innis—is to identify and classify the *spread effects*.⁶¹

Moreover, as Watkins remarks, for Innis a “serious pitfall is that the [emerging] economy may get caught in a ‘staple trap,’”⁶² meaning that rigidities arising from the exploitation of staples become self-perpetuating.⁶³ Whereas mainstream (neoclassical) economists propose a *law of comparative advantage* with no rigidities—whereby developing countries purportedly benefit from specializing in staples if that is where their

relative efficiencies lie—Innis foresaw countries being forever locked into staples production to the preclusion of more balanced development.

Another and related departure from the economics orthodoxy concerns Innis's rejection of the proposition that an unfettered price system automatically allocates resources *optimally*. Innis advised that instead of admiring the purported efficacy of the price system, economists should reallocate their scarce time and energy into identifying factors giving rise to the system of relative prices in the first place! In newer countries, Innis claimed, prices are unduly influenced by interactions with larger, richer economies; consequently, prices in smaller countries are *biased*: they tend to indicate the priorities and valuations of the larger trading partners. In Innis's words, "The success of *laissez-faire* has been paid for by the exploited areas of which we are one."⁶⁴

Innis was out-of-step also with mainstream economists in directing attention to *cultural* implications of trade. In perhaps the starkest, harshest, yet understated, declaration he ever made, he pronounced:

The history of the fur trade is the history of contact between two civilizations, the European and the North American . . . [bringing] about such a rapid shift in the prevailing Indian culture as to lead to wholesale destruction of the peoples concerned by warfare and disease.⁶⁵

More generally, Innis's staples thesis proposed that the rise to predominance of a new staple, in combination with technological change, invariably produced a period of crisis. Adjustments needed to be made and new patterns of social interaction came to the fore.⁶⁶ Groups controlling the new staple and the new technology associated with it ascended to power, displacing the group(s) associated with the former ones. "Technology" in this context connotes particularly modes of transportation: ship, rail, ox cart, roads.

According to Innis's historiography, timber supplanted fur. Like fur, timber "was adapted . . . to the cheap water transportation of the St. Lawrence." It contrasted to fur, however, in terms of weight, bulk, and value.⁶⁷ Whereas the manufacture of fur products (such as hats) was undertaken mostly in Europe, timber's bulk and weight favored processing "close to its source";⁶⁸ Canada, therefore, exported squared lumber instead of raw timber to the United States.

Exports to Europe created immense pressures to utilize the capacity of otherwise empty returning ships. Innis remarked: "A heavy unbalanced trade [is] a source of constant disturbance."⁶⁹ Imbalance in the case of lumber, Innis believed, presaged both the abrogation of preferential duties with Britain and the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 with the United States.⁷⁰

Paper is, of course, a major product of timber, and in Eastern Canada a large number of lumber companies began producing pulp and paper.⁷¹ The manufacture of newsprint, however, required "enormous capital

equipment” giving rise to significant overhead costs,⁷² thereby inducing a concentrated industry structure in order to attain economies of scale. More importantly in terms of Innis’s future scholarship, paper is a medium of communication, and accordingly its production enabled or stimulated the rise of mass media.⁷³

Donald Creighton noted that Innis’s first decade at the University of Toronto (1920–1930) was filled with frustration and loneliness.⁷⁴ During those years, Innis was the only one on staff researching Canadian economic history, and he had yet to become an established scholar. In fact, his book on the fur trade (finally appearing in 1930) was rejected by several publishers. At one point in his first decade, Innis even resigned his post because he had been overlooked for promotion by his department chair, E. J. Urwick. Wisely, the university reconsidered, as did Innis.

It seems likely that Innis isolated himself, too, through his personal practices. He was removed from teaching a class in his first year at U of T for being “too radical.” Also, he refused to wear an academic gown in the classroom, unlike his colleagues at the time.⁷⁵ By the early 1930s, however, particularly with the appearance of *The Fur Trade in Canada*,⁷⁶ but also on account of several other publications, Innis had become an established and respected scholar. And in 1940, his monumental work, *The Cod Fisheries: The Story of an International Economy*, appeared in print.

For two decades, 1930 to 1952, on account primarily of his staple writings, Innis was Canada’s preeminent scholar. In 1934, he was appointed to the Royal Commission, Provincial Economic Inquiry, for the Province of Nova Scotia;⁷⁷ in the same year he was nominated a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. In 1936, he was promoted to full professor, and in July 1937 was named head of the Department of Political Economy—the first Canadian to hold that position. In May 1938, he delivered the presidential address, “The Penetrative Powers of the Price System,” to the Canadian Political Science Association. In 1942, he served as president of the Economic History Association, and in 1946 was named president of the Royal Society of Canada. He was appointed a member of the Manitoba Royal Commission on Adult Education in 1945, and for 1952 was president of the American Economics Association.⁷⁸ Innis was also a member of the Royal Commission on Transportation, 1948–1950. He was awarded honorary degrees from five universities: Glasgow, Laval, McMaster, Manitoba, and New Brunswick. At University of Toronto, he became dean of the Graduate School in 1947, and by all accounts was a select member of the inner circle governing the university.⁷⁹ As Innis awaited death in his Toronto home in the autumn of 1952, Governor General Vincent Massey called to pay his respects⁸⁰—likely the highest honor a private citizen in Canada can receive from his/her government.

But, while enjoying the prestige of high acclaim, Neill remarks, Innis could not resist allowing his “mild, misanthropic anarchism to show though.” Neill asks: “What can be said of someone who would give the

presidential address to the Royal Society in an old tweed jacket and baggy trousers, and who would choose as his topic the extent to which church and state had combined in Canada to keep the common man down?"⁸¹ (Neill does not even mention that Innis resigned in anger from an office in the Royal Society to oppose one of its awards; thereby was "the academic world of Canada," Creighton writes, "confronted by the astonishing spectacle of one of its most distinguished members openly boycotting the proceedings of its most prestigious body!"⁸²). Innis never played to the audience. In 1948, invited by the administrators of the Beit fund to give six lectures at Oxford "on any subject in the economic history of the British Empire," he delivered talks on "Empire and Communications," scarcely even mentioning the British Empire; many walked out the first evening, and audiences dwindled noticeably for subsequent lectures.

Innis was frequently self-deprecating. Perhaps even more fundamentally, he often defended the marginalized (and even did so when disagreeing with them!). He insisted on viewing phenomena from the perspective of the margin (although I will show in later chapters he did not put much stock in the intellectual prowess of the broad public).

Although serving on royal commissions and advising governments on economics affairs, Innis was deadset against political activism on the part of scholars. There was even an angry public confrontation during the Depression years between Innis and Frank Underhill on that issue.⁸³ However, as John Watson has so perceptively pointed out, it was not that Innis opposed scholars influencing public policy; to the contrary, "for Innis, that was one of the main points of independent scholarship."⁸⁴ Innis's concern, rather, was that direct participation by scholars/intellectuals in politics would corrupt their critical independence. That issue is explored in greater depth in part III, contrasting Innis with Noam Chomsky.

Finally, it should be noted that the staples thesis became marginalized in Canada after Innis's death. Earning both a BA and MA in economics from the University of Western Ontario in the mid to late 1960s, the present author was not once required, or even encouraged, to read anything by Harold Adams Innis! By that time, evidently, mainstream Canadian economists were pleased to be "part of an undifferentiated North American profession."⁸⁵

Phase 3: Medium Theory

It is in the context of his preeminence in Canadian scholarship and his acceptance by highly-placed government officials that one should consider Innis's final mission, which he pursued primarily in his four final books (and in the previously published articles contained therein). There,

once again, Innis set off to break new ground, and again he did so in virtual isolation.

Innis's work during those final years was much grander in scope than hitherto. He explored such basic existential categories as time and space, freedom and control, continuity and change, center and margin, centralization and decentralization, individualism and collectivism, fact and illusion, war and peace, authoritarianism and democracy, knowledge and power, subjectivity and objectivity, truth/persuasion/opinion, propaganda, the political economy of scholarship and of education, the evil of power, and indeed the veritable rise and fall of civilizations. In doing all this, Innis innovated not merely a new approach for media and communication studies but also for the study of world history! His novel approach, today sometimes referred to as *medium theory*, entailed "the historical and cross-cultural study of the different cultural environments" as induced or supported "by *different* media of communication."⁸⁶

In developing *medium theory*, Innis was setting a course for communication studies that was antithetical to the nascent American mainstream. In the U.S., mainstream/foundational researchers were intent, for example, to discern or propose "laws of the media," a project that has been aptly termed "*media theory*." For instance, as developed below, most of the (primarily U.S.) researchers publicly endorsed a "law of minimal media effects" — a generalization said to encompass *all* media. *Medium theory* and *media theory*, then, are antonyms with regard to specificity. Innis's medium theory contends that different media have different effects and need to be studied individually; the law of minimal effects is an instance of media theory that purports to apply to all media.

Finally a caveat, and a response to that caveat. Friesen and Cressman note correctly that Innis, McLuhan, and the Toronto School today are "only one aspect of Communication Studies in Canada." They continue:

Unlike Departments of Communication Studies in the United States which are oriented to empirical research or the training of journalists and communications professionals, in Canada, Communication Studies is *an inclusive blend of critical traditions* used to study media and culture, including: Marxism, Frankfurt School, Critical Theory, Feminism, French Post-Structuralism, Phenomenology, Birmingham School, Cultural Studies, and Sociology. With this critical emphasis, Departments of Communication in Canada attract students interested in activism and social justice, with studies of media in the tradition of Innis and McLuhan being marginalized.⁸⁷

The authors are undoubtedly correct in noting that communication study in Canada today encompasses much more than merely Innis, McLuhan, and their derivatives. However, it is also worth emphasizing that it was Innis who inaugurated the critical tradition in Canada, which Friesen and

Cressman describe. Innis set the critical trajectory, which today encompasses much more than merely studying Innis.

NOTES

1. Innis's daughter, Mary Innis Cates, wrote the present author that Harold Innis "came from a rural unsophisticated farm family. To learn to speak proper English, which his family never did, he studied the speeches of Wilfred Laurier as printed in the newspaper." She continued, "His first year at college, with only one suit of clothes, was almost reason for him to give up studying. It was his mother who rallied her relatives to encourage him to continue." Personal correspondence from Mary Innis Cates, October 17, 2014. See also Creighton, *The Passionate Observer*, 147.

2. In her reminiscences about her father, Anne Innis Dagg writes: "During his high school years, young Harold caught muskrats [on a marshy area of the family farm] each winter, getting up early in the morning to check his steel traps before school. Once he had killed a muskrat, he would skin it and stretch its hide on a specially cut wooden shingle. When the pelts were ready, he was able to sell them each for between ten and twenty-five cents. Uncle Sam said that this early experience kindled an interest in trapping that would eventually lead his brother to research and write *The Fur Trade in Canada*. Anne Innis Dagg, "Memories of My Father," *Queen's Quarterly* 101, no. 1 (spring 1994), 83.

3. Heyer, *Harold Innis*, 3.

4. Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 89.

5. "The Economics of Conservation." (1938; reprint, *Staples, Markets and Cultural Change*, edited by Daniel Drache, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 203–207. Also, Innis, "A Confidential Memorandum on Wildlife in the Mackenzie District" (1932; in W. J. Buxton, editor, *Harold Innis and the North: Appraisals and Contestations*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 122–26.

6. Watson, *Marginal Man*, 15.

7. Harold Innis, "The Teaching of Economic History in Canada" (1929; reprint, *Essays in Canadian Economic History*, edited by Mary Q. Innis, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), 3, 11. Luski describes this article as "Innis's bravura debut into his academic community." Michael Gordon Luski, *Harold Adams Innis: The Bias of History* (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1998), 49. Innis's initial effort to rectify the paucity of materials readily available on Canadian economic history was *Select Documents in Canadian Economic History: 1497–1783* (University of Toronto Press, 1929), co-edited with Arthur Lower. A subsequent volume bearing the same title covered the years 1783–1885.

8. Watson, *Marginal Man*, 63. Note the following entry to Innis's diary from the time he was a student at McMaster: "Do not go into the presence of temptation. . . . Be forearmed. Link up with other men. Associate yourself sufficiently with Christ. Keep your eyes in the right direction. . . . Take Christ as the great solvent of your doubt. . . . Be decisive. Spend time unhurriedly in daily prayer. . . . A dominant purpose to live the right life. Christianity a life spirit and method of living." Quoted in Luski, *Harold Adams Innis*, 12.

9. Watson, *Marginal Man*, 62.

10. Quoted in Creighton, *Harold Adams Innis*, 31. Also, Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 86. Mary Innis Cates, however, writes that "I remember my father saying that when he was in his late teens he was obliged to go with his family to a revival meeting. When they called on all those who had been saved to rise, he refused—and heard a lady behind him pointing to him and saying, 'There's the devil.'" Personal correspondence from Mary Innis Cates, October 17, 2014. Evidently Innis had a mind of his own, even then.

11. Innis, letter to Arthur Cole, quoted in Creighton, *Harold Adams Innis*, 107.
12. Watson, *Marginal Man*, 70. Creighton provides a particularly touching account of Innis's injury. Creighton, *Harold Adams Innis*, 32–37.
13. Watson, *Marginal Man*, 71. Watson writes: "The shrapnel that had punched a hole in his right thigh during the Great War had led to an infection, causing long-term swelling of his knee and lower leg as well as poor circulation. The psychological effects were delayed, and appear to have included depression and exhaustion alternating with periods of elation and hyperactivity" (p. 119). V. W. Bladen, in his memorial address, quoted Innis speaking to students on Armistice Day, 1933: "It has not been long since most of us have been awakened by the night-mares of intense shell-fire, and even now the military bands played with such enthusiasm by young men are intolerable, and Armistice Day celebrations are emotionally impossible." V. W. Bladen, "Harold Adams Innis 1894–1952," *The American Economic Review* 43, no. 1 (March 1953), 2.
14. Creighton, *Harold Adams Innis*, 100.
15. Watson, *Marginal Man*, 223. Mary Innis Cates, provides a different view: "So few biographers realize that my father was basically a happy man—he had a wonderful sense of humour and enjoyed all his travels and research. As a child, I remember his saying that while he was in the trenches in World War I, he vowed that if he got out alive he would never complain about anything again." Personal correspondence from Mary Innis Cates, October 17, 2014.
16. *Ibid.*, 71.
17. *Ibid.*, 99.
18. Philip Massolin, "Academic Modernization and the Decline of Higher Learning: The University Question in the Later Scholarship of Harold Innis," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 23, no. 1 (1998). <http://cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1022/928> (accessed June 2, 2014).
19. Heyer, *Harold Innis*, 3; Watson, *Marginal Man*, 76.
20. Creighton, *Harold Adams Innis*, 107.
21. Another vignette: Mary Innis Cates writes that Harold Innis "always paid special attention to young faculty members, one of whom, Roy Daniells, wrote a poem about his kindness." That poem, "For Harold Innis," is reproduced in Watson, *Marginal Man*, 398.
22. *Ibid.*, 19. Also see Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 104.
23. Brebner, "Obituary: Harold Adams Innis," *Economic Journal* 63, no. 251 (September, 1953): 730.
24. Robert L. Formaini, "Frank Knight: Origins of the Chicago School of Economics." *Economic Insights* 7, no. 3 (2002). <http://www.dallasfed.org/assets/documents/research/ei/ei0203.pdf> (accessed June 2, 2014).
25. Frank H. Knight, "Economic Psychology and the Value Problem." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 39, no. 3 (1925), 396, emphasis added. The contrasting view of "positive" or "value-free" economics is presented by Milton Friedman in "The Methodology of Positive Economics," in *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 3–43.
26. Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit* (1922; reprint, London: LSE Reprints, 1933), 52–53.
27. For example, Gary S. Becker and Richard A. Posner, *Uncommon Sense: Economic Insights, From Marriage to Terrorism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). The term, "economic imperialism," is from George Stigler, *Memoirs of an Unregulated Economist* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 191–205.
28. Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 104.
29. Innis, "Government Ownership and the Canadian Scene" (1933; reprint, Innis, *Essays in Canadian Economic History*, edited by Mary Q. Innis. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), 79. He also remarked: "I am sufficiently humble in the face of extreme complexity of my subject to know, first, that I am not competent to understand the problems much less propose solutions."

30. Innis, "The Teaching of Economic History in Canada" (1929; reprint, *Essays in Canadian Economic History*), 3.

31. Innis, "The Press, a Neglected Factor in Economic History," (1952; reprint, *Changing Concepts of Time*, Introduction by James W. Carey. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2004), 91.

32. *Ibid.*, 91. See also Harold A. Innis and Jan O. M. Broek, "Geography and Nationalism: A Discussion." *Geographical Review* 35, no. 2 (April 1945). Regarding geography as a social science, Innis wrote: "Even in peace time, atlases have been published in Canada and the United States that show wind, rain, and temperature stopping at the 49th parallel. Scientific interest has been distorted to fit the mold of nationalism, and national boundaries have become cultural facts with the permanence of the features of geological phenomena" (p. 302).

33. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," in *Political Economy in the Modern State*, 83. Innis makes the point time and again. In "Snarkov Island," for example, he wrote: "A new country, especially Canada, cannot afford to rely on the theory borrowed from old industrialized countries but she must attack with all the skill and industry she can command the task of working out a theory adapted to the situation in which she is able to defend herself against exploitation, against the drawing off of her resources and against the violent fluctuations which are characteristic of exploitation without afterthought." Innis, "Snarkov Island." Appendix in Robin Neill, *A New Theory of Value*, 149.

34. Neill, "Review: *Marginal Man, The Dark Vision of Harold Innis*," *EH.net* (2006) http://eh.net/book_reviews/marginal-man-dark-vision-harold-innis (accessed October 30, 2012).

35. Mel Watkins, "The Dismal State of Economics in Canada," in *Staples and Beyond*, 176.

36. Neill, *A New Theory of Value*, 12.

37. Innis, "The Work of Thorstein Veblen" (1929; reprint, *Essays in Canadian Economic History*), 18.

38. Horace M. Gray, "Reflections on Innis and Institutional Economics," in *Culture, Communication and Dependency*, 102.

39. "From start to finish Innis moved in search of the laws of growth and decline." Neill, *A New Theory of Value*, 4.

40. R. Douglas Francis, *The Technological Imperative in Canada*, 165. See also, Fletcher Baraga, "Influence of Veblen on Harold Innis," *Journal of Economic Issues* 30, no. 3 (September 1996): 667–83.

41. Gray, "Reflections on Innis and Institutional Economics," 104–105.

42. Innis, "The Work of Thorstein Veblen," 25. Innis, incidentally, called Adam Smith "the Mount Everest of Political Economy." See Innis, "The Passing of Political Economy (1938; reprint, Innis, *Staples, Markets and Cultural Change*, edited by Daniel Drache, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 439. See also, Baragar, "The Influence of Veblen on the Economics of Harold Innis."

43. Mary Quayle Innis, *An Economic History of Canada* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1935; revised 1943). Harold's influence is apparent inasmuch as Mary adopted an essentially staples-centered narrative, beginning her book with "The Fishing Industry in the Sixteenth Century" and concluding it with chapters, respectively, on "Wheat 1885–1914," and "Minerals and Newsprint."

Mary Quayle Innis also published short stories in magazines and a fictional novel (*Stand on a Rainbow*, 1943), based loosely on her home life with Harold Innis. She received honorary degrees from at least two universities, and served as Dean of Women, University College, University of Toronto (1955–64). See Luski, *Harold Adams Innis*, 53–55; also Anne Innis Dagg, "Memories of My Father," 82.

44. Luski, *Harold Adams Innis*, 55.

45. See particularly David Black, "'Both of Us Can Move Mountains': Mary Quayle Innis and Her Relationship to Harold Innis's Legacy." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 28, no. 4 (2003).

46. Carey, "The Chicago School and the History of Mass Communication Research" (1996; reprint, *James Carey: A Critical Reader*), 24.
47. Carey, "The Chicago School," 143.
48. McLuhan, "Introduction," in Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (1972 edition), xiv–xv.
49. Blondheim, "The Significance of Communication," 76.
50. See also F. M. Stark, "Harold Innis and the Chicago School," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, no. 3 (fall 1994): 13–45.
51. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, (1930; reprint based on the Revised Edition, prepared by S. D. Clark and W. T. Easterbrook, with a Foreword by Robin W. Winks, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 393. Although this important point is not pursued further in this book, it is a prime example of Innis challenging received wisdoms and disputing the positions forwarded by the most respected academics of the day, such as Goldwyn Smith (*Canada and the Canadian Question*, 1891). See Frank Abbott, "Harold Innis: Nationalist Historian" *Queen's Quarterly* 101, no. 1 (spring, 1994): 92–102.
52. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 392, 401.
53. Portions of this section draw on the Innis chapter in my *Canadian Communication Thought*.
54. Watkins, "A Staple Theory of Economic Growth," 5.
55. W. A. Mackintosh, "Economic Factors in Canadian History (1923; reprint, *Canadian Economic History: Classic and Contemporary Approaches*, edited by M. H. Watkins and H. M. Grant, Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1999), 4.
56. Mackintosh, "Economic Factors in Canadian History," 4.
57. Watkins, "The Staples Theory Revisited," in *Staples and Beyond*, 31.
58. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 385.
59. Innis, "The Teaching of Economic History in Canada," 11.
60. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 385.
61. *Spread effects* are defined by Watkins as the "impact of export activity on domestic economy and society." Watkins, "A Staple Theory of Economic Growth," 8.
62. *Ibid.*, 13, 16.
63. Watkins, "Canadian Capitalism in Transition" (1997; reprint, *Staples and Beyond*), 73.
64. Innis, "Comment," *The State and Economic Life* (1934), cited in Neill, *A New Theory of Value*, 61.
65. *Ibid.*, 388.
66. Innis, *Empire and Communications* (1950; revised by Mary Q. Innis, Foreword by Marshall McLuhan, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 5–6.
67. Innis, "The Lumber Trade in Canada" (1938; reprint, H. A. Innis, *Essays in Canadian Economic History*), 242.
68. *Ibid.*, 243.
69. *Ibid.*, 242.
70. *Ibid.*, 243.
71. *Ibid.*, 246.
72. Innis, "The Canadian Economy and the Depression" (1934; reprint, Innis, *Essays in Canadian Economic History*), 136–37.
73. Innis, "The Canadian Economy and the Depression," 127.
74. Creighton, *Harold Adams Innis*, 75.
75. Luski, *Harold Adams Innis*, 56.
76. Berger reports it took fifteen years for *The Fur Trade* to sell one thousand copies. *The Writing of Canadian History*, 97.
77. Nova Scotia, Royal Commission (John Henry Jones and Harold Innis), *Report of the Royal Commission, Provincial Economic Inquiry* (Halifax: King's Printer), 1934.
78. Brebner, "Obituary: Harold Adams Innis," 728. Innis died before his scheduled delivery of the presidential address in late December 1952. However, he did prepare a preliminary draft, which was read to the association at its annual meeting, that draft

being published in the *AER* in March 1953. Its official title was “The Decline in the Efficiency of Instruments Essential in Equilibrium”; alternative titles were: “The Bias of Economics,” and “The Menace of Absolutism in Time.” Chester Morris reminded the audience in his note to the article that “the portion printed here was written when he was extremely weak and often in much pain.” That being said, Innis’s wit showed through brilliantly nonetheless: “I am in the position of the man who was about to be hung; when he was asked whether he had anything to say, he replied, ‘This will certainly teach me a lesson,’” *American Economic Review* 43, no. 1 (March 1953), 16, 17.

79. See generally, Ian Drummond with William Kaplan, *Political Economy at the University of Toronto: A History of the Department 1888–1982* (Toronto: Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Toronto, 1983), particularly 81–107.

80. Dagg, “Memories of My Father,” 79.

81. Neill, *A New Theory of Value*, 18.

82. Creighton, *The Passionate Observer*, 146–47. Details are provided by Sandra Campbell, *Both Hands: A Life of Lorne Pierce of Ryerson Press* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013), 336–37.

83. Luski, *Harold Adams Innis*, 73.

84. Watson, *Marginal Man*, 178–79.

85. Neill, *A History of Canadian Economic Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 221.

86. Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place*, 16.

87. N. Friesen and D. Cressman, “The Canadian School” (February 2012). http://learningspaces.org/files/Canadian_School.pdf (accessed November 18, 2012); emphasis added.

TWO

Staples Thesis and Medium Theory

One might well ask why Innis, in the mid 1930s,¹ at the apex of his career, chose *again* to become “lonely and intellectually isolated,”² *again* to inaugurate and develop a line of research that few understood or appreciated,³ *again* to risk ostracism by disputing axioms held as inviolable by the Canadian and international elite. Numerous commentators have wrestled with these questions. Here, I begin by reviewing briefly, but critically, some of that literature. *Pari passu*, this critical review and commentary will help delineate relations between the staples thesis and medium theory, and help identify (in Innis’s eyes) the limitations (or *biases*) of the former.

COMMENTATORS’ SPECULATIONS

A Complicated and Contradictory Person

Eric Havelock scanned the surface of Innis’s psychological makeup and concluded that he “was a complicated and even contradictory person,”⁴ hinting perhaps that Innis was not quite stable. Maybe *that* was why he risked throwing so much away!

Havelock described Innis also as “the radical conservative of his day,”⁵ the proverbial *insider-outsider* who sought after and attained insider status at early and mid career but who seemingly repudiated all that in choosing, in his final decade, to again become an outsider.⁶

Havelock’s conjectures, however, seem quite off target. It was not overweening ambition or lust for power, as Havelock contends,⁷ that drove Innis in his early and mid career. Innis did, after all, *choose* to inaugurate, in isolation, a new approach to *Canadian* economics; he fervently berated the economics mainstream for being (as he saw it) an

instrument for economic exploitation (among other nondesiderata); he defended and praised Thorstein Veblen, which in those years only people *not* fixated on personal advancements would do; he resigned, and later again threatened to resign, from his position at U of T—on the latter occasion to support another outsider, Frank Underhill (with whom he disagreed fervently);⁸ he continually made disparaging remarks, from at least the mid 1930s, regarding not just the competence but also the integrity of the governmental and scholarly elite, including university administrators. These are not the behaviors or strategies of one seeking to endear himself to power. And, as noted previously, he even resigned in 1938 from a position in the Royal Society of Canada.

Far more convincing than Havelock's suggestion is the proposition that Innis, *throughout his career*, consistently did what he thought was right. Innis was an "inner-directed," honest scholar to begin, and he remained just that to the very end.⁹ He received the approval and praise of elites on account of the originality and integrity of his work, without seeking that approval per se.

That said, the question remains: Why would Innis feel the need to change the focus (and indeed the very ontology) of his scholarship, as became manifest in his four books on media/communication and in several of his articles of the mid 1930s? The claim made in formulating this question is substantiated below.

Smooth Transition 1: Testing Bias

In his 1953 address to the American Economics Association honoring the recently deceased Innis, W. T. Easterbrook proposed that Innis's shift from staples to communication/media entailed "no suggestion of a break or loss of continuity or of interests."¹⁰ At another commemoration, Easterbrook stated similarly: "Although it is possible to mark out some [phases] in Innis's work, there is at no point any suggestion of a break or a radical shift in his mode of approach to national or general economic history."¹¹ To substantiate these claims, Easterbrook noted that Innis had always been keenly interested in testing the limits or biases of knowledge. When developing his "Canadian" economics, for example, according to Easterbrook, Innis was intent to test the limitations of the economic mainstream, and he quoted Innis to support this observation:

A new country presents certain definite problems which appear to be more or less insoluble from the standpoint of the application of economic theory as worked out in the older highly industrialized countries. Economic history consequently becomes important as a tool by which the economic theory of the old countries can be amended.¹²

Notice, however, the word choice here: *amended*, not tested.

Likewise, Easterbrook noted that Innis later redeployed the tools he had developed for analyzing staples to investigate media and communication—again to test limitations or biases, this time of *those* tools. Again, Easterbrook quoted Innis to support his remarks, this time from the unfinished paper he was to have delivered as his presidential address to the American Economics Association (AEA): “The economic historian must test the tools of economic analysis by applying them to a broad canvass and by suggesting their possibilities and limitations when applied to our language or cultural groups.”¹³

However, while Easterbrook was certainly correct in noting that Innis was highly interested in exploring and testing for bias and that his favored method was to reapply theories, tools, and methods to new situations, Easterbrook failed to note and possibly even to grasp that Innis was gravely concerned about the political-economic dimensions of bias, and that in his view the *bias* of theories can be *intentional*: according to Innis, theories can be a purposeful means of “exploitation”:¹⁴

A new country, especially Canada, cannot afford to rely on the theory borrowed from old industrialized countries but she must attack with all the skill and industry she can command the task of working out a theory adapted to the situation in which she is able to defend herself against exploitation, against the drawing off of her large resources and against the violent fluctuations which are characteristic of exploitation without afterthought.¹⁵

Consequently, Innis set out in the early 1920s to craft a *new* economic theory, one especially suited to smaller, developing countries. And he intended his new theory to *countervail* the dominant economics of his day. In effect, Innis was proposing a revolution in economic thinking for the developing world, insisting that its perspective is (or should be) markedly different from the mainstream in wealthier countries. Innis was proposing, then, that the relativity of knowledge can be a road to emancipation for subjugated peoples.

It was only in his presidential address to the AEA—his final piece of writing—that Innis reached a final resolution of the dialectic or contradiction between his staples and communications writings—between *relativism* as had grounded his staples thesis, and *universalism* as underpinned his media/communication work. In this address, Innis made a plea for a universal economics: “Having learned my lesson [at the end of my life] I must begin by pleading for a general emphasis on a universal approach and by insisting as an economist that economic history is primarily concerned with the task of extending the universal applicability of economic theory and of strengthening a central core of interest.”¹⁶ (Inserting the phrase, “at the end of my life” in square brackets, incidentally, is quite appropriate as Innis prefaced the just-cited passage this way: “I am in the position of the man who was about to be hung; when asked whether he

had anything to say, he replied ‘This will certainly teach me a lesson.’” Innis’s “lesson,” what he had concluded from a lifetime of scholarship, was that universalism is preferable to relativism—for reasons to be addressed below. One might say that *this* was Innis’s deathbed conversion.¹⁷

Finally, again indicative of Innis’s struggle in moving from staples to media, in the last phase of his career Innis insisted that a preoccupation with economics is itself emblematic of Western decline. Innis inaugurated his media/communication work, in part, to respond to that malaise: “Obsession with economic considerations,” he wrote, “illustrates the dangers of monopolies of knowledge and suggests the necessity of appraising *its* limitations.”¹⁸ And again,

The effectiveness of the price system will depend on a realization of its limitations. . . . The intensity of the belief in the price system will vary in part with the teaching of economics and with the character of the teaching. Its susceptibility to mathematical research facilitates reinforcement of the belief in the price system and contributes to the intensity of the obsession. Its dangers follow obsession and intolerance to a philosophical interest and skepticism.¹⁹

Anything *but* a smooth transition!

Smooth Transition 2: Timber To Paper

Other commentators, too, have proposed that Innis’s journey from staples to medium theory was smooth. In particular, they have contended that researching the timber and paper staples induced Innis to extend his investigations to include communication media, public opinion, monopolies of knowledge, propaganda, and so forth.²⁰ From this perspective, Innis merely shifted his focus from transportation systems to communication systems, from staples to messages, and from crises attributable to shifts in the predominant staple to crises arising when one communication medium supplants another. *Monopolies of knowledge* in medium theory, therefore, become analogues of monopolies in the production of staples in his previous writings. Whereas previously, staples, the transportation infrastructure, and international relations undergirded and helped cast the system of relative prices (which in turn *biased* economic development), in medium theory it is the *mode of communication* that undergirds the price system and helps set relative *values* (as well as prices). In both theories, moreover, Innis focused on center-margin relations.

These comparisons and hypothesized commonalities are heuristic, intriguing, and at a certain level make a lot of sense. Their incompleteness (one might say, their *bias*), is that they fail to recognize that medium theory is in important ways *antithetical* to the staples thesis, and that Innis

developed the two theories for diametrically opposed reasons. There was always a dialectical tension between Innis's two theses, and Innis ultimately resolved that contradiction only at the very close of his life. The antithetical relation between his two theses is discussed at length below.

Donald Creighton captured some of the mental anguish Innis must have experienced in transitioning from staples to media. However, Creighton also remarked that "originally, pulp and paper had no doubt been conceived as [simply] another study of a Canadian staple industry . . . but, as time was to show fairly quickly, it was, in fact, radically different." Creighton added that unlike fish and fur, "communications was an almost illimitable field. Communications was an open-ended subject. It stretched back into remote historical times and forward into the present and future. It was an enormous, monstrous subject."²¹

Creighton's position would be more tenable were it not for the fact that Innis published what, retrospectively, may be regarded as his pivotal piece, "The Canadian Economy and the Depression," in 1934—six years before Creighton claimed that Innis made an abrupt shift to media and communication. Nor did Innis, in that inaugural 1934 essay, treat pulp and paper as just another staple. Rather, he tied the production of staples, new sources of energy, and utilization of various modes of transportation to inadequacies in the press, advertising, "the decline of freedom of speech and editorials, and the emergence of headlines and the modern newspaper." Innis remarked also on social scientists' lack of understanding, which he related to the "technological drift of modern industrialism." Even more to the point, Innis claimed that "the coincidence with the advent of radio of dictatorship in Russia, Germany, Italy, the United States, or Canada is not accidental"—a major theme in his ensuing work on media and communication. The article is remarkable, too, for foreshadowing his later treatment of the price system as a space-binding, present-mindedly-biased medium of communication.²²

Economics vs. Communication

James Carey was one of the very few (if not indeed perhaps the only commentator hitherto) to have proposed a contradiction between the staples thesis and medium theory. Carey stated bluntly: "Communication and economics constitute contradictory frameworks." He continued, "That was, I believe, the great insight of Harold Innis."²³

Far from a smooth transition, then, Carey proposed a purposeful dialectic. According to Carey, communication means *making common* (or sharing), whereas economics is all about *privatization*. Stated alternatively, communication for Carey concerns community and culture, whereas economics is premised on hedonism, utilitarianism, and possessive individualism.

These are insightful observations when applied to mainstream economics and nonmainstream communication study. However, regarding *Innis's* transition or transformation, Carey's observations are of but limited relevance. *First*, Innis's economics were *never* the mainstream; Innis, the economist, never celebrated the efficacy of the price system or possessive individualism; Innis's concern always was with the cultural/institutional underpinning of the price system and the price system's recursive impact on culture and institutions. *The Fur Trade*, for instance, was all about how economic activity "makes common," and creates a culture. *Second*, as Carey well knew (and insistently complained about), *the mainstream* of U.S. communication study was never about culture and communication; it addressed "transmissions" whereby messages from a sender to a receiver or receivers have "effects." Carey was drawn to Innis precisely because Innis did not comply with that mainstream. In both his staples and media theses, then, Innis investigated the "making common." Therefore, we find little explanation for Innis's shift here. (Interestingly, when forced to choose between cultural studies approaches to media/communication and political economy approaches, Carey insistently opted for the former, and did so without even referencing Innis as a possible—let alone an exemplary—reconciliation between the two²⁴.)

A New Theory of Value

Robin Neill's explanation, too, is original and heuristic. We saw previously that Innis characterized mainstream economics as inadequate to provide guidance to newer countries. Innis recommended that instead of focusing on relative prices, social scientists should "attempt [to] study . . . factors underlying the market."²⁵ He continued: "Price phenomena are only a part of the 'sediment of experience' and throw light on its character similar to that of the study of architecture, literature, or other evidences of cultural activity."²⁶ In recommending an inquiry into factors underlying the market, Neill has suggested Innis foreshadowed his media/communication work. Neill contended that Innis moved to media/communication in order to "explore the effects of communication media as the technological determinants of the values [prices] relevant to the [economic] growth process."²⁷

This proposition, compelling though it is, as seen below, is also only part of the story. Innis had more urgent tasks in mind in his last decade than simply delving into the determinants of relative prices. Neill's proposal also omits considerations of the fundamental contradictions between the staples and the medium theses.

Confronting Bias

A. J. Watson's explanation (or rather, a major one of his several explanations²⁸) differs yet again. He proposes that Innis confronted the problem of bias in a deeper way than hitherto. In 1935, Innis's departmental chair, E. J. Urwick—yes, one and the same Urwick who had denied Innis promotion a few years earlier—published an article in the inaugural issue of the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, where he claimed that objectivity is impossible in the social sciences.²⁹ Innis's rejoinder appeared in the very next issue.³⁰ Watson proposes that by introducing and emphasizing the notion of *bias* in his later media studies, Innis was struggling with "the conundrum posed by Urwick."³¹ Support for Watson's claim is to be found (again) in an impeccable source—namely, Innis himself. In his "Introduction" to *Empire and Communications*, Innis stated that "in a sense these lectures become an extension of the work of Graham Wallas and of E. J. Urwick."³²

On the other hand, Innis also stated toward the end of his life (in his "Preface" to *The Bias of Communication*), that he was responding to an exam question ("Why do we attend to the things we attend to?") as posed decades earlier by his professor at McMaster, James Ten Broeke.³³ That question, too, concerns *bias* as Innis deployed the term.

And again: Innis's exposure as a student to Frank Knight at Chicago meant that he had to struggle with the problem of *bias* at the very beginning of his doctoral studies. "Reality is not what is logical, but *what it suits our purposes to treat as real*," Knight claimed. "Reality is the sum of the factors which condition purposive activity, including purposive thought."³⁴ Later, Innis even espied *bias* in his own PhD dissertation!

In fact, Innis's staples thesis was founded on *three* propositions concerning bias; first, that economic models developed in advanced countries are biased against improving conditions in developing ones; second, that countries and regions are biased in their development on account of trade relations with imperial powers; third, particular staples bias development in particular ways.

Bias and distortions in understanding, then, did not suddenly trouble Innis in 1935 upon reading Urwick! Arguably, though, that debate, *in combination with world events* (discussed below, momentarily), plus struggles with his manuscript on *The Cod Fisheries*, caused the issue of bias to trouble Innis more deeply and in different ways than hitherto, inducing him to approach the question in a new manner and for different reasons. Innis's mental breakdown of 1937 was likely a crisis point, and he emerged from that with a new ontology, a revised epistemology, and with a new set of pressing issues with which to grapple.³⁵

MEDIUM THEORY, THE GREAT DEPRESSION, AND THE CENTURY OF WAR

In the preface or introduction to three of his four books on media and communication, Innis declared clearly his urgent, practical goals—as opposed to, say, musing over Ten Broeke’s exam question, or formulating responses to Urwick, or extending staples theory from pulp and paper to newspapers, or fathoming the framework of the price system, or even fostering Canadian independence. In the preface to *Political Economy in the Modern State* Innis proposed that “the first essential task is to see and to break through the chains of modern civilization which have been created by modern science”³⁶—a concision, incidentally, certainly worthy of extended meditation. In his essay of the same title, he declared that his intent was to “to indicate the circumstances which have been favourable to the growth of freedom and the spread of learning.”³⁷ In the preface he also stated that his book was intended for use by returning soldiers: “War veterans have been trained to do difficult things, and it is hoped that their training, enthusiasm and self confidence may be conserved and directed to the tasks of peace more difficult and more complex than those of war. The volume is intended as a guide and as a warning.”³⁸

In his preface to *Changing Concepts of Time*, similarly, Innis announced that “an attempt is made in this volume to elaborate the thesis developed in *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto, 1951) and in *Empire and Communications* (Oxford, 1950) in relation to *immediate problems*. . . . The problems of understanding others have become exceedingly complex partly as a result of improved communications.”³⁹

In the preface to *Empire and Communications* he declared that he, like others he cited, would try to suggest “the significance of communication to modern civilization.”⁴⁰ Then, he opened his longer introduction with these words:

The twentieth century has been notable in the concern with studies . . . designed . . . to throw light on the causes of the rise and decline of civilizations, which have reflected an intense interest in *the possible future of our own civilization*. . . . The significance of a basic medium to its civilization is difficult to appraise since the means of appraisal are influenced by the media. . . . A change in the type of medium implies a change in the type of appraisal.⁴¹

Noteworthy, too, for the present discussion, are remarks from “Minerva’s Owl,” the inaugural essay of his other media/communication book, *The Bias of Communication*:

The varied rate of development of communication facilities has accentuated difficulties of understanding. Improvements in communication . . . make for increased difficulties of understanding.⁴²

Running through these declarations from his four books on media is the notion of increased misunderstanding (even to the point of war) as a concomitant of technological change, particularly changes in the predominant means of communication. Innis's overarching purpose in inaugurating media/communication research, then, was to shed light on the world's *contemporary problems* (as opposed to Canadian economic history), and he identified the primary problem as that of *misunderstanding*.⁴³ Being an economic historian, his methods of approaching the problem were of course, historical—at least, in part.

In targeting misunderstanding within contemporary Western civilization as the new focus for his research, Innis made two assumptions. One was that limitations to understanding (i.e., misunderstanding) are spread and amplified by communication media. Second, to attain insight regarding contemporary limitations to understanding, a promising strategy would be to investigate understandings within previous civilizations as they, by definition, were bereft of contemporary media. Innis stated: “[We can] perhaps hope that consideration of the implications of other media to other civilizations may enable us to see more clearly the bias of our own.”⁴⁴

When Innis began switching from staples to media and communication in 1934-1935, the world had endured the First World War. It was then enduring the Great Depression.⁴⁵ These cataclysmic events proved to Innis the extent and gross importance of contemporary misunderstandings. Moreover, the world also was about to enter, and was perhaps preparing to enter, World War II.⁴⁶ By the time the Second World War was over, the United States had become a giant, militarized state; it had dropped atomic bombs on Japan and was engaged in an escalating arms race as but one component of a new “cold” war. In his final year of life, Innis was one of the first—likely *the* first—distinguished academic in North America to oppose the Korean War, which he viewed as merely an exercise in U.S. imperialist aggression.⁴⁷

Certainly, the world lacked understanding! And, as Donald Creighton remarked, in his media/communication works “it was as though [Innis] was driven by a desperate compulsion to deliver his last message to a sick and troubled world.”⁴⁸ Forsaking staples studies that had made him famous, Innis again threw discretion to the wind, this time to investigate developments in media and communication as important factors contributing to heightened misunderstanding.

No wonder Innis was so ignored, misinterpreted, and rejected! He placed his finger on the pulse of modernity, and found modernity to be frail. In declaring that improvements in communication lead to greater difficulties in understanding, Innis was repudiating mainstay tenets of governments, media organizations, scholars, and indeed virtually all proponents of the contemporary zeitgeist—namely, the equating of technological progress with human betterment!

Modernity is frail, Innis argued, partly on account of the very factors that purportedly make it “great,” namely technological achievement and advanced communication! Innis declared that the “collapse of Western civilization [began] with the present [20th] century.”⁴⁹ “States are destroyed by ignorance of the most important things in human life”; they are destroyed by “a profound lack of culture,” which (following Plato) he defined as “the inability to secure a proper agreement between desire and intellect.”⁵⁰ In Innis’s view, contemporary media of communication had the disastrous effects both of *increasing desire* (what Innis’s colleague and former student at the University of Toronto, C. B. Macpherson, would refer to as “possessive individualism”⁵¹), and of *reducing intelligence!*⁵² And in this balance Innis detected an enduring truth: a “permanence beyond time.”

PERMANENCE BEYOND TIME

There are two ways (at least) of specifying Innis’s new and final agenda. One (as noted previously) is to portray his objective as illuminating limitations (or “biases”) of contemporary understanding by making comparisons with previous civilizations which were, by definition, bereft of contemporary media.⁵³ Comparisons are required, Innis believed, as otherwise the pronounced tendency is to accept uncritically and as “normal” current practices and understandings and for analysts thereby to remain blithely unaware of current limitations. Through juxtaposition and contrast, he suggested, the limitations of contemporary culture might come into relief.

The second formulation, equally accurate, is remarkably different. It is to suggest that, in keeping with Innis’s avowed affinity for the Greeks and the oral tradition⁵⁴ and likely on account of lingering traces of his early religiosity, he sought *eternal, universal truths*. His method for uncovering these was to scour previous civilizations in order to detect commonalities, consistencies, and recurrent patterns—thereby enabling him to infer truths for his/our own times.

Innis made this second formulation of his media project crystal clear in the (long-overlooked) closing pages of his essay, “A Plea for Time.” There he proposed that developments in modern communication have resulted in a “glorification of the life of the moment, with no reference beyond itself and *no absolute or universal value.*”⁵⁵ He continued, now quoting Wyndham Lewis: “The modern ‘clerks’ ‘consider everything only as it exists *in time*, that is as it constitutes a succession of particular states, a ‘becoming,’ a ‘history,’ and never as it presents a state of permanence beyond time under this succession of distinct cases.”⁵⁶ Innis continued that “the form of mind from Plato to Kant [had] hallowed existence beyond change.” He concluded his essay with an admonition: “We

must somehow escape on the one hand from our obsession with the moment and on the other from our obsession with history."⁵⁷ For Innis, detecting a constant beyond time was key to escaping both "obsessions." In his preface to *Political Economy in the Modern State*, he made a similar pronouncement, albeit there referring to the "constant beyond time" as "natural law."⁵⁸

These two formulations of Innis's last project, *both* supported by his own words, are in important aspects antithetical. The first formulation proposes attaining insight through comparison, looking for differences; the profound effects of contemporary media, according to this formulation, can be more easily recognized if we study civilizations bereft of those media. The second formulation, in contrast, entails a quest for similarity, which is to say *an absolute*—a universal, a "constant beyond time."

As noted previously in this chapter, in his final (incomplete) manuscript, Innis abandoned the contradiction, effectively negating the position he had staked out so insistently thirty years before when developing his staples thesis. Drawing close to death, Innis insisted that "economic history is primarily concerned with the task of extending the universal applicability of economic theory."⁵⁹ *That* was the lesson he had learned, which he jocularly referred to with his gallows humor.

To return, then, to the question raised at the beginning of this chapter: Why would Innis choose in the mid 1930s *again* to become lonely and intellectually isolated, *again* to inaugurate and develop a line of research that few understood or appreciated, *again* to risk ostracism by disputing axioms held as inviolable by the Canadian and international elite? Noam Chomsky has provided (inadvertently, of course) what is likely the most general yet penetrating answer; Chomsky remarked that "the intellectual has, traditionally, been caught between the conflicting demands of truth and power." He added that whereas the intellectual choosing to serve power can expect "prestige and affluence," the intellectual choosing to meet the demands of truth "can expect to be a lonely creature, disregarded or reviled."⁶⁰

Innis's intent, I have argued, always was to serve the demands of truth, and fortuitously his staples thesis received the approbation of elites in Canada, likely because it accorded with their designs to increase their power vis-à-vis the United States; however, in his final decade, evidently, the demands of truth had become so precipitously inconsistent with the demands of power that it was impossible any longer for Innis to serve "two masters."

NOTES

1. Citing Tom Easterbrook, Carl Berger credits Innis with making an abrupt shift to media/communication in July 1940, "a month after the military collapse of France." Creighton, too, proposes that Innis's transition to media/communication occurred in

the summer of 1940. See Berger, *Writing Canadian History*, 187, and Creighton, *The Passionate Observer*, 156. See also, W. T. Easterbrook, "Innis and Economics," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 19, no. 3 (August, 1953), 292. For reasons discussed below, I think this is much too late and much too abrupt.

2. Watson, *Marginal Man*, 167.

3. Watson reports that "in terms of print runs and sales, Innis's communications works were not even modest successes. . . . Only one thousand copies of *The Bias of Communication* were printed, of which 180 remained in stock in September 1959. Clarendon Press declined to reissue *Empire and Communications*, as its original sales had been so meager." *Ibid.*, 252.

4. Havelock, *Harold A. Innis*, 17.

5. *Ibid.*, 22. One can hardly disagree. Innis was "radical" in his deep distrust of authority, his insistence that we pierce through elite deceptions to attain clearer understanding, his strong suspicions of all hierarchy, and his linking of knowledge and scholarship to systems of economic and military power. Innis was "conservative," however, in his pleas for time and continuity, his quest for absolutes, his skepticism about the merits of democracy, his pessimism, and his doubts concerning the soundness of judgments on the part of the democratic majority.

6. Havelock, *Harold A. Innis*, 25.

7. Havelock wrote: "[Innis] was not always and consistently the completely dedicated scholar. . . . For one thing, he was ambitious. The exercise of power and influence was something he valued, and sought, and achieved. . . . He readily accepted appointments to public bodies and commissions which could give him contacts with the powers that be." Havelock, *Harold A. Innis*, 24. On the other hand, however, Innis was equally ready to resign from prestigious bodies—for example, the University of Toronto and the Royal Society of Canada—when he felt *not* doing this would compromise his principles. Creighton, *The Impassioned Observer*, 147.

8. Havelock, *Harold A. Innis*, 21.

9. This speculation is consistent with Watson's observation that Innis harbored "a deep-seated belief that scholarship demanded a lifestyle with as few personal duties and material desires as possible." Watson, *Marginal Man*, 248; emphasis in original.

10. W. T. Easterbrook, "Harold Adams Innis, 1894–1952." Memorial address to the American Economics Association, December 28, 1952. *American Economic Review* 43, no. 1 (March 1953), 8–9.

11. W. T. Easterbrook, "Innis and Economics." *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 19, no. 3 (August, 1953), 292.

12. Innis, *Contributions to Canadian Economics* (1929), 52, as quoted in Easterbrook, "Innis and Economics," 294; emphasis added.

13. Harold Innis, "The Decline in Efficiency of Instruments Essential in Equilibrium," *American Economic Review* 43 no. 1 (March, 1953): 16–22, quoted in Easterbrook at p. 291.

14. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," in *Political Economy in the Modern State*, 83; Innis, "Comment," *The State and Economic Life* (1934), cited in Neill, *A New Theory of Value*, 61; Innis, "Snarkov Island." Appendix in Robin Neill, *A New Theory of Value*, 149.

15. Innis, "Snarkov Island," 149.

16. Innis, "The Decline in the Efficiency of Instruments Essential in Equilibrium," 19.

17. Nor was it just (or even primarily) to *test* the limitations of the tools developed in his staples thesis that Innis redeployed them in his media/communication work. In fact, he declared that those tools, having already proved useful, should be tried out again: "Certain tools . . . have proved effective in the interpretation of the economic history of Canada. . . . I have felt it wise to proceed with instruments with which I am familiar and which have proved useful." Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 6.

18. *Ibid.*, 4.

19. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, ix.

20. Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 188. See also Heyer, *Harold Innis*; McLuhan, "Introduction," in Innis, *The Bias of Communication*, xv; and Bickerton, Brooks, and Gagnon, *Freedom, Equality, Community*, 14.

21. Creighton, *The Passionate Observer*, 157.

22. Innis, "The Canadian Economy and the Depression" (1934; reprint, *Essays in Canadian Economic History*, edited by Mary Q. Innis, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), 123, 127, 129, 130. As early as 1935, moreover, Innis was planning the book that eventually became *Political Economy in the Modern State* (1946). Included in that book are two other of his major transitional essays: "The Penetrative Powers of the Price System" and "Unused Capacity as a Factor in Canadian Economic History," both originally published in 1936. In "Penetrative Powers," Innis tied staples to money and described money as a space-binding/ time shattering medium of communication effacing tradition and wiping out weaker cultures.

23. Carey, "Communications and Economics," 63; emphasis added.

24. Carey, "Abolishing the Old Spirit World." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 1 (1995): 82–89. Regarding that debate see Babe, *Cultural Studies and Political Economy*, 97–115.

25. Innis, "The Role of Intelligence: Some Further Notes," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 1, no. 2 (May 1935), 284; emphasis added.

26. Innis, "The Role of Intelligence," 284.

27. Neill, *A New Theory of Value*, 82.

28. Watson notes that the Great Depression had affirmed for Innis his long-standing contention that mainstream social science was highly deficient. Furthermore, the mindset required for *The Cod Fisheries* was much different than Innis's approach to *The Fur Trade* and so Innis was already widening his horizons and adjusting his parameters. Moreover, there were dramatic personal issues going on in Innis's life, according to Watson. Undoubtedly, all these factors are of relevance; but regarding Innis's specific move to media from staples, the debate with Urwick (among the forgoing) seems the most relevant.

29. E. J. Urwick, "The Role of Intelligence in the Social Process." *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 1, no. 1 (February 1935): 64–76.

30. Innis, "The Role of Intelligence: Some Further Notes."

31. Watson, *Marginal Man*, 167.

32. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 9.

33. Innis, "Preface," *The Bias of Communication*, xviii.

34. Frank H. Knight, "Economic Psychology and the Value Problem." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 39, no. 3 (1925), 396, emphasis added. The contrasting view of "positive" or "value-free" economics is presented in Friedman, "The Methodology of Positive Economics."

35. Innis did continue to publish on staples from the mid 1930s to 1941: on mining, with his book, *Settlement and the Mining Frontier* (Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, Vol. 9. Toronto: Macmillan, 1936); and on dairy (1937), lumber (1938), wheat (1939), and mining again (1941), the latter marking his final publication on staples. See, respectively, "The Historical Development of the Dairy Industry in Canada," "The Lumber Trade in Canada," "The Wheat Economy," and "The Canadian Mining Industry," all republished in *Essays in Canadian Economic History*. Despite this, beginning in 1934 and culminating in his four media/communication books, Innis manifested a marked change in outlook as he shifted his attention to media and communication.

36. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, vii.

37. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 139.

38. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, vii. It is doubtful, though, that many war veterans jumped at Innis's invitation. As noted by B. S. Kierstead in reviewing the book: "Most of the essays are [not] easy to read. . . . The essays are a guide, rather, for the exceptional student, anxious to pursue the sometimes obscure progress of a brilliant and original mind in the difficult task of breaking new ground." *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 13, no. 4 (November 1947), 600.

39. Innis, "Preface," *Changing Concepts of Time*, xxv; emphasis added.
40. Innis, "Preface," *Empire and Communications*, xiii.
41. Innis, "Introduction," *Empire & Communications*, 9.
42. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," *The Bias of Communication*, 28.
43. One of Innis's earliest pieces reflecting on medium theory and bias was "Discussion in the Social Sciences," read to the summer session at the University of British Columbia in 1935 and published in the *Dalhousie Review* 15 (May 1936): 401–13. It was intended to complement "The Role of Intelligence" published in May 1935. "Discussion in the Social Sciences" is reprinted with the new title, "The Intellectual in History," in Drache, *Staples, Markets and Cultural Change*, 446–58.
44. Innis, "The Bias of Communication," in *The Bias of Communication*, 34.
45. Innis, "The Canadian Economy and the Depression."
46. In 1933, Innis wrote his editor, James Shotwell, that *The Cod Fisheries* would be completed within a year; it was not published, however, until 1940! Between 1933 and 1935, Innis received a good deal of editorial assistance on that manuscript, "trying to wrestle the unwieldy mass into publishable form," according to Watson. Innis's response to Urwick was published in 1935 and his companion piece, "Discussion in the Social Sciences," was delivered as a speech in the same year. Following his breakdown of 1937, moreover, it would seem, Innis largely relegated the editing of *The Cod Fisheries* to Shotwell and others. Putting all this together, and granted that new staples studies continued to appear until 1941, Innis's "great transformation" from staples to medium theorist likely began in the mid 1930s, between say 1934 and 1937.
47. Creighton, "Harold Adams Innis—An Appraisal," in *Culture, Communication and Dependency*, 23; see also, Heyer, *Harold Innis*, 55, and Creighton, *Harold Adams Innis*, 142; and Creighton, *The Passionate Observer*, 156.
48. Creighton, *The Passionate Observer*, 159.
49. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 94.
50. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, x.
51. C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).
52. Regarding the latter, see the discussion on the mechanization of mass education, below.
53. As quoted previously: "[We can] perhaps hope that consideration of the implications of other media to other civilizations may enable us to see more clearly the bias of our own."
54. "My bias is with the oral tradition, particularly as reflected in Greek civilization, and with the necessity of recapturing something of its spirit." Innis, "A Critical Review," *The Bias of Communication*, 190.
55. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 89; emphasis added.
56. *Ibid.* The quote from Lewis is from *Time and Western Man* (1927).
57. *Ibid.*, 89–90. For Innis, "one of the aims of education is to break the strong hold of the present on the mind." Innis, "Adult Education and Universities," 203; here Innis was quoting approvingly a Harvard study on education.
58. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xiii, xiv, xvi. There Innis seems to agree with Smith that there is in principle "an obvious and simple system of natural liberty," but, Innis continues, that condition of natural law has been interfered with, if not destroyed, by communications industries, the commercialization of language, national boundaries, demands for capital, and written constitutions—all of which have been disruptive to cooperation; as a result, Force replaces Opinion.
59. Innis, "The Decline in the Efficiency of Instruments Essential in Equilibrium," 17.
60. Noam Chomsky, "Knowledge and Power: Intellectuals and the Welfare-Warfare State" (1970; reprint, *Masters of Mankind*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 22–23.

THREE

Time, Space, and Medium Theory

This chapter reviews Innis's medium theory, and thereby recapitulates material recited by Innis's various commentators over the years. In the process, however, it identifies one of Innis's "constants beyond time," identifies several aspects (or formulations) of what may be termed the *Innisian dialectic of Enlightenment*, and it critiques Innis's positions on Plato, the sophists, orality, and writing. The chapter concludes on an up-note, however, showing how, through medium theory, Innis bridged the gap not only between space and time bias, but also between individualism and the common good.

TIME AND SPACE

First Inklings

Although Innis was commenting critically as early as 1934 on the impact of newer, mechanized media on economic, political, and social organization,¹ it is likely he made his initial connection between media on the one hand and the dialectic of space-time on the other in his 1942 essay, "The Newspaper in Economic Development"—and there only in the concluding paragraph:

Finally this paper is designed to emphasize the importance of a change in the concept of time, and to argue that it can not be regarded as a straight line but as a series of curves depending in part on technological advances . . . [particularly] technological advances in the communication field. . . . The concepts of time and space must be made relative and elastic and the attention given by the social scientists to the problems of space should be paralleled by attention to the problems of time.²

Monopolies of Knowledge

Innis sensed that his previous modes of analysis (staples thesis) could be applied, with modifications, to the new topic at hand.³ For example: as an economic historian, Innis was convinced that monopolies of all sorts spawn pressures (incentives) for new entry (competition); in his media/communication work, therefore, he claimed that *monopolies of knowledge*, too, induce new competition—through innovations in media.⁴ On the other hand, Innis also confided that it was “with the bias of an economist I may have extended the theory of monopoly to undue limits,” adding immediately that it is “part of the task of the social scientist to test the limits of his tools and to indicate their possibilities, particularly at a period when he is tempted to discard them entirely.”⁵ Rather than discard the tools, then, Innis redeployed them.

Innis used his modified construct, *monopoly of knowledge*, in at least two related ways. One was to refer to instances where an identifiable group dominates knowledge production and/or distribution. For Innis, those who control the predominant medium also control the messages, and thereby influence significantly the knowledge circulating in society. In ancient Egypt, for example, much knowledge was controlled by workers possessing specialized skills for chiseling hieroglyphs and ultimately by their employer (the Pharaoh). More generally, complex systems of writing are usually controlled by a small, specially skilled class and therefore help support aristocracy or plutocracy. Conversely, simpler and more flexible systems of writing, according to Innis, tend to facilitate broader use, encourage the vernacular, and thereby support decentralized knowledge production and reception. Regarding Egypt, since papyrus is much lighter and more flexible than stone, its adoption fostered a degree of decentralization. (However, Innis also noted, since the supply of papyrus is concentrated along the Nile it, too, was amenable to centralized control.)

Innis also used his construct, *monopoly of knowledge*, to indicate the type (or character⁶) of knowledge typifying or predominating in a culture or civilization. In this regard he often had in mind the relative balance accorded considerations of time (in the sense of duration and continuity) vs. space (i.e., geographic reach or extension). According to Innis, history is fraught with conflicts (i.e., problems of understanding) between groups aspiring to direct society through appeals to time vs. groups endeavoring to exercise control over space. In “A Plea for Time,” Innis made numerous references to “the struggle between church and state for control over time,”⁷ which is to say a struggle between time as duration vs. present-mindedness. In such instances, according to Innis’s medium theory, a time-binding medium challenges or is challenged by a more space-binding medium (parchment vs. paper and the printing press, for

instance). "Inventions in communication compel realignments in the monopoly or the oligopoly of knowledge,"⁸ he declared.

Constant Beyond Time

In his essay, "The Bias of Communication," Innis succinctly summarized his medium/communication thesis: "History is not a seamless web but rather a web of which the warp and the woof are space and time woven in a very uneven fashion and producing distorted patterns."⁹ And elemental in producing these distortions, he advised, is the predominate medium of communication. Specifically,

Communication . . . occupies a crucial position in the organization and administration of government and in turn of empires and of Western civilization. . . . I shall attempt to outline the significance of communication in a small number of empires as a means of understanding its role *in a general sense*.¹⁰

The Platonic *constant beyond time* that Innis was proposing here (i.e., communication's "role in a general sense"), then, is that *all* societies/civilizations exist through communication, and the various means of communication will, each of them, help organize the societies or civilizations in different but patterned ways. (This is not to say that, in Innis's view, there are not, or may not be, other constants beyond time; in fact, he wrote also of "absolute or universal value"¹¹ and of "natural law";¹² see also chapter 5.)

Dialectic of Enlightenment

In "Minerva's Owl," Innis enlarged on his thesis that different media will help organize societies in different ways. He declared: "The varied rate of development of communication facilities has accentuated difficulties of understanding."¹³ Here, Innis was proposing (through medium theory), in effect, his own version of a *dialectic of Enlightenment*.¹⁴ On the one hand, science (or Enlightenment) increases the capacity, speed, and fidelity of communication; on the other, due to differences among people in different regions of the world regarding their use or exposure to new and newer media, there result differences in understanding regarding such basic existential categories as time and space, and thereby also regarding *values* contingent thereon. Improvements to media, therefore, can cause increased misunderstanding.

In the same essay, Innis repeated: "*Improvements in communication . . . make for increased difficulties of understanding*."¹⁵ This condensed statement alludes to another component of the *Innisian dialectic of Enlightenment*. Innis repeatedly emphasized that scientifically-devised media (radio, cinema, the printing press) are used primarily to propagate illusions, delusions, and irrationality,¹⁶ thereby contradicting the very rationality that

had made possible their invention/production in the first place: the onset of mass (scientifically-derived) media in the nineteenth century, Innis declared, marked the transition from rationalism (Enlightenment) to irrationalism; this transition was manifested, among other things, in "the interest in psychology, advertising, [and] mass propaganda."¹⁷ In Innis's view, "the outbreak of irrationality . . . is the tragedy of our time."¹⁸ Innis articulated this contradiction also in the Preface of *Political Economy in the Modern State*:

Mathematics as developed by Newton strengthened the appeal to a natural order evident in the political and economic writings of the eighteenth century. . . . But the impact of industrialism on knowledge particularly with the development of electrical transmission has weakened the possibility of sustained philosophic approach such as characterized the world after Newton. . . . The revolution in communication has favoured a return to rhetoric and force [and] a fresh realization of the significant role of language as a divisive force in the modern world.¹⁹

A third facet of the *Innisian dialectic of Enlightenment* is that Enlightenment (science) freed people from superstition and from authoritarian leaders self-interestedly invoking purportedly eternal truths (time bias), but in doing so science also effaced or obscured *values* needed to guide and check the usage of the increasingly powerful technologies enabled by science itself.²⁰ In a fourth formulation, Innis declared that the tragedy of science was that, once freed from time monopolies (church), science became captive to space monopolists (the state, the military, commerce).²¹ In a fifth formulation, he attested that "improvements in communication weakened the possibility of sustained thought when it [had] become most necessary."²² Likely, he had in mind that print, on account of its authoritarian properties and its concomitant present-mindedness, disengaged people's thinking. Innis added that civilization, thereby, "has been compelled to resort to reliance on force as a result of the impact of technology on communication."²³ In another essay he wrote: "[In the twentieth century] we have been unable to find a solution to the problem of law and order, and have resorted to force rather than persuasion, bullets rather than ballots."²⁴

ORALITY VS. WRITING

Innis was particularly enamored with Greek civilization. There, for an all-too-brief period, he believed, media supporting time and space had been in balance, or rather in appropriate tension, inducing thereby a full, rich civilization such has seldom been seen before or since.²⁵

Although "Greek civilization was a reflection of the power of the spoken word,"²⁶ according to Innis, at its peak it also was premised on

writing. The Greek phonetic alphabet, he surmised, permitted an "efficient representation of sounds," thereby enabling the Greeks "to preserve intact a rich oral tradition."²⁷ Whereas in other civilizations the complexity of the writing system necessitated expertise, thereby encouraging hierarchy and time-binding monopolies of knowledge,²⁸ in Greece the much simpler alphabet inhibited formation of a highly specialized professional class, and thereby prevented a monopoly over education by a priesthood. The flexible Greek alphabet also facilitated, in Innis's words, "the growth of political organizations which implied an emphasis on space."²⁹

So just what was it about Greek oral society, aided and abetted by "a simplified and flexible alphabet,"³⁰ that charmed Innis so? For one thing, he claimed, orality brought individuals into direct contact, thereby sustaining *community*. Moreover, that sense of community "assumed a concern with *time in continuity* and not just as 'a series of independent instantaneous flashes."³¹ Furthermore, orality established and maintained "lasting moral and social institutions,"³² including the assembly and the rise of democracy,³³ the courts, local markets, and so on. Innis claimed that orality *anchored* institutions, the community, and individuals by emphasizing continuity in values and in moral standards.

Furthermore, and somewhat in contradiction to the preceding, the persistence of orality checked the tendency toward rigidity that, he maintained, normally accompanies writing. For example, Plato's transcription of the Socratic oral dialogues "opposed the establishment of a finished system of [written] dogma"; Innis was enthused that Plato "would not surrender his freedom to his own books and refused to be bound by what he had written."³⁴ Innis lauded Plato for attempting "to adapt the new medium of prose to an elaboration of the conversation of Socrates. . . . A well-planned conversation, Innis contended, "was aimed at discovering truth and awakening the interest of the reader"³⁵ (a proposition, incidentally, to be scrutinized below). Innis added, "The power of the oral tradition persisted in [Plato's] prose in the absence of a closely ordered system."³⁶ Writing checked "the growth of myth and made the Greeks skeptical of their gods."³⁷ In contrast, Innis advised, given the complexity of the Hebrew's system of writing and the associated power of their scribes, philosophy became "the handmaid of religion."³⁸ As in much else, the key for Innis was *balance* in the sense of tension, balance here being between writing and orality.

However, according to Innis, the happy balance enjoyed by the Greeks was short-lived. As the relative importance of writing increased, so did egotism and the lessening of community: "A writing age was essentially an egoistic age,"³⁹ he declared. And again: "Written testimony and written instruments displaced cumbersome ceremonies of the oral tradition . . . egoism replaced an interest in the group."⁴⁰ Writing weakened community in other ways, too—for instance, by accentuating com-

munication over space and thereby promoting anonymity in human relations.

Orality and writing possess other trade-offs also. According to Innis, “the oral dialectic is overwhelmingly significant where the subject matter is human action and feeling, and it is important in the discovery of new truth.”⁴¹ With that statement, Innis actually made two claims from which we may derive two inferences. First, regarding human action and feeling, the implication is that writing (in contrast to oral dialogue) fosters inaction and detracts from feeling. In this regard, Innis emphasized the solitude of the silent reader on the one hand, and the “cruelty of mechanized [and often anonymous] communication”⁴² on the other.

A second inference is that compared to oral dialogue, written communication is of little use in discovering new truth (although it is of value, Innis acceded, in disseminating truth once attained⁴³). Innis believed the search for truth requires openness—a willingness to change one’s mind. Seeking truth, therefore, requires oral dialogue (“continuous philosophical discussion aimed at truth”⁴⁴).

For one so insistent on balance and proportion, arguably, Innis here seems remarkably one-sided in his assessment of writing/print—a criticism explored below in some detail.

A NEW WRITING STYLE

In his book on the Canadian Pacific Railway, in his writings on staples, and in his more general work in economics, Innis was often crystal clear, sometimes even engaging, although many readers have also been put off by his penchant of painstakingly reproducing documentary evidence. His daughter, Anne Innis Dagg, notes Innis could even be poetic!⁴⁵ That changed, apparently, when he tackled medium theory—or at least when he prepared certain of his texts pertaining to medium theory. Bonnett declares flatly, “Harold Innis is an awful read.”⁴⁶ Whether one accepts that proposition or not, there is widespread agreement that his mode of exposition changed.

Key to Innis’s writing style, I would argue, are his frequently expressed misgivings regarding the authoritarian, indeed totalitarian, properties of writing generally and of print in particular. Writing *can* lead to misunderstanding, if and when readers refrain from engaging in critical reflection. Note the following small sampling of Innis’s expressions of concern:

The letter killeth and the concern has been [in the media books] with the diverse means by which different types of letters bring about their deadly results.⁴⁷

All written works, including this one [i.e., *The Bias of Communication*], have dangerous implications to the vitality of an oral tradition and to the health of a civilization . . .⁴⁸

The textbook . . . has become such a powerful instrument for the closing of men's minds.⁴⁹

Given those sentiments—similar ones are expressed quite frequently—it is likely that Innis tried to devise a writing style that would, so far as possible, *stimulate* thought and *reduce* what he saw as being the totalitarian properties of print.⁵⁰ William Kuhns proposes that through his new style, Innis's "sentences convey the weight of tomes, and almost inevitably force careful, ponderous readings."⁵¹ McLuhan, too, insisted that "Innis presents his insights in a mosaic structure of seemingly unrelated and disproportioned sentences and aphorisms . . . he expects the reader to make discovery after discovery that he himself had missed."⁵² Donald Theall, likewise, maintained that Innis's style was a conscious strategy to allow "a multiplicity of levels of discourse to interact with one another while simultaneously presenting an argument which is not 'linear' but is rationally defensible. . . . Political, economic, cultural, and intellectual aspects are blended within the consideration of the history of communication."⁵³

The foregoing is fully consistent with the previous discussion regarding Innis's borrowing the tools from his staples thesis and reapplying them in a different context (medium theory), thereby testing their bias or limitations. In this case, Innis was likely exposing the limitations of standard (linear) mode of exposition characteristic of print, by innovating a "mosaic structure."

A NOTE ON PLATO, SOCRATES, WRITING, AND ORALITY

Not everyone would agree with Innis that Plato and Socrates single-mindedly pursued truth. Actually, the Socratic dialogues often seem quite polemical, using the "form" of thesis/antithesis/synthesis as a ploy to obscure premeditated, foreordained (and often anti-democratic) positions. According to I. F. Stone, Plato's Socrates dialogued primarily with "submissive yes-men"⁵⁴ and with "compliant interlocutors."⁵⁵ Plato's Socrates, moreover, frequently clouded issues⁵⁶ through verbal trickeries,⁵⁷ and in Plato's *Republic*, any recalcitrant refusing to be persuaded was ruthlessly dismissed⁵⁸—hardly an openness on Plato's part to truth-seeking through oral dialectic!

The interlocutors that Plato's Socrates chose to demolish through argumentation, moreover, were often democrats, whom Plato/Socrates derisively labeled "sophists." I. F. Stone remarks that oratorical skills are essential to democratic participation. Plato and Socrates (as is well

known) were of a totalitarian bent, favoring rule by philosopher kings. Classicist Charles Freeman writes that “the eighth book of [Plato’s] *Republic* [represents] Plato’s bitterest attack on democracy.”⁵⁹ Therefore, the deep reason for Plato/Socrates’s aversion to “sophists” was likely their deep-seated antipathy to democracy.⁶⁰ Put more positively, Plato/Socrates may have been apprehensive lest skills in argumentation be used to sway an undiscerning public.⁶¹ (As we will see in upcoming chapters, Innis might well have sympathized with these concerns.)

Plato/Socrates, moreover, endorsed the *noble lie* (or what Karl Popper preferred to translate as *the lordly lie*, which might also suitably be rendered as *the government’s lies*, or even as *ignoble lies*); dissembling is permissible, according to Plato/Socrates, if it helps rulers retain power.⁶² Innis was aware of this, noting flatly, without comment, that Plato claimed “that governments must be free to lie.”⁶³ By supporting the noble lie, Plato/Socrates obviously did not always single-mindedly and disinterestedly support truth—an observation seemingly at odds with Innis’s main premise regarding Plato/Socrates being dedicated truth-seekers, and therefore also perhaps weakening his concomitant placing such strong emphasis on orality as an efficacious means for seeking truth.

Innis knew, too, that Socrates insisted that truth is in principle unattainable: “With the Greeks,” Innis remarked, “virtue is knowledge, particularly the knowledge that we know nothing.”⁶⁴ That proposition Innis contrasted both with what he termed “fanaticism” (i.e., total assuredness in one’s position) and also with the principle articulated by the Hebrew prophets of antiquity that “knowledge is evil.”⁶⁵ Although the later Innis himself insistently forwarded the Socratic position regarding the inscrutability of truth—writing, for example, that “the insistence on ‘truth’ as dogma is an invitation to disaster”⁶⁶—he also insisted, just as emphatically, that scholars must steadfastly pursue truth.

A few other points also can be made regarding Innis’s perhaps unduly romantic understanding of Greek orality generally and of Plato/Socrates in particular. In his “Introduction” to *Empire and Communications*, Innis stated: “The voice of a second-rate person is more impressive than the published opinion of superior ability.” He explained, citing Graham Wallas, that “writing as compared with speaking involves an impression at the second remove and reading an impression at the third remove.”⁶⁷ Innis realized, then, that oral communication may be more effective than writing for purposes of indoctrination and authoritarian control—a point certainly underplayed in his critique of print and textbooks.

Furthermore, Innis neglected to note that oral conversation can be beset by its own pathologies. As noted by John Durham Peters, for instance,

One need only mention such playwrights as O'Neill, Beckett, Sartre, Ionesco, Albee, or Havel or filmmakers such as Bergman, Antonioni, or Tarkovsky to evoke scenes of stammering face-to-face relations.⁶⁸

Finally, Innis's position on the totalitarian properties of print is quite contentious for some. Literary critic, Northrop Frye, for instance, proposed that compared to both orality and electronic media, print *liberates* the individual—by allowing time to pause and consider critically what was just read, and to mentally test the claims the author made.⁶⁹ For Nicholas Carr, similarly, “the words of the writer act as a catalyst in the mind of the reader, inspiring new insights, associations, and perceptions, sometimes even epiphanies.”⁷⁰ To be sure, Carr here is referring to what he calls, “deep reading,” not necessarily the most prevalent mode of reading. Carr continues:

The literary ethic was not expressed only in what we normally think of as literature. It became the ethic of the historian, illuminating works like Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. It became the ethic of the philosopher, informing the ideas of Descartes, Locke, Kant, and Nietzsche. And crucially, it became the ethic of the scientist. . . . None of [the] momentous intellectual achievements would have been possible without the changes in reading and writing—and in perceiving and thinking—spurred by the efficient reproduction of long forms of writing on printed pages.⁷¹

SUMMING UP

Happily, this chapter need not end on such dour notes. Richard Noble, for instance, remarked astutely that, by grounding his medium thesis “in institutions and practices *embodying the oral tradition*, Innis tied individual freedom to a conception of the broader social good.”⁷² Innis was no methodological individualist; nor was he an individualist libertarian. Rather, he contended that individual freedom is contingent on laws and other social institutions (media of communication, for instance) devoted to creating and maintaining conditions for individual freedom *in the context of community*.⁷³

Reviewing Innis's *Political Economy in the Modern State* in 1947, B. S. Keirstead made much the same point, writing: “Innis indicates that . . . a problem of our day is to reconcile the modern concern for great masses, for ‘the welfare of the whole world without taking any particular care of anybody,’ with the classical liberal passion for the individual.”⁷⁴

Furthermore, none of the critical commentary directed toward Innis in this chapter undermines Innis's larger point, namely that at its pinnacle Athens celebrated simultaneously a large measure of freedom of speech, oral dialogue, writing, and public participation in politics (albeit, only for some!). Although Plato/Socrates may have disapproved, the glory of Ath-

ens *was* its incipient democratic spirit (admittedly, *not* as pronounced as one might wish on account of its tolerance of slavery and other limitations⁷⁵). That flowering, as Innis suggested, may well be attributable, to some major extent, to the balanced coexistence of orality and writing, of time and space.

NOTES

1. Innis, "The Canadian Economy and the Depression" (1934; reprint, *Essays in Canadian Economic History*), 127.
2. Innis, "The Newspaper in Economic Development" (1942; reprint, *Political Economy in the Modern State*), 34.
3. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 6.
4. Innis, "The Bias of Communication," in *The Bias of Communication* (1951; reprint, with an Introduction by Marshall McLuhan, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 50.
5. Innis, "Preface," *The Bias of Communication*, xvii.
6. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," in *The Bias of Communication*, 3–4.
7. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 72.
8. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 4.
9. Innis, "Preface," *The Bias of Communication*, xvii.
10. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 4, 6; emphasis added.
11. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 89.
12. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xiii, xiv.
13. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 28.
14. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944; reprint, translated by John Cumming, New York: Continuum, 1991).
15. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 28.
16. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 78–82.
17. Innis, "An Economic Approach to English Literature in the Nineteenth Century," in *Political Economy in the Modern State*, 35.
18. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," in *Political Economy in the Modern State*, 98–99. The foregoing is, however, only one half of Innis's dialectical understanding. Mathematical argument, he also claimed, although "rational," is usually partial, missing broader implications.
19. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xvi.
20. See "Minerva's Owl," 31, and "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 96.
21. See "The Problem of Space," 129.
22. See Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xiv.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 95.
25. Innis remarked that England, too, enjoyed a brief interval of "flowering"—when the flexible alphabet supported an oral tradition, as revealed particularly in drama. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 9.
26. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 56.
27. *Ibid.*, 53.
28. "A relatively inflexible alphabet such as Hebrew and limited facilities for communication narrowed the problem of education to a small highly-trained group or special class." Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 14.
29. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 66, 55.
30. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 9.
31. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 89; emphasis added.
32. Innis, "The Problem of Space," 105.

33. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 9.
34. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 57.
35. *Ibid.*, 56.
36. *Ibid.*, 57.
37. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 8.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, 9.
40. *Ibid.*, 12, 14.
41. Harold Innis, "A Critical Review," in *The Bias of Communication*, 191; emphasis added.
42. *Ibid.*, 191.
43. *Ibid.*, 191; emphasis added.
44. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 57.
45. She quotes from his private papers: "Winter came back with tell tale force as a giant seeing spring getting the start of him . . . he snowed and snowed and then to make doubly sure of beating spring he snowed again and snowed some more. But spring was young and winter was old and in one day the sun beat down intense, a cold south west wind grew warmer. . . . Little streams and rivulets forced their way joyously singing down through the banks and spring had captured his enemy unaware for spring was young and winter was old . . ." Harold Innis, "Outdoor Study" (1913), quoted in Anne Innis Dagg, "Memories of My Father," 85.
46. Bonnett, *Emergence and Empire*, 3.
47. Innis, "Preface," *The Bias of Communication*, xviii.
48. *Ibid.*, xiii.
49. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 100.
50. Berger writes: "Innis's concern with limitations, his inveterate tendency to search out biases, and his feeling for the tentativeness of his subject were all to a certain extent reflected in his style of writing. . . . His distrust of the dogmatic reinforced an elliptical form of expression." Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 107. Similarly, W. T. Easterbrook declared: "[Throughout Innis's writings] there is apparent a constant struggle to break down this finality [of the printed word] and to weaken or destroy the inherent tendency to monopoly of communications, his impatience with the orderly presentation or the continuous development of narrative, his technique of juxtaposing unlike elements as a means of seeking insights into process." Easterbrook, "Harold Adams Innis 1894–1952." *American Economic Review* (1953), 9.
51. William Kuhns, *The Post-industrial Prophets: Interpretations of Technology* (1971; reprint, New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1973), 144.
52. McLuhan, "Introduction," in Innis, *The Bias of Communication*, ix.
53. Theall, "Exploration in Communication Since Innis," in *Culture, Communication and Dependency*, 228.
54. I. F. Stone, *The Trial of Socrates* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1988), 72.
55. *Ibid.*, 171.
56. *Ibid.*, 49.
57. *Ibid.*, 83.
58. *Ibid.*, 169.
59. Charles Freeman, *The Greek Achievement: The Foundation of the Western World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 10.
60. Stone, *The Trial of Socrates*, 42.
61. Freeman, *The Greek Achievement*, 268.
62. *The noble lie* of Plato's *Republic* is ascribed to Socrates. The lie is that although all people are in fact "brothers," born of the Earth, they are persuaded for purposes of elite rule that there is an inherently superior ruling class or caste. For Plato/Socrates, the great mass of the population, even from childhood, must be indoctrinated into the false notion that they are inherently inferior in order that they be accepting of their own subjugation. Socrates also refers to "opportune falsehoods." See Stone, *The Trial of Socrates*, 167.

63. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 93.
64. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 18.
65. *Ibid.*, 18.
66. Innis, "Russian Diary," 47.
67. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 11.
68. John Durham Peters, *Speaking Into Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 6, 2.
69. Northrop Frye, *The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 43. In a 1969 interview with Eli Mandel, Frye affirmed: "It looks as though a book written entirely by one person is a dictatorial or authoritarian kind of monologue, where the writer is simply holding your buttonhole and not letting you go until he's finished. But actually the written, sequential treatise is a very democratic form of dialogue with the reader. The author is putting all his cards on the table in front of you. He has made his response to the subject with which he has been in dialogue." In Robert D. Denham, editor, *A World in a Grain of Sand: Twenty-Two Interviews with Northrop Frye* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 7. Innis was not oblivious to this insight, however; in reference to Florence of 1330 AD, he declared: "Writing compelled the individual to reflect more intensively." Innis, "The Problem of Space," 125.
70. Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 74.
71. *Ibid.*, 76.
72. Richard Noble, "Innis's Conception of Freedom," in *Harold Innis in the New Century*, 43–44; emphasis added.
73. Bickerton et al., *Freedom, Equality, Community*, 31.
74. B. S. Kierstead, "Review: *Political Economy in the Modern State*. *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 13, no. 4 (November, 1947), 601–602.
75. Freeman, *The Greek Achievement*, 214–35.

FOUR

Political Economy, Medium Theory, and Existentialism

This chapter looks more closely at ontological premises grounding Innis's medium theory and how medium theory relates to political economy.

HOLISM

Approaching truth in a complex, dynamically changing, interrelated world, Innis understood, is difficult and problematic. Therefore, he proposed, investigators must become aware of and take into account *biases*, both their own and also external factors that might limit or distort understandings. Regarding outside factors he singled out particularly the various means for communicating (media) as being of primary significance.

Being an inveterate political economist, however, Innis also focused on concentrated political-economic power as a principal source of bias. Elite power-holders, he claimed, will often attempt to skew knowledge production and distribution to their own advantage. And all too frequently social scientists and other scholars eagerly pay heed the sirens' call:¹

[The social scientist's] contribution is assumed by those who pay for it to have advanced their interests, probably at the expense of other interests and not necessarily to the advantage of the community as a whole—whatever that may mean. In any case, the social scientist is apt to develop strong vested interests in the prospects of an enterprise or of a group or of a society. He becomes concerned in many cases with the increasing profits and the increasing sale of products irrespective of the wants of the community, and acts largely in a predatory capacity.²

As well as castigating scholars for working “in a predatory capacity,” in the same article Innis used the phrase, “the prostitution of social science” in reference to academic conferences focused on “an avowed objective.”³ Over the years, the prostitution and predatory nature of scholarship were continuing concerns for Innis, which he found particularly loathsome when practiced by social scientists basking in the security of university tenure.

Innis, then, was no mere “technological determinist”; he was, rather, a political economist who proposed that the distinct properties of various media will support different elites. Innis’s *medium theory* essentially interrelates two principal sources of bias: elite power and the predominant medium of communication. He proposed that elite power normally controls the predominant medium of communication, which it uses to promote its own interests. Conversely, the type of bias inherent to the predominant medium normally strengthens or supports the power of the particular elite of the time and place. Innis named his variable of synthesis, *monopolies of knowledge*.

TIME, SPACE, BEING, AND GOVERNANCE

Toward the close of “A Plea for Time,” Innis made three poignant clusters of claims:

1. *The state is a major contributor to the weakening of time-binding monopolies.* In former times, he attested, states and other political organizations intent on administering larger territories were often constrained by monopolists controlling time, for example religious institutions.⁴ Territorial expansion requires greater cultural uniformity, he argued, but this is antithetical to time-as-continuity as encouraged by time monopolists. Space-biased authorities, therefore, normally try to impose—even to the point of war—cultural uniformity.⁵ (Consider, for example, attacks on indigenous peoples by European imperial powers; on the other hand, the church, too, has been interested in empire, the Crusades, and missionary zeal of all sorts being pertinent examples; such couplings of time and space, in the author’s view, are the exceptions proving Innis’s rule of inherent trade-offs between time and space.)

In addition to warfare, states in the modern era, according to Innis, weaken the sense of time-as-continuity/duration by supporting science and technology, which increase spatial interactions, and are usually tied to “growth, competition [internationally], and survival of the fittest.”⁶ Survival of the fittest, for instance, connotes a lessening of diversity, which is to say a decline in the influence of time as duration. It also connotes *might makes right*, seemingly a core axiom of imperial powers and territorial aggressions of all sorts. Technological outcomes of scientific

ic research, moreover, such as radio and other “mechanical” means of transmission,⁷ in Innis’s view, enhance cultural control and facilitate the coordination of state resources, contributing enormously thereby to “the rapid extension of control by the state.”⁸ Furthermore, to the extent that scientific and social scientific “laws” are deemed universal, scientific knowledge induces cultural uniformity geographically.

According to Innis, however, it is not merely the state that aims to reduce or obliterate time-as-continuity. So do business corporations: “Weakening of control over time by the church and limited control by the state left a vacuum which was occupied by industry,”⁹ Innis declared.

2. *The resulting present-mindedness* (i.e., refusal or inability even to consider “a state of permanence beyond time”¹⁰) *disempowers individuals, depriving them of resolve or will*. Innis wrote: “Obsession with present-mindedness precludes speculation in terms of time and duration. . . . This contemporary attitude leads to the discouragement of all exercise of the will or the belief in human power.¹¹ And again, “It is possible that we have become paralysed to the extent that an interest in duration is impossible or that only under pressure of extreme urgency can we be induced to recognize the problem.”¹²

Innis supported his contentions by proposing that “the form of mind” from Plato to Kant, in contrast to the “contemporary attitude,” had been consistent with individual freedom and with authentic individual power. That “form of mind,” he explained, had “hallowed [made sacred] *existence beyond change*.”¹³ However, people today, in being preoccupied with “living in the moment and for the moment . . . banish all *individual* continuity,”¹⁴ which is to say they now have little conception of who they are—a major premise of (and celebrated by¹⁵) postmodernists it might be added.¹⁶ Moreover, as just seen, Innis maintained that “it is possible [we have] become *paralysed* to the extent that an interest in duration is [now virtually] impossible.”¹⁷

In his media writings Innis often invoked Nietzsche, and he may well have had him in mind when making these pronouncements. Nietzsche proposed a “finality of becoming,”¹⁸ meaning there is permanence neither to the world nor to ourselves: *we* are historical beings, in flux, mutable, shaped and molded by ever-shifting circumstances; *we* face, in other words, what Innis conceived to be a continuing crisis of identity. George Grant, one of Nietzsche’s most lucid interpreters, noted that the “*last men*,” by Nietzsche’s account, face a void or an abyss stemming from their lack of self-definition even though in psychological self-defense they are likely to avoid thinking about that. Instead of contemplating the nature of their existence, Nietzsche wrote, these *last men* “have their little pleasure for the day and their little pleasure for the night. . . . ‘We have discovered happiness,’ say the last men and blink. Or again, ‘A little

poison now and then: that produces pleasant dreams. And a lot of poison at last, for a pleasant death.”¹⁹

Those *last men* conform remarkably well to Innis’s depiction of contemporary people “paralyzed” or beset by present-mindedness (see immediately below).

At this point, it might be appropriate to emphasize again that Innis, himself, can be regarded as one striving to cope with the existential abyss identified here: How can one possibly find an “anchor” for self-identity, and how can one attain understanding (let alone engage in scholarship to seek truth) in a world beset by indeterminacy and permanently in flux?

3. *Instead of the former time monopolies that promoted “existence beyond change,” many individuals now embrace “new religions evident in fascism, communism, and our way of life.”*²⁰ Fascism and communism as space-binding, state-sponsored “religions” may require little or no elucidation. But “our way of life,” and Innis’s understanding of that as “a new religion” in some respects akin to fascism and communism, certainly do. The first question is, then, exactly what Innis meant by “our way of life.” The second concerns the similarities he saw between it and fascism/communism.

In “A Plea for Time” and elsewhere Innis identified pertinent features of “our way of life,” several of which recall Nietzsche’s “last men,” including:

- “disappearance of an interest in time,”²¹ and therefore an increased attention to the ephemeral,²² indeed an “obsession with present-mindedness”²³
- heightened demand—regionally, nationally, internationally—for news;²⁴ an increased interest also in changing styles and fashion
- rampant hedonism²⁵
- instability²⁶
- obsession with economics
- omnipresent propaganda²⁷
- superficiality, entertainment, amusements;²⁸ rise of “information industries” and a “concern with information”;²⁹ “mechanical transmission” of “vast quantities” of information³⁰
- trend toward centralization
- “atomization of society”;³¹ stated otherwise, a decline in the sense of community³²
- decline in “the belief in individual power”; a discouragement “of all exercise of the will”³³
- acceptance of the “sham independence of democracy.”³⁴ Innis wrote: “Political duplicity has become an asset of first importance in democratic countries”³⁵
- abolition of “all individual continuity”³⁶

All this may seem obvious enough today, although as a dialectical theorist Innis also acknowledged countervailing pressures stemming from *authentic* scholarship, from oral dialogue, and from vestigial time-binding institutions.

The second question: Why did Innis consider “our way of life” to be a new religion, comparable to such other “new religions” as communism and fascism? If *religion* is understood broadly as shared beliefs concerning the ultimate nature and purposes of life, or indeed of the universe, many of the foregoing traits of “our way of life” can indeed be deemed “religious.” For Innis, life beyond death had been the “great myth” of temporal culture, but for spatially-oriented cultures, a “great myth” is “democracy.”³⁷

But that still begs the question of *similarities* to fascism/communism. Recall that Innis claimed that “our way of life” endorses or embraces “*the sham independence of democracy*,”³⁸ and that “political duplicity has become an asset of first importance in *democratic* countries.”³⁹ These assertions constitute major explanations for his equating our way of life to fascism and communism. That still leaves the question as to what grounds Innis based those claims on. And why would anyone ever accept or embrace any of *that*? In “A Plea for Time” Innis provided some answers:

*The political realization of democracy invariably encourages the hypnotist. The behaviourist and the psychological tester have their way. In the words of one of them: “Great will be our good fortune if the lesson in human engineering which the war has taught us is carried over, directly and effectively, into our civil institutions and activities (Yoakum).”*⁴⁰

Innis might well have quoted other authorities, too. In 1928, for example, Edward Bernays (whom Innis cited elsewhere) began his famous book, *Propaganda*, by claiming:

*The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.*⁴¹

A bit later Bernays added, “Propaganda is the executive arm of the invisible government.”⁴²

Walter Lippmann, too, in a sequence of books, provided a lengthy argument to the same effect.⁴³ Innis cited Lippmann on several occasions. (Sadly, as we will see in chapter 6, on one occasion Innis seems to endorse these views himself;⁴⁴ this, to my knowledge, was the exception to Innis’s usually anti-authoritarian position).

For Innis, Bernays, and Lippmann, what we today call “democracy” is tantamount to the “manufacture of consent” (Lippmann’s phrase,⁴⁵ albeit as made prominent by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky⁴⁶). Ad-

vertising, public relations, news, political polls, attitudinal surveys, PR, elections, and much more, for Bernays and Lippmann are, *and should be*, devices not to respond to opinion, but to *manage* it.⁴⁷ Lippmann advised that elites should use vague, polysemous symbols, lie, censor, and otherwise deceive the general public in order to construct *pseudoenvironments* as the best way of achieving consensus; Bernays, similarly, urged “democratic” propagandists to attain familiarity with Freudian psychology in order to *engineer consent* through psychological, subconscious manipulations. Innis’s equivalent expression was that democracy invariably encourages “the hypnotist” as elites endeavor to control the public by distracting attention from things that matter while stealthily inculcating “proper” opinions: “The shell and pea game of the country fair,” Innis remarked, “has been magnified and elevated to a universal level.”⁴⁸ According to Innis, “rights for the masses meant rites for the masses.”⁴⁹

The essential differences between Innis on the one hand and Bernays/Lippmann on the other are that Bernays/Lippmann consistently approved of and deemed essential deceptions, distractions, and psychological manipulations to counter democratic formalities and to entrench elite rule, whereas Innis (except seemingly on the occasion referred to above) detested: (1) any and all deception, and (2) any and all autocratic rule.⁵⁰

From Innis’s claim that the political realization of democracy *invariably* encourages the hypnotist, we can infer that he considered authentic democracy to be frail. Democracy ineluctably gives rise to forces dedicated to its overthrow. Elites hate democracy, notwithstanding the lip service they continually pay it, the lip service itself likely being a prime means of supplanting democracy through deception with authoritarian rule.

Elsewhere, Innis provided additional justifications for claiming similarities among fascism/communism and western democracy. In *Changing Concepts of Time*, for instance, he cited well known U.S. authorities regarding what *they* deemed (at the time of the Cold War) to be the undue influence of the USSR on the U.S.A.:

Archibald MacLeish in an article on “The Conquest of America” in the *Atlantic Monthly* (August 1949) wrote, “Never in the history of the world was one people as completely dominated intellectually and morally by another as the people of the United States by the people of Russia in the four years from 1946 through 1949.” . . . H. Ickes in the *New Republic* (October 17, 1950) wrote, “We have been subjugated by Russia because of our fear of Russia.” “I thank God that Roosevelt is not here now to see a greater and a stronger America not on its knees but on its hands and knees grovelling before dangers of its own imagining.”

At which point Innis interjected:

The outsider can perhaps see more clearly than these writers the truth of their remarks in the work of the Committee on Un-American Activities, in *the reign of terror* introduced as a result of a revival of a system of informers in ex-Communists' rackets, in trials and penalties, and in rumours of suicides. . . . We seem to be condemned to lives of perpetual hate. Unity and coherence [previously] achieved in the United States by animosity against Great Britain . . . has necessitated animosity against Russia.⁵¹

Innis intended the term, "reign of terror," to be applied to the Red Scare and the accompanying Communist witch hunts in the United States beginning in the mid to late 1940s.⁵² For some today, however, the term resonates with the Bush administration's "War on Terror" abroad and "Homeland Security" domestically, and with Obama's targeted assassinations through drones abroad and with NSA electronic spying at home.⁵³

Moreover, as just noted, in Innis's judgment "we seem to be condemned to lives of perpetual hate."⁵⁴ To amplify that proposition, he quoted Fuller regarding the militarized basis of the postwar American economy: "Should an enemy not exist he will need to be created."⁵⁵ Distinctions among fascism, communism, and our way life, then, again seem quite blurred and faint.

In the "democratic states" following World War II and the onset of the Cold War, Innis declared, "we have passed from the security and optimism which characterized the belief in progress in the nineteenth century to fear and pessimism and demands for security."⁵⁶ In that context, he concluded, "democratic states" resort to "totalitarian propaganda" in order to "bolster our morale."⁵⁷ Consistent with the effectiveness of "totalitarian propaganda" and perhaps partly as a consequence of its omnipresence, Innis suggested, irrationalism has come to characterize the twentieth century.⁵⁸ Here we arrive at a principal explanation as to why Wilbur Schramm (as discussed in part II) was so insistent on denying that propaganda is ever effective: Schramm advocated hard, rational social science on the one hand, and insisted that American democracy is strongly differentiated from soviet and other totalitarianisms on the other.

MANUFACTURING CONSENT

In "A Plea for Time," Innis remarked how well-suited modern mass media really are for manufacturing consent—or, in his words, for governments to impose "cultural uniformity on its peoples."⁵⁹ He explained:

As modern developments in communication have made for greater realism they have made for greater possibilities of delusion . . . We are under the spell of Whitehead's fallacy of misplaced concreteness. The

shell and pea game of the country fair has been magnified and elevated to a universal level.⁶⁰

Here Innis's wit is both acute and dark. Photography, seemingly, is more "real" than words, and hence empowers advertisers and propagandists more effectively than print alone ever could. Moving pictures seemingly are more "real" still, immersing audiences into what some later writers referred to as "simulacra" and as "hyper-realities."

However, the issue is not merely that elites have at their disposal more powerful tools for deception and persuasion. According to Innis, people (particularly the "lowest intellectual types") actively seek out and enthusiastically participate in their own bemusement and delusion. Innis declared:

The technological advantages in communication shown in the newspaper, the cinema and the radio demand the thinning out of knowledge to the point where it interests the lowest intellectual levels and brings them under the control of totalitarian propaganda.⁶¹

Innis suggested, too, that with the rise of popular mass media, "public opinion as a reflection of the middle classes became less important, and popular clamor made rapid headway."⁶² Meanwhile, "the best minds," according to Innis, were diverted from the important problem of increasing understanding to focus on commerce, armaments, and manipulation of public opinion.⁶³

But people cannot tolerate seeing themselves as powerless and unfree because, according to Innis, they possess *an instinct for freedom*. He wrote: "*The sense of power and the instinct for freedom* have proved too costly and have been replaced by the sham independence of democracy."⁶⁴ Stated otherwise, being deprived of *authentic* freedom/power, citizens suspend disbelief and acquiesce in delusions of power and in delusions of democracy. In other words, for deeply-based psychological reasons in the absence of authentic freedom and authentic democracy, people accept and welcome the "sham" of freedom.

Like Nietzsche's *last men*, moreover, citizens in contemporary culture dull their angst through entertainments, fashion, celebrity, drugs, superficialities, hedonism, the ephemeral, and all else that "our way of life" has to offer. These distractions and fantasies may help, too, in avoiding confrontations with *the sham*. And, of course, space-binding media are adept at providing such necessary illusions, amusements, and bemusements, and are eager to do so.

Parenthetically, this was one of the few times—likely the only time—that Innis used the phrase, *instinct for freedom*. On another occasion (quoting Rougier) he actually used the antithetical phrase, *an instinct of servitude*, defined as "a need for being regimented and commanded."⁶⁵ One could speculate at some length as to how Innis might reconcile these seemingly antithetical postulates: instinct for freedom/instinct for servi-

tude. I treat both at some length in part III. For now, it is sufficient to note that both *instinct for freedom* and *instinct of servitude* support Innis's characterization of contemporary democracy as delusory, as a sham.

In stark contrast to our contemporary "sham of freedom," Innis referenced "the *community* built by the Greeks" which, he claimed, "assumed a concern with time as continuity, not merely as "a series of instantaneous flashes."⁶⁶ A sense of time as duration and as continuity, plus oral dialogue and dialectic, according to Innis, are essential for confronting and displacing the "sham."

INNIS'S EXISTENTIAL ANGST

Whereas the *object* to be studied during Innis's staples period admittedly could and did change (staples succeeded one another, as did the associated modes of transportation), there is little or no hint in Innis's staples writings that *the scholar*, or researcher, too, is subject to change. Differences among countries or within the same country at different times is one thing; differences in *interpreting* the *same* events on account of different biases in the scholar or among different scholars, is quite another. *That*, however, was the disturbing proposition Innis introduced, *de nouveau*, with medium theory. Every researcher is, in part, according to the Innis of medium theory, a product of his or her times, and hence understands/interprets/misinterprets accordingly. Innis made this point time and time again:

It is scarcely possible for generations disciplined in the written and the printed tradition to appreciate the oral tradition.⁶⁷

The impact of writing and printing on modern civilization increases the difficulties of understanding a civilization based on the oral tradition.⁶⁸

A change in the type of medium implies a change in the type of appraisal and hence makes it difficult for one civilization to understand another.⁶⁹

We must all be aware of the extraordinary, perhaps insuperable, difficulty of assessing the quality of a culture of which we are a part or of assessing the quality of a culture of which we are not a part. In using other cultures as mirrors in which we may see our own culture we are affected by the astigma of our own eyesight and the defects of the mirror, with the result that we are apt to see nothing in other cultures but the virtues of our own.⁷⁰

There is another way of stating Innis's new dilemma: to assent that universals (presuming they exist) are impossible to know, due to the relativity/finiteness of our knowing, is tantamount to falling into the dual abyss

of totalitarian governance (no ascertainable truth with which to hold power to account) *and* lack of personal identity (as the self is always in flux). On the other hand, to claim that there *are* universals which *can* be fully comprehended by some (but not all), leads to “fanaticism” and to totalitarian governance by experts or philosopher kings—all this being equally repugnant to Innis. Innis’s compromise, to avoid both undesirable extremes, was to pursue scholarship to ascertain constants outside of time, even while denying that these constants can ever be comprehended in their full complexity. Scholars must pursue truth, but do so humbly, while being as self-reflexive as possible in order to account for their own limitations or biases, *and* while engaging in oral dialogues so that their propositions can be tested by points of view other than their own.

AN ANALYTICAL NOTE

Despite championing Greek culture and making a plea for time, Innis was not afflicted with nostalgia. He began “A Plea for Time” by proposing that time poses *three* major problems for contemporary understanding. First is the problem to which he provided the bulk of his attention, namely *present-mindedness*. The danger here is that “knowledge of the past may be neglected to the point that it ceases to serve the present and the future.”⁷¹

The second (and antithetical) problem, is *antiquarianism*—the belief that only the past counts and that everything should be judged accordingly. Innis called on scholars to resist not only “present-mindedness” but also to “escape from antiquarianism . . . and from the bogeys of stagnation and maturity.”⁷²

Third is the difficulty, or impossibility, of contemporary analysts adequately understanding former cultures; this is sometimes called *presentism*. “The task of understanding a culture built on the oral tradition is impossible to students steeped in the western tradition,”⁷³ Innis declared. Although “it is impossible for [the economic historian] to avoid the bias of the period in which he writes,” Innis proposed, “he can point to its dangers by attempting to appraise the character of the time concept.”⁷⁴

Deibert makes a further distinction pertinent to this discussion: historicism vs. essentialism. From a *historicist* perspective, Deibert advises, “rationalities, nations and states—though potentially stable over long periods of time—are nonetheless products of historical contingencies and thus subject to change as nature and society evolve. . . . The historicist privileges change over continuity, flux over permanence.”⁷⁵ The *essentialist*, in contrast, “is concerned with uncovering fundamental laws and universal truths about nature and society. . . . [He or she] seeks to build knowledge on stable, unchanging foundations.”⁷⁶

According to Deibert, “where Innis falls on this divide between essentialism and historicism is somewhat ambiguous . . . [but] a closer inspection reveals that of the two modes of thought, Innis was fully in tune with the historicist approach.”⁷⁷ The argument presented in the present chapter reaches a somewhat different conclusion: Innis was historicist regarding staples, maintaining that each staple has unique effects and proposing the relativity of knowledge to time and place (although at that time he seemed unconcerned with the possibility that his own work might be plagued by historicist concerns). In his media writings, however, the issues were reversed: Innis anguished over “biases” of every researcher due to his or her own historicity; nonetheless, he was fully essentialist in seeking out commonalties of previous civilizations that could be of contemporary applicability, and in his insistence that scholars seek truth (“a state of permanence beyond time”), as opposed to merely living in the moment.

NOTES

1. Innis, “The Passing of Political Economy” (1938; reprint, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change*, edited by Daniel Drache), 440-41.
2. Innis, “The Role of Intelligence: Some Further Notes,” 281.
3. *Ibid.*, 285.
4. Innis, “A Plea for Time,” 67.
5. *Ibid.*, 76.
6. *Ibid.*, 87.
7. *Ibid.*, 84.
8. *Ibid.*, 88.
9. *Ibid.*, 74.
10. *Ibid.*, 89.
11. *Ibid.*, 87, 90.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, 90.
14. *Ibid.*, 90; emphasis added.
15. See the discussion on postmodernism and human nature in part III.
16. See, for example, Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society* (New York: Routledge 1995), 228-22.
17. Innis, “A Plea for Time,” 88; emphasis added.
18. George Grant, *Time As History* (1969; reprint, edited with an Introduction by William Christian, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 37.
19. George Grant, quoting *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *ibid.*, 44-45.
20. Innis, “A Plea for Time,” 88.
21. *Ibid.*, 61, 87.
22. *Ibid.*, 82.
23. *Ibid.*, 87.
24. *Ibid.*, 76, 82.
25. *Ibid.*, 79.
26. *Ibid.*, 79.
27. *Ibid.*, 80-81.
28. *Ibid.*, 82.
29. *Ibid.*, 83.
30. *Ibid.*, 83-84.

31. *Ibid.*, 80.
32. *Ibid.*, 89.
33. *Ibid.*, 90.
34. *Ibid.*, 90.
35. Innis, "The Canadian Economy and the Depression," 134.
36. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 90.
37. Kuhns, *Post-industrial Prophets*, 159.
38. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 90.
39. Innis, "The Canadian Economy and the Depression," 134; emphasis added.
40. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 90; emphasis added.
41. Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York: Liveright, 1928), 2; emphases added.
42. Bernays, *Propaganda*, 8.
43. Walter Lippmann, *Liberty and the News* (1920; reprint, with a Preface by Robert W. McChesney, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2010); *Public Opinion* (1922; reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004); *The Phantom Public* (1927; reprint, with a new Introduction by Wilfred M. McClay, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993).
44. Innis, "The Intellectual in History," 453.
45. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 135.
46. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988).
47. Lippmann wrote, for example: "My conclusion is that public opinions must be organized for the press if they are to be sound, not by the press as is the case today." Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 17. See also, Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); also, Joyce Nelson, *Sultans of Sleaze: Public Relations and the Media* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989).
48. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 82.
49. Innis, "The Problem of Space," 94.
50. Innis's admiration of Plato/Socrates seems quite contradictory to his rejection of authoritarian governance. Innis admired Plato/Socrates, however, for reasons other than, and despite, their support of despotism. And he admired the limited form of Greek democracy perhaps, in part, because it was not all inclusive. But he admired it, too, because it was not autocratic and because it countervailed or was countervailed by the philosophers.
51. Innis, "Roman Law and the British Empire," 61; emphasis added.
52. Michael Barson, *Better Dead Than Red: A Nostalgic Look at Russiaphobia Red-Baiting and Other Commie Madness* (NY: Hyperion, 1992).
53. See, for example, Kevin Gosztola, "Attack on Wedding Convoy One Of Worst in History of Drone War in Yeman," *The Dissenter*, December 13, 2013, <http://dissenter.firedoglake.com/2013/12/13/us-drone-strike-on-wedding-convoy-was-one-of-the-worst-attacks-in-the-history-of-yemen/> (accessed Dec. 18, 2013). Obama stopped using the phrase, "War on Terror," but the drone strikes and spying are a continuation of it; nor did "homeland security" end with Bush, either.
54. Innis, "Roman Law and the British Empire," 61.
55. *Ibid.*, 38. Quote is from J. F. C. Fuller, *Armament and History* (1945).
56. Innis, "An Economic Approach to English Literature in the Nineteenth Century," in *Political Economy in the Modern State*, 35.
57. Innis, "An Economic Approach to English Literature," 35.
58. *Ibid.*, 35.
59. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 76.
60. *Ibid.*, 82.
61. Innis, "The University in the Modern Crisis," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, 74.
62. Innis, "An Economic Approach to English Literature," 55.

63. "The mechanization of modern society compels increasing interest in science and the machine, and attracts the best minds from the most difficult problems of western civilization." Innis, "A Plea for Time," 90.
64. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 90; emphasis added.
65. Innis, "The Problems of Rehabilitation," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, 61.
66. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 89.
67. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 8.
68. Innis, "The Bias of Communication," 41.
69. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 9.
70. Innis, "Industrialism and Cultural Values," 132.
71. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 61.
72. *Ibid.*, 62.
73. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 55.
74. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 62.
75. Deibert, "Between Essentialism and Constructivism," 34–35.
76. *Ibid.*, 33.
77. *Ibid.*, 35–36.

FIVE

Media and Scholarship

Innis related media to two types of communication: the scholarly and the popular (sometimes referring to the latter as “the vernacular”). This chapter reviews Innis’s understanding of the consequences of media for scholarship; the following chapter reviews his understanding of media and popular culture.

BACON AND INNIS

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) is still renowned for proposing that *knowledge is power*. Scientific knowledge, Bacon averred, has enabled humankind to dominate nature.¹ In his fictional account of a New Atlantis, Bacon portrayed an utopian society ruled by scientists. And in *Novum Organum Scientiarum* (1620) Bacon famously claimed that three “mechanical discoveries”—the printing press, gunpowder, the compass—had “changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world . . . in so much that no empire, no sect, no star seems to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs.” Bacon compared his *new organum* (inferring general relations from multiple observations and testing those inferences by experiment) to Aristotle’s *old one*, which he disparaged on grounds that it merely deduced conclusions from untested assumptions or axioms.

Innis, likewise, related knowledge to power. And, like Bacon, Innis speculated on consequences of science for the human condition. However, whereas Bacon confined his attention to power used to subdue nature, Innis emphasized the subjugation of some people and some cultures by others. Whereas Bacon, evidently, regarded humanity as unified, by Innis’s account humankind is normally conflicted and class-riven.

Indeed, the same three inventions heralded by Bacon as immeasurably benefiting humankind, by Innis's account reinforce asymmetric power relations. Modifications or "improvements" to the inventions, furthermore, in Innis's view, today threaten human survival.² Far from utopian, Innis viewed contemporary science as deadly—unless and until modified or counterbalanced by the wisdom of the Greeks—wisdom that Bacon dismissed so contemptuously, at least in part.

So, just what was the wisdom of the Greeks that Innis regarded so highly? In a phrase, it was "a constant avoidance of extremes and extravagance," arguably another Innisian "constant beyond time." Innis explained: "Virtue is the middle way. There are no cures. Always we are compelled to be sceptical of the proposal to cure the world's ills."³

Rather than emphasize *progress* as an ideal, as had Bacon, Innis modestly proposed *balance*. Rather than depicting humanity as marching forever forward, hand-in-hand, Innis insisted that countervailing power—skepticism, emphasis on the humanities, rivalries among different power groups and their knowledges, dialectical thinking—are vital correctives to the moribund trajectories set by all monopolies of knowledge, including modern science: "We must beware of those who have found the truth,"⁴ Innis warned. Far from envisaging a blissful, utopian future, Innis insisted that *anchorages* with the past are essential to avert utter collapse.

In the following dense extract from his pivotal article of 1934, Innis detailed the trajectory he discerned in Western civilization—from democracy (e.g., the Greeks), to improved media, to advances in weaponry, to totalitarianism, to successions of war:

Democratic institutions accentuate the influence of urban population and metropolitan centres, and, in turn mechanization strengthens the position of centralized control. Improved communication such as the press and radio, improved transportation, and the development of modern architecture (for example the skyscraper) tend to stress similarities of language and ideas. Expansion of the pulp and paper industry has supported intensive advertising and revolutions in marketing essential to the demands of the city. It has coincided with the decline of editorials and freedom of speech, and the emergence of headlines and the modern newspaper with its demands for excitement, including wars and peace, to appeal to a large range of lower mental types. The coincidence with the advent of radio of dictatorship in Russia, Germany, Italy, Great Britain, the United States, or Canada is not accidental. Mechanization, moreover, implies more effective utilization of physical force. Machine guns are effective keys to the city. . . . The vital relationship of militarism to capitalism and to the modern state, which has become to a large extent a collector and distributor of funds for war purposes, persists. . . . Political duplicity has become an asset of first importance in democratic countries.⁵

By perusing Innis's subsequent media/communication writings, we can uncover substantial support for the sometimes startling connections he suggested so briefly, even cryptically, here.

MECHANIZATION AND FORCE

Bacon used the phrase, "mechanical discoveries," when referring to outcomes of the scientific method which, in his view, substantially augmented humankind's domination of nature. "Mechanized" and "mechanical" are words employed by Innis, too, but seldom with a positive thrust. For Innis, rather, mechanization (and particularly mechanized media of communication) is at the heart of the contemporary malaise which he attributed to congenital misunderstanding: mechanization is inextricably linked to space bias, militarization, force, empire, and present-mindedness. The inaugural mechanical device that both foreshadowed and typified the mechanized age (and thereby our contemporary era beset by present-mindedness), according to Innis, was the printing press.

Innis contrasted oral communication and print. Between those poles, of course, he investigated various other media for writing: stone, papyrus, clay tablets, parchment, paper, and pen. While expressing reservations regarding each of those, he leveled his harshest indictments at the printing press which, in his view, utterly transformed what we take to be knowledge. Whereas hand copying was laborious and time-consuming, required little capital, and produced texts that were never quite identical, the printing press was capital intensive and produced quickly and in abundance identical copies. One consequence of mechanized media, therefore, was that informational artifacts were subject to industrial and pecuniary pressures for mass production, mass consumption, economies of scale, mass promotion, mass distribution, and profits. Innis concluded that mechanized media, consequently, are hostile to *authentic* scholarship:⁶

The Industrial Revolution and mechanized knowledge have all but destroyed the scholar's influence. *Force* is no longer concerned with his protection and is actively engaged in schemes for his destruction.⁷

The conditions of freedom of thought are in danger of being destroyed by science, technology, and the mechanization of knowledge, and with them, Western civilization.⁸

We are compelled to recognize the significance of mechanized knowledge as a source of power and its subjection to the demands of force through the instrument of the state. . . . Centralization in education in the interests of political organization has disastrous implications.⁹

In our day, Innis maintained, political-economic-military power (“force”) controls the predominant modes of communication, and thereby also much of what we take to be knowledge. In our era, mechanized media, which in Innis’s terms would now include digital media (see chapter 13), are outcomes of applied science (and, incidentally, have almost uniformly been supported in their development by the military: telegraph, radio, television, Internet, satellites, fiber optics, computers, cellular technology, guided missiles, drones). Militarized media, by definition, extend or maintain spatial control. *Force*, then, most assuredly *is* aligned with governance over space, with Baconian science, and with contemporary media of communication. The tragedy of our time, according to Innis, is that (in accordance with Bacon’s recommendation) there is scant counterbalance or dialectic among knowledges or alternative ways of knowing to offset the predominance of mechanized, space-binding, present-minded, militaristic knowledge.

Of course, space-oriented power blocs—military, governments, corporations—need and therefore purchase research, skills, knowledge, and intelligence. For Innis to assert that force and mechanization are “hostile” to scholarship, then, must have meant that he viewed the form of scholarship demanded by these power blocs as inferior or inauthentic. Innis quoted Mark Pattison on the opposition between force and *authentic* scholarship (or what Pattison simply called “knowledge”):

*Power is a machine, but it is one of which the moving force is passion, much oftener than knowledge. . . . Passion, creating and animating power, degrading knowledge to be the skilled artificer that forges chains for its subjects. Power, once constituted, has a tendency to perpetuate itself: it is at the discretion of power how much, or how little, intellectual progress its subjects shall be permitted to make. For though knowledge be itself a power yet as it grows up and finds passion already seated on the throne, it cannot raise its head, except so far as the monarch in possession licenses it.*¹⁰

In addition to being applied to develop new technological means of force, mechanized knowledge serves another purpose for elite power: it numbs the population. Innis declared, perhaps in oblique reference to Plato’s allegory of the cave: “The danger of shaking men out of the soporific results of mechanized knowledge is similar to that of attempting to arouse a drunken man or one who has taken an overdose of sleeping tablets. The necessary violent measures will be disliked.”¹¹

CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITIES

Where Angels Fear to Tread

According to Innis, scholarship to be worthy of the name must be open, free, intelligent, skeptical; it must be independent of economic pressures; it must seek truth irrespective of possible negative impact upon existing systems of power.

Innis maintained that, historically, universities had been the fount of authentic scholarship and had been primary sources of countervailing influence.¹² In his view, the university “must continue its vital function” of mediating time and space, that is of “checking the dangerous extremes to which all institutions with power are subject.”¹³ However, Innis expressed concern that universities in his day were increasingly prone to siding with space to the preclusion of time. The contemporary university, he wrote, “is besieged on all hands by villains.”¹⁴ And again: “We stand on one small and dwindling island surrounded by a flood of totalitarianism.”¹⁵ The contemporary precariousness of independent scholarship, Innis believed, stemmed essentially from three factors:

First, scholars were bereft of resources with which “to combat organizations of power always insidiously waiting to prey on them.”¹⁶ According to Innis, “Nothing has been more indicative of the decline in cultural life in Canada since the last war than the infiltration of politics in the Universities”;¹⁷ and again: “Universities supported by the state have seen the disappearance of freedom of speech and freedom of the press, to say nothing of academic freedom.”¹⁸

Innis’s concern may have been stimulated particularly from the fact that his campus at the University of Toronto during the Second World War resembled a military encampment as uniformed soldiers and students scurried about hither and yon. Special courses were developed for military personnel. The university’s curriculum was continuously subject to modification in attempts to conform it more closely to military needs. The principals of McGill and Queen’s universities were even advocating closing arts faculties, as they deemed those inessential to the war effort. (Harold Innis, along with others, helped block that move!¹⁹).

In addition, the plight of colleague Frank Underhill,²⁰ would have done nothing to placate Innis’s anxiety: both the leader of the opposition and the premier of the province denounced Underhill in the provincial Legislature on account of his pacifist and seemingly anti-British statements. Both politicians demanded his dismissal.

Second, according to Innis, professors were unduly prone to seeking out and accepting pecuniary and other rewards from space-biased monopolists, and as part of their quest they eagerly modified research agendas and findings. As Innis put it, academics have “been quick to work in collusion with [government bureaucracies], to pretend an omnis-

ciency equal to all occasions, and to become the kept class of autocracies."²¹ Innis was not one, however, to name names, and so these charges remained abstract; in that regard, of course, the contrast with Noam Chomsky is stark.

Third, university administrators—essentially ambitious bureaucrats in Innis's judgment—were, almost to the person willing accomplices of organized power. Innis declared ominously: "Universities will be charged as one of the kept institutions of capitalism."²² And again: "The impression that universities can be bought and sold, held by business men and fostered by university administrators trained in playing for the highest bid, is a reflection of the deterioration of western civilization. To buy universities is to destroy them and with them the civilization for which they stand."²³

In considering these remarks it is worthwhile recalling that Innis was himself a university administrator,²⁴ meaning that he had regular contact with the types of people described above, including the university president. It is doubtful comments such as these, if noticed,²⁵ would have endeared him to his administrative superiors—or indeed to his colleagues in the professoriate—perhaps helping to explain why his post-staples scholarship was so ignored for years after his death and even today is only selectively cited and considered.

Pressured by governments, corporations, the military, ecclesiastical institutions, political parties,²⁶ and even public opinion, the contemporary university, according to Innis, was prone to selling its soul, making "the task of attempting to become [an *authentic*] social scientist . . . beyond human endurance. . . . He will receive small thanks and possibly much contempt and persecution for attempting to tear the mask from innumerable biases which surround him."²⁷

As developed further below, Innis was then fully aware of, and continuously bore in mind, the fierce opposition that likely awaited scholars manifesting a modicum of intellectual integrity and independence. Innis most definitely was no "fool" rushing in where angels feared to tread.

Scholarship and Present-mindedness

Innis remarked that governments, the military, and corporations favor and support applied, practical research. That means, according to Innis, they support "mental processes [that are] essentially short range."²⁸ Time-binding knowledge, conversely, is seldom encouraged. In fact, power and its assistant, "force," Innis insisted, are congenitally *opposed* to "intelligence."²⁹ *Intelligence*, for Innis, entails "forethinking," which is the precise opposite of present-mindedness. Citing Eric Havelock, Innis maintained that among contemporary intellectuals, *intelligence* (in this sense) is increasingly rare:

Intellectual man of the nineteenth century was the first to estimate absolute nullity in time. The present—real, insistent, complex, and treated as an independent system, the foreshortening of practical prevision in the field of human action, has penetrated the most vulnerable area of public policy. War has become the result, and a cause, of the limitations placed of the forethinker.³⁰

War is a *result* of present-mindedness; people in positions of influence (politicians and their expert advisers) do not think things through as to long-term implications. War also is a *cause* of present-mindedness; war gives rise to moment by moment exigencies, necessitating continuing attention.

It is not merely individual experts and scholars, however, who are prone to present-mindedness. So, too, are entire academic disciples, including of course (and especially, in Innis's view), economics:

Work in the *social sciences* has become increasingly concerned with topical problems and social science departments become schools of journalism. . . . [The social scientist using] mathematical technique . . . can develop formulae to be used by industry and business and by governments in the formulation of policy. . . . It is significant that [economist John Maynard] Keynes should have said that in the long run we are all dead and that we have little other interest than that of living for the immediate future.³¹

And again, elsewhere:

One notes with alarm the changing fashions in economics. The breakup of the classical tradition of economics is an indication of the powerful influence of fashions in our times. At one time we are concerned with tariffs, at another with trusts, and still another with money. As newspapers seldom find it to their interest to pursue any subject for more than three or four days, so the economist becomes very weary of particular interests or senses that the public is weary of them and changes accordingly.³²

As Innis was writing, an arms race threatened annihilation. Innis anticipated not merely "the universities [as being] in danger of becoming a branch of the military arm,"³³ but he also foresaw "the prospect of a new Dark Ages."³⁴ For him, only a revival of authentic scholarship as protected by reinvigorated, independent universities could save the world. In an address to graduating students at Dalhousie University (1944), he stated:

As recent graduates, we dedicate ourselves afresh to the maintenance of a tradition without which western culture disappears. . . . These ceremonies peculiar to an institution which has played the leading role in the flowering of western culture remind us of the obligation of maintaining traditions concerned with the search for truth for which men have laid down and have been asked to lay down their lives.³⁵

In addition to governments, the military, and corporations imposing present-mindedness on universities, so also according to Innis does public opinion; and for their part, universities were increasingly attempting to curry public favor: "Universities have appointed press agents to persuade the public of their contributions; their curricula have been adjusted; and a rash of departments of university extension has broken out."³⁶ Accordingly, universities were debasing their curricula: "The universities like churches have concentrated their attention on public opinion as the source of power whether in extension courses or in the shaping of curricula and content."³⁷ Meanwhile, "academic freedom ha[d] become the great shelter of incompetence," with the social sciences providing "both the opiates and the stimulants to what passes for modern thought."³⁸

DISSENT IN THE MIDST OF OPPRESSION

Innis wrote his media/communication books not only when he was broadly acclaimed Canada's foremost scholar, but also while occupying senior administrative positions at the University of Toronto and serving governments in prestigious capacities. He published many of his most scathing remarks directed at government officials, the political system, university administrators, scholars, journalists and the press system, in other words, during World War II and its aftermath, the Red Scare—periods normally considered to have severely curtailed expressions of dissident thought and knowledge. One might well ask: How did Harold Innis get away with it? How and why did Innis survive?

One answer was given by Innis himself in the form of a humorous anecdote, followed by a confession:

If in the course of an article I make reference to a large government department or a large business organization, I will receive in an incredibly short time after the article has been published a personal letter . . . explaining that my remarks are liable to misinterpretation and inferring that the head of such an influential department in a large university should be very careful about the way in which his views are expressed. I plan to leave in my estate a valuable collection of autographs of prominent men in this country.

Whereupon Innis added:

For these reasons I am largely compelled to avoid making speeches in public and to resort to the careful preparation of material to be made available in print. In most cases this involves writing in such guarded fashion that no one can understand what is written or using quotations from the writings of authors who stand in great repute.³⁹

Previously, I suggested that in his writings Innis strove to avoid “linearity” which would undermine his holistic or “ecological” position, and also that he wanted to counter the customarily authoritarian properties of print. Another possibility, however, supported by the foregoing anecdote, is that he strove to protect his indictments of contemporary society from personal attack and repression. More than just that, though: by perhaps shielding *himself* from censure from elite/totalitarian forces, Innis may have had in mind also the notion that he was preserving (or at least not reducing) the integrity of the *University*. Innis was insistent that the University remain (or once again become) isolated from political interference, for only then, he maintained, could scholars counter prevailing biases and thereby contribute to the survival of civilization. “Scholars have much to lose from encroachments of power,” Innis remarked, because (quoting Jacob Burckhardt’s *Force and Freedom*), “power is of its nature evil, whoever wields it.”⁴⁰ And again: “The descent of the university into the market place reflects the lie in the soul of modern society.”⁴¹

In his scholarship, then, Innis was himself living out certain contradictions and was continuously striving for balance. On the one hand, he was himself among the elite; on the other, if his criticisms proved *too* effective, *he* stood to lose a lot. Again, on the one hand, according to Innis, only authentic scholarship can countervail omnipresent space-binding pressures that, unchecked, may well result in the collapse of Western civilization; on the other, authentic scholarship is likely to incur the wrath of powerful interests who could well respond by curtailing academic freedom.

One suspects Innis continuously asked himself just how real *is* academic freedom anyway, if academics engage in *self-censorship* in the name of preserving academic freedom? While one may well disagree with the balance Innis struck, one must at the same time admire his courage and understand the wrenching contradictions he attempted to navigate.

WAR ECONOMIES

Tragically, according to Innis, in the twentieth century present-mindedness has been a factor causing whole economies to become war-based, to be dedicated to producing the means of mass annihilation. Quoting Fuller:⁴² “An all-round increase in armed forces [has been necessary] to mitigate unemployment.” In fact, Innis continued, in accordance with increased present-mindedness, the very motivation underlying militarization has shifted from defense to economic concerns: Today, war is “to solve unemployment in order to ensure against anarchy, instead of war to protect employment (ordered life) against external aggression.” Indeed, “the dependence on war becomes even more vital to our economic

system than the dependence of war on industry." "Should an enemy not exist he will need to be created."⁴³

It is precisely at this point that Innis tied war and weaponry (Bacon's "gun powder") to popular culture and mass media (Bacon's "printing press"): "A war cannot be carried on without atrocity stories for the home market,"⁴⁴ Innis judged. Further discussion on the influence or control of popular culture by space monopolies, and connections Innis proposed between gunpowder on the one hand and the printing press on the other, are reserved for the next chapter.

EDUCATION AND MECHANIZATION

Innis believed that the inventions of the mechanical printing press and the paper machine heralded a perverse revolution in the production and distribution of knowledge.⁴⁵ He maintained that mechanization fosters specialization, indeed an "obsession with specialization";⁴⁶ it encourages the pursuit of economies of scale in knowledge production and distribution,⁴⁷ thereby presaging the advent of "information industries."⁴⁸ University departments and disciplines today, he lamented, are often unduly present-minded; but that is not merely a knee-jerk response to the demands of political-economic power; it is also a consequence of properties built into the very means of communicating:

The textbook . . . has become such a powerful instrument for the closing of men's minds with its emphasis on memory and its systematic checking of new ideas. Biases become entrenched in textbooks which represent monopolies of the publishing trade and resist the power of thought.⁴⁹

Innis used the phrases, *mechanization of knowledge* and of *education*, to refer not merely to larger presses and larger print runs in order to decrease average production costs of textbooks,⁵⁰ but also to larger classrooms;⁵¹ the discouragement of oral dialogue and the concomitant decline in critical, creative thought;⁵² insistence by schools on the efficacy of formulaic knowledge⁵³ and the use of mechanical instruments (including but not limited to text books—film, for example) as teaching aids.

Perhaps most importantly for Innis, though, was the undue emphasis on the present and the transitory brought about by mechanization. Citing Laski, Innis mused sardonically that "education [had become] the art of teaching men to be deceived by the printed word."⁵⁴ Part of that "deception" was over-specialization among academics. The printing press contributed to over-specialization, according to Innis, on account of the ease of replication. Curiously, though, he also invoked a psychological explanation: "Repression of the human spirit produces its aberrations in spe-

cialization."⁵⁵ We could speculate at some length on what Innis had in mind here.

The printing press and other "mechanical devices," Innis remarked, vastly increased the production and distribution of information. In fact, in contemporary society, "freedom of the press" survived—to the degree it *had* survived—principally because published words became trivial on account of the overabundance of published materials.⁵⁶ Innis would likely maintain that today freedom of scholarship, to the extent there is such a thing, is tolerated primarily because there is an over-abundance of academic writings.

NOTES

1. William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 45–71; also Leiss, *Under Technology's Thumb* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).

2. According to Innis, "the collapse of Western civilization . . . begins with the present [20th] century." Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 94.

3. Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 66.

4. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, vii.

5. Innis, "The Canadian Economy and the Depression," 127, 133, 134. See also Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 94–96.

6. I use the term, *authentic scholarship*, to highlight Innis's contrast with mechanized knowledge and knowledge produced for essentially pecuniary and propagandistic purposes.

7. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 31; emphasis added.

8. Harold Innis, "A Critical Review," 190.

9. *Ibid.*, 195.

10. *Essays by the Late Mark Pattison*, Vol. 2 (1889), quoted in Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 135–36; emphasis added.

11. Innis, "The Church in Canada" (1947; reprint, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change*), 459.

12. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 141. On the other hand, Innis also claimed that formal education through the millennia has been a primary means of indoctrination.

13. *Ibid.*, 141.

14. Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 65.

15. Innis, "The University in the Modern Crisis," 73.

16. Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 70.

17. *Ibid.*, 69.

18. Innis, "The University in the Modern Crisis," 73.

19. Martin L. Friedland, *The University of Toronto: A History* (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 2002), 350. Friedland notes, too, that pressures were mounting on universities to "restrict access to courses deemed not to be in the national interest" and that "students enrolled in non science courses were to be targeted for call-up if they were medically fit," whereas those "enrolled in courses deemed to be in the national interest would [be allowed to] continue" (pp. 55, 63). This debate gave rise to formation of the Humanities Research Council (1943) as an organization set up to help stave off unwanted government intrusions into curricula; Innis played a leading role. See DCWM, "Commentary on Political Economy in the Modern State," *Days and Works* http://dcwm-worksanddays.blogspot.ca/2008/07/commentary-on-political-economy-in.html#_ftnref10 (accessed October 13, 2014). See also Michael D. Stevenson, *Canada's*

Greatest Wartime Muddle: National Selective Service and the Mobilization of Human Resources During World War II (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 51–65.

20. See Luski, *Harold Adams Innis*, 87–93. Also, Watson, *Marginal Man*, 228–31; and Massolin, *Canadian Intellectuals*, 100–101.

21. Innis, "The Newspaper in Economic Development" (Reprint: *Political Economy in the Modern State*), 31.

22. Innis, "The University in the Modern Crisis," 75.

23. *Ibid.*, 75. According to Innis, moreover, the boards of governors of Canadian universities "have been known deliberately to torture scholars and students in the interests of political demands. They have been known deliberately to interfere with the content of courses in the interests of particular groups or classes, political parties or ecclesiastical organizations. Apparently they have felt compelled to lend themselves to the systematic rape of scholarship." Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 69.

24. But not one who conformed to what one's normal conception is of an administrator. John Watson writes: "The administrative paperwork was left to Professor C.A. Ashley and to departmental secretaries. When she [a secretary in the Political Economy Department] would approach Innis concerning a matter not involving policy or appointments, his reply would be: 'You run the office, you do it yourself.' . . . Departmental meetings were once a year affairs convened without an agenda. . . . A similar low level of administrative attention was devoted by Innis to his duties as dean of the School of Graduate Studies . . ." Watson, *Marginal Man*, 238–39.

25. And assuredly they *were* noticed. Innis developed the theme in his address accepting an honorary degree at the University of New Brunswick (1944). See Innis, "Universities and Their Problems." Graduation Address, University of New Brunswick, 1944. <http://www.lib.unb.ca/archives/HonoraryDegrees/results.php?action=browse&name=I&startswith=1> (accessed October 6, 2014).

26. Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 69.

27. Innis, "The Role of Intelligence: Some Further Thoughts," 283.

28. Innis, "Preface," *Changing Concepts of Time*, xxvi.

29. *Ibid.*, xxvi.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 86; emphasis added.

32. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 95–96.

33. Innis, "A Critical Review," 195.

34. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 138.

35. Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 71.

36. Innis, "The Newspaper in Economic Development," 31.

37. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 143.

38. Innis, "The Intellectual in History," 450.

39. Innis, "The Church in Canada," 387. Likely the most sustained demonstration of his dry, bitter, and mischievous wit is "Discussion in the Social Sciences" (1936; reprint, "The Intellectual in History," in Drache, ed., *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change*, 446–58).

40. Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 70.

41. Innis, "The University in the Modern Crisis," 76.

42. J. F. C. Fuller, *Armament and History* (1946).

43. Innis, "The Military Implications of the American Constitution," 38. All of Innis's statements here are quotations from Fuller, *Armament and History*.

44. *Ibid.*, 38.

45. Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 27.

46. Innis, "Industrialism and Cultural Values," 139.

47. Innis, "Adult Education and Universities" (1947, extracted in *the Bias of Communication*, 205–206).

48. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 83.

49. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 100.
50. Innis, "Adult Education and Universities," 206.
51. Innis, "A Critical Review," 193.
52. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 138; and "A Critical Review," 191.
53. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 86.
54. Innis, "Industrialism and Cultural Values," 139.
55. Innis, *Innis on Russia*, 63.
56. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, vii.

SIX

Media and Public Opinion

FORCE AND OPINION

By extending Francis Bacon's notion of *power* from merely control over nature to control of other people, types of knowledge rejected by Bacon as ineffectual—rhetoric, superstition, authoritative claims in the absence of testing, deduction in the absence of induction, etc.—again come to the fore. In this regard, Innis quoted David Hume (1711–1776):

As *force* is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but *opinion*. It is, therefore, on opinion that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and the most military governments as well as to the most free and most popular.¹

Control of opinion by the governors, Hume claimed, is required in order for the governors to retain power. By controlling *opinion*, governors render *force* quiescent—force being (Hume proposed) always on the side of the governed on account of their superior numbers.

Although Innis agreed with Hume that popular opinion is normally sought out by the governors, he disagreed fundamentally with Hume's initial proposition, namely that power (even latently) resides with the governed. Innis wrote, "The relation of *monopolies of knowledge* to *organized force* is evident in the political and military histories of civilization."² Note Innis's subtle changes in terminology: *organized force*, not just *force*; *monopolies of knowledge* instead of *opinion*. Whereas Hume claimed that "force" resides with the governed, Innis insisted that "organized force"—the military, the police, the courts, and other coercive institutions, whose power stems at least partly from weaponry (i.e., applications of Bacon's "science"), trumps mere "force." A further implication of Innis's gloss on Hume is that "organized force" normally possesses a

“monopoly of knowledge,” which is to say organized force normally controls opinion.³

Innis disagreed with Hume in a second way, too. According to Innis, *democratic* opinion is unstable, superficial, and demands continual excitement and sensation;⁴ newspapers increase their circulations, for example, not just by covering wars, but also by pressuring governments to engage in them! Once democratic (popular) opinion supplants the cool, thoughtful, detached opinion of the educated middle classes, according to Innis, organized force will inevitably be required to restore order. In the twentieth century, he wrote,

We have been unable to find a solution to the problem of law and order, and have resorted to force rather than persuasion, bullets rather than ballots. “I know only two ways in which society can be governed—by public opinion and by the sword,” wrote Macaulay. But Crocker, representing the Conservative position, claimed that we govern by the law saving us from extremes of government by public opinion or by the sword.⁵

For Innis, organized force (i.e., the “sword”) and democratic opinion, are antithetical, extreme modes of governance; both, therefore, in his view, are dangerous. However, in his view, governance by democratic public opinion is not merely inept; it inevitably induces its opposite, authoritarianism/organized force—in part on account of its ineptitude and its demands for sensation. (Other reasons proposed by Innis for deeming democracy frail were reviewed in chapter 4). Far better, in Innis’s view, than either of those extremes is governance by moderate (middle and upper class) opinion accompanied by the rule of law. But, he claimed, with the rise of mass media and democratic politics, middle and upper class opinion had lost its potency.

Interestingly, Noam Chomsky, too, quoted the aforementioned passage from David Hume. In chapter 12 we will have occasion to revisit Innis’s gloss on Hume within the context of Chomsky’s interpretation.

PERSUASION, FIRST AMENDMENT, AND THE “FREE PRESS”⁶

Innis maintained that once science had enfeebled the Church and other time-binding monopolies, the state (and corporations) became “more dependent on *cultural* development.”⁷ Whereas time-binding monopolies had once provided an “anchorage” (beliefs, values, goals, meanings) for individuals and for society, after their power waned substitute means were needed (in the view of the governors) to control what Edward Bernays referred to as the “organized habits and opinions of the masses.”⁸ It is in the area, then, of “cultural development” in the age of science and advanced weaponry that Innis’s analyses of the press, radio, film, advertising, and popular culture become so poignant.

In this section, I sketch out briefly certain aspects of Innis's detailed account of technological changes regarding press systems, and how these changes impacted upon the structuring and restructuring of political-economic-cultural power. Three important developments in the history of press systems were: changes in the supply of newsprint, the application of the telegraph to press systems, and increased speed of printing presses. In combination, these changes induced a revolution in the production and distribution of news, giving rise (in Innis's view) to a new monopoly of knowledge as cemented in the United States by the Bill of Rights.

In 1791, Congress amended the U.S. Constitution by enacting the Bill of Rights. The first of the amendments stated, in part, that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." For many, this provision confirmed in law a basic democratic freedom, and indeed the U.S. is often (justifiably) cited as being one of the few countries constitutionally limiting *prior restraint*.⁹ Innis, though, saw things differently, insisting adamantly that the First Amendment *narrowed* the marketplace of ideas. He made this claim many times:

Freedom of the press has made freedom of speech impossible.¹⁰

In the United States [a] monopoly [was] accorded the press by the Bill of Rights.¹¹

Freedom of the press had been an essential ingredient of the monopoly for it obscured monopolistic characteristics.¹²

More examples are provided in footnotes.¹³

Innis provided several justifications for these unsettling propositions:

First, after the enactment of the First Amendment, the press remained (for a time) staunchly under political control due to patronage. By reinforcing freedom of the press, therefore, the dominant political interests did not reduce and may even have extended their own freedom/power. Thomas Jefferson, for example, recognizing the potential of the newspaper as "an element of strategy,"¹⁴ not only encouraged inauguration of the *National Gazette* (October 21, 1791), but also, through grants of monopoly over congressional news and a "generous share of public printing," persuaded the *National Intelligencer* to move from Philadelphia to Washington. Another president who courted a favorable press through reciprocity was Andrew Jackson; in the 1820s, according to Innis, four of his five cabinet members were "experienced journalists."¹⁵ There were other levers of patronage, too.¹⁶

Second, by the 1830s, increases in supplies of wood pulp dramatically reduced the price of newsprint¹⁷ which, accompanied by technological advances in printing, gave rise to "a new type of paper," namely the

penny press.¹⁸ As newspapers increased their circulation, so did the political clout of publishers increase. Rather than being dominated by political interests as had been the case in Jefferson's day, newspaper proprietors affected directly public policy. For example, newspaper interests successfully campaigned to lower tariffs on newsprint and scuttled plans by the International Paper Company to acquire newspapers to secure a captive market.¹⁹ Even more significantly, in Innis's view, newspaper owners were important factors regarding decisions on such basic matters of state policy as war and peace: "Wars created a demand for extra editions. . . . The Franco-Prussian War gave the evening paper an established position in England. . . . To Mr. Hearst was attributed the telegram to Remington, "You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war."²⁰ On another occasion Innis declared, "Every conceivable device to increase circulation was pressed into service, notably in the newspaper war between Pulitzer and Hearst in the late nineties in New York City, including sensational headlines, the comics, and the Spanish American War."²¹ And again, more briefly: "In a literal sense, wars are created, as crime waves are created, by the newspaper."²² (Incidentally, several contemporary scholars affirm Innis's general claim, maintaining that newspapers were instrumental in bringing about World War I.)²³

Third, in seeking larger circulation, publishers narrowed the range of material—effectively *reducing* the marketplace of ideas. They made "appeals to lower levels of literacy,"²⁴ with tactics that included intensive coverage of wars, state funerals, murders, public pageants, ceremonies, and sporting events; also, comics, photos, features, and "a prevailing interest in orgies and excitement."²⁵ Whereas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, newspapers had contributed to political reform by publicizing abuses "which concerned those capable of reading or those capable of subscribing to the papers,"²⁶ in the twentieth century as literacy became more widespread, newspapers debased their content to attain larger readership: "intelligence" waned, sensationalist and present-minded fluff increased, as dictated by the economics of publishing.

Fourth, advertisers came to exert a great deal of influence over what was considered newsworthy. Citing George Seldes, Innis remarked that "the real publishers are the advertisers since their financial support of a publication is in most cases all that keeps it alive."²⁷ Intent on accommodating the interests of advertisers, publishers provided "a constant emphasis on prosperity"²⁸—as opposed to, say, focusing on the plight of the poor. Innis noted also that advertising came to dominate the content of newspapers: in St. Louis between 1875 and 1925, newspapers reduced space allocated to news from 55.3 to 26.7 percent, with a concomitant increase in the space devoted to advertising.²⁹ For Innis, news for the "cheap papers" became little more than "a device for advertising the paper as an advertising medium."³⁰ Dependence on advertising, more-

over, meant that muckraking in the financial field was no longer deemed fit to print.

Fifth, the application of the telegraph to journalism virtually forced newspapers (pursuing economies of scale) "to pool their efforts in collecting and transmitting news,³¹ leading in 1848 to the organization of what soon became the Associated Press,"³² a concentrated news gathering/distribution system that helped redefine the very notion of news. In addition, advertisers encouraged newspaper amalgamations as a way to avoid duplication.³³

Sixth, beginning with Ivy Lee, PR professionals became adept at "disguising advertising material and planting it in unexpected places to be picked up as news."³⁴ Innis remarked caustically: "Slanting the news which has followed the growth of advertising and the use of press agents and publicity men has enabled government departments to maintain representatives to inform the press."³⁵

Seventh, publishing went some distance in supplanting empathetic, dialogic conversation with what Innis termed the "cruelty of mechanized communication."³⁶ Innis declared:

The Western community was atomized by the pulverizing effects of the application of machine industry to communication.³⁷

Improvements in communication tend to divide mankind.³⁸

The oral discussion inherently involves personal contact and a consideration for the feeling of others, and it is in sharp contrast with the cruelty of mechanized communication and the tendencies which we have come to note in the modern world.³⁹

Eighth, newspapers fostered "a narrowing of the range from which material is distributed and a widening of the range of reception, so that large numbers receive, but are unable to make any direct response."⁴⁰ The right to freedom of speech specified in the Bill of Rights, as interpreted by the courts, did not include a right of citizens to diffuse messages through media owned by corporations. Freedom to publish therefore, is a right possessed by owners of the press and that right subsumes a power to exclude viewpoints and spokespersons with whom they disagree.⁴¹

Finally, and most importantly in Innis's view, empowered by the Bill of Rights the press strengthened knowledge in the service of space, to the preclusion of time. The result was a strengthening in the *monopoly of knowledge* that Innis named, "present-mindedness":

[Quoting Lockhart] Nothing is less permanent than journalism.⁴²

The influence of mechanization on the printing industry had been evident in the increasing importance of the ephemeral. Superficiality became essential to meet the various demands of larger numbers of peo-

ple and was developed as an art by those compelled to meet the demands . . . With these powerful developments time was destroyed and it became increasingly difficult to achieve continuity or ask for a consideration of the future.⁴³

The overwhelming pressure of mechanization evident in the newspaper and the magazine has led to the creation of vast monopolies of knowledge of communication. Their entrenched positions involve a continuous, systematic, ruthless destruction of elements of permanence essential to cultural activity. The emphasis on change is the only permanent characteristic.⁴⁴

In the United States the dominance of the newspaper led to large-scale development of monopolies of communication in terms of space and implied a neglect of problems of time.⁴⁵

Innis summarized: "Freedom of the press as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights in the United States [became] the great bulwark of monopolies."⁴⁶ Press systems, governments, business corporations, and the military, all shared an interest in reducing the concerns of time as duration or continuity, and enlarging preoccupations with space, and in that sense all were complicit.

For 2014, Reporters Without Borders ranked the United States as 46th in a listing of 180 countries in its "World Press Freedom Index"—just below Romania and just above Haiti. (Canada was placed 18th, below Jamaica and above Poland.⁴⁷

RADIO AND CINEMA

Innis did not pay nearly as much attention to radio or the cinema as he did to the press. Nonetheless, his insights are worth recounting. Essentially, he proposed that radio increased present-mindedness, defied political boundaries, facilitated demagoguery, appealed even to the illiterate, and impacted upon the press making it even more present-minded than hitherto:

Radio . . . has done more than its share to debase our intellectual standards. The demands of the new media were imposed on the older media, the newspaper and the book. With these powerful developments time was destroyed and it became increasingly difficult to achieve continuity or to ask for a consideration of the future.⁴⁸

Radio capitalized the development of the headline, reduced the importance of the extras edition, and provided interpretation and background. It could reach lower levels of intelligence and literacy and could capitalize on the advances made by advertising in other media.⁴⁹

A single individual could appeal at one time to vast numbers of people speaking the same language and indirectly, though with less effect, through interpreters to numbers speaking other languages.⁵⁰

Political leaders were able to appeal directly to constituents and to build up a pressure of public opinion on legislatures. . . . President F. D. Roosevelt exploited the radio as Theodore Roosevelt had exploited the press.⁵¹

The rise of Hitler was facilitated by the use of the loud speaker and the radio. By the spoken language he could appeal to minority groups and to minority nations. Germans in Czechoslovakia could be reached by radio as could Germans in Austria. Political boundaries related to the demands of the printing industry disappeared with the new instrument of communication. The spoken language provided a new base for the exploitation of nationalism and a far more effective device for appealing to larger numbers. Illiteracy was no longer a serious barrier.⁵²

Meanwhile, film, combining sound with moving photography, propagated powerful and convincing illusions, helped propagandists construct what Lippmann called "pseudo-environments":

In Germany moving pictures of battles were taken and shown in theatres almost immediately afterwards. The German people were given an impression of realism which compelled them to believe in the superiority of German arms; realism became not only most convincing but also with the collapse of the German front most disastrous. In some sense the problem of the German people is the problem of Western civilization.⁵³

At precisely this point, Innis penned one of his most ironic—and profound—maxims: "As modern developments in communication have made for greater realism they have made for greater possibilities of delusion."⁵⁴

PUBLIC OPINION, DEMOCRACY, AND TOTALITARIANISM

In an address to members of the Canadian National Newspapers and Periodical Association in 1943, Innis expressed a belief in the possibility and desirability of democracy. He urged: "There is real need in a democracy for the means of machinery whereby there will be some sort of effective registering of public opinion."⁵⁵

That pronouncement, however, is definitely an exception. More commonly, Innis condemned the notion of democracy per se—and the press for contributing to it. Citing Guizot, Innis wrote of "the great evil of democracy."⁵⁶ Citing Lord Acton, Innis declared that the Athenian experience showed that "government by the whole people, being govern-

ment by the most numerous and powerful class is an evil of the same nature as unmixed monarchy;"⁵⁷ according to Acton, moreover, stable institutions must counter "arbitrary revolutions of opinion."⁵⁸

Commercial media, Innis maintained, had been a powerful force promoting democracy in the sense that they catered to the lower and largest class—by charging low prices, providing sensationalized news, and presenting other present-minded fluff. Prior to the popular (penny) presses, Innis asserted, public affairs had largely bypassed the "lower levels of literacy." By the twentieth century, however, those "lower literacy levels" had become an important component of "public opinion": they had attained the right to vote; they formed opinions through their exposures to mass media; and politicians necessarily needed to take those opinions into account. As Innis put it, "Public opinion as a reflection of the middle classes became less important, and popular clamour made rapid headway."⁵⁹ In *Changing Concepts of Time*, Innis quoted David Hume (again): "Nothing, indeed, can be a stronger presumption of falsehood than the approbation of the multitude."⁶⁰ He then quoted G. C. Lewis: "The concurrence of the crowd is a proof of the worst side." And then George Sand: "There is nothing so undemocratic as the mass of the people."⁶¹ Innis's stratagem, as noted previously, was often to quote notable authorities when raising controversial points, rather than expressing the opinions directly.

Innis's essay, "Discussion in the Social Sciences" (1936), too, is largely anti-democratic. There, however, his favored device to make palatable vexatious points was humor. That article is full of barbs, mischievous denunciations, and ironies followed by quips and paradoxes. Rhetorically, Innis asked: "What is the hope of democracy?" His response: "What democracy?" He continued that it was important to sustain the *illusion* of democracy, however, as the illusion is much less dangerous than the real thing! When democracy is but an illusion, he explained, "experts" have greater opportunity to formulate policy:

To an increasing extent it has become more dangerous to trust democracy to think out solutions to complex problems, and more necessary to rely on skill and intelligence. The complexity of economic life necessitates constant attention to detail such as only the civil servant can be expected to provide. . . . [Democratic] discussion has become a menace rather than a solvent to the problems of a complex society. Freedom of discussion [however] is of first importance as a means of preventing something worse. So long as attention is focused on circuses, on writing letters to the editor, or attending political meetings, or demanding a scapegoat, and getting one, provided it is not too costly, the civil servant and the social scientist have a chance of getting on with the problems.⁶²

What can we make of this? The foregoing is seemingly the complete antithesis to Innis's manifold denunciations of experts, economists, quan-

titative methods, specialization, autocratic rule, and so forth. It even identifies freedom of speech (including oral exchanges!) as an important component of the “sham” of freedom and democracy! The essay manifests Innis at his most conservative, most politically incorrect moment.

However, the foregoing ought to be interpreted within, and counter-balanced by, the broader context of Innis’s thought. *First*, if democracy is a sham, all the oral dialogue in the world will not likely transform it into something authentic; in fact, that same freedom of speech (as Innis remarked) can be instrumental in perpetuating democratic illusions: much talk, little action—especially when the “talk” is guided by elites and their minions in the media, or as Chomsky would put it, the discussion is allowed or encouraged to take place only within well-defined boundaries. *Second*, the very same Innis who wrote the afore-cited remarks also proposed that power is by its very nature evil, that experts are too narrowly focused and are prone to sell their skills to the highest bidder.

Innis certainly distrusted popular opinion and democracy. But, as developed at further length in the next section, he distrusted concentrated power and autocracy at least as much—likely more. In fact, Innis distrusted all happy solutions, all final answers. Life to him was a constant struggle to maintain balance or preserve the tension between or among extremes that on their own are inadequate or undesirable.⁶³ We are stuck *in media res*. It was the same Innis, moreover, who remarked: “To paraphrase Hilaire Belloc we must say of democracy, ‘Always keep a hold of nurse/ For fear of finding something worse.’”⁶⁴

“SOLUTION” TO THE EVIL OF POWER

There are dichotomous views of “democracy.” The classical or literal conception as expounded by writers like J. J. Rousseau and John Dewey, is that political leaders are to be responsive to the desires of the general public. In this conception, leaders seek out public opinion and act in accordance with public opinion.

A second and opposing view, which ought really to be called *pseudo-democracy*, is that elites manipulate opinion to ensure it corresponds to what the leaders want in the first place. Writers *advocating* pseudo-democracy have included Walter Lippmann and Edward Bernays.

What Innis actually championed is more nuanced and complex, and requires elaboration. He agreed with the proponents of *pseudo-democracy* (and with David Hume, for that matter) that political-economic power normally tries to control opinion. He declared, “Public opinion follows [organized] force”;⁶⁵ and again: “Advertising and mass propaganda masquerading as education compels the consent of the governed.”⁶⁶ However, Innis usually did not see this as being at all benign or desirable. Normally, he was repulsed by this state of affairs. Innis distrusted organized

force and concentrated power of all sorts. Economist Harry Johnson, who studied under Innis, termed him an “anarchist,”⁶⁷ a labeling not totally inapt, as amply attested to by the following declarations:

A friend in power is a friend lost.⁶⁸

A decline in morality has followed war and the growth of hierarchies in church, state and private enterprise. Power is poison.⁶⁹

Power is of its nature evil, whoever wields it.⁷⁰

The supreme and paramount principle of every corporation that has ever existed, whether spiritual or temporal, is to maintain power. Lord Acton summarized the view in his memorable sentence: “All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”⁷¹

Power is regarded as an end rather than as a means.⁷²

The principle that authority is taken, never given, begins to emerge.⁷³

The church, the army and the police, industry, and possibly the drink trade have been powerful forces affecting fanaticism.⁷⁴

Power and its assistant, force, [are] the natural enemies of intelligence.⁷⁵

Power, once constituted, has a tendency to perpetuate itself.⁷⁶

Power tends to expand indefinitely and will transcend all barriers abroad and at home until met by superior forces.⁷⁷

[Citing Wordsworth, 1817] There is, in fact, an unconquerable tendency in all power, save that of knowledge, acting by and through knowledge, to injure the mind of him by whom that power is exercised.⁷⁸

Distrusting administrators and oligarchs on the one hand, and public opinion/democracy on the other, Innis turned, forlornly perhaps, to the honest scholar and the universities as founts of wisdom and disinterested intelligence in the midst of perplexity. But here, too, he sounded alarms, warning not just of a possible “tyranny of opinion,” but also of a tyranny “of *learning*”!⁷⁹ Innis even declared that the social sciences had become “the opiate of the people,”⁸⁰ so naively trusting in technical solutions had the general public become.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Innis has been characterized as being incapacitated by doubt. Carl Berger even suggested that F. R. Scott's poem, "To Certain Friends," may have been directed at Innis.⁸¹ In making that suggestion, though, Berger was surely unfair. Scott wrote of doubt and indecision based on fear: *fear* of forming an opinion; *fear* of having a clear perception of which direction to go; *fear* of leaving "the shade of the middle ground" to walk "in the open air" to parts unknown.⁸²

If anything, throughout his career, Innis surely and admirably manifested *courage*.⁸³ He was a dissenter through and through. He forsook the mainstream. Most definitely he was never one to bask in "the shade of the middle ground." No one attacks *both* democracy and elite power, as Innis did, out of fear. All his life, Innis ventured out, to explore new places, usually alone, "in the open air," and did so irrespective of the personal consequences that might ensue. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Innis, surely indecision on account of fear is not a factor.

In 1951, a year or so before his death, Harold Innis added the following quote from Robert Louis Stevenson to his *Idea File*: "If a man love the labour of any trade, apart from any question of success or fame, the gods have called him."⁸⁴ Most fittingly, Michael Gordon Luski, from whose thesis I have gratefully extracted this citation, added: "By this judgment, Innis had been doubly blessed."⁸⁵

Innis's "solutions" to the problem of power and governance, then? *First*, diffusion. He wrote: "Fortunately we are sufficiently divided in regions, races and religion to resist . . . demands for centralization."⁸⁶ *Second*, independent, skeptical scholarship, to assess the inadequacies of all extremes, provide a sense of balance and proportion, but *not* to proclaim final solutions. *Third*, reinvigorated oral dialectic, whereby opposing views are considered and policies are debated and formulated to help us muddle through, and whereby a sense of time can countervail the pervasive pressures of space.

Solutions? Hardly! But these recommendations do conform to Innis's fundamental principles that (a) there *are* no final solutions, only better and worse responses to looming crises, (b) we should strive to maintain the tensions, to live in the balance—*in media res*, and (c) always consider the past for guidance and the future for long term consequences.

In the chapters to come, Innis's writings on media and communication will be further clarified and tested through comparisons with the media writings of Wilbur Schramm and Noam Chomsky. Schramm and Chomsky illuminate Innis in remarkably different ways: Schramm by being Innis's nemesis and antithesis, and in another sense his "proof"; Chomsky through profound similarities and differences. Chomsky represents optimistic socialist anarchism as compared to Innis's anarchic pessimism. Innis and Chomsky are remarkably agreed, however, as regards their

understandings of our contemporary plight and our contemporary illusions.

NOTES

1. David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (1742), quoted in Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 4.

2. *Ibid.*, 4; emphasis added.

3. Elsewhere Innis declared: "Ultimate power rests in the hands of the army." And again: "Armed force based on the effective linkage between economic power and political power becomes supreme." See Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xii, xiii. Innis declared also that the "monopoly of knowledge incidental to specialized skill in writing which weakens contact with the vernacular will eventually be broken down by force" but that "reading in contrast with writing implies a passive recognition of the power of writing." Innis, "Minerva's Owl," 4.

4. Hence Innis wrote, citing Guizot, "of the great evil of democracy [as] 'it readily sacrifices the past and the future to what is supposed to be the interest of the present,' and the evil was accentuated by the reign of the newspaper and its obsession with the immediate." It was at that point that Innis added, "But to paraphrase Hilaire Belloc we might say of democracy, 'Always keep a hold of nurse/ For fear of finding something worse.'" Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 95.

5. *Ibid.*, 94.

6. This section draws on Babe, "Harold Innis and the Paradox of Press Freedom," *Fifth-Estate On-Line*, May 2007 <http://www.fifth-estate-online.co.uk/criticism/haroldinnisandtheparadox.html>

7. Innis, "The Problem of Space," 130.

8. Edward Bernays, *Propaganda*, 9.

9. *The Guardian* in England partnered with the *New York Times* for that very reason after it attained files leaked to it by Edward Snowden. According to *The Guardian*: "Journalists in America are protected by the first amendment which guarantees free speech and in practice prevents the state seeking pre-publication injunctions or 'prior restraint.'" Lisa O'Carroll, "Guardian Partners with *New York Times* Over Snowden GCHQ Files," *The Guardian*, 23 August 2013. In fact, "under the watchful gaze" of GCHQ, the British government's spy agency, *The Guardian* destroyed several computers containing leaked files; "The *Guardian* took the decision after the government explicitly threatened the paper with an injunction" and indeed threatened to close the paper down. Luke Harding, "Footage Released of Guardian Editors Destroying Snowden Hard Drives." January 31, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jan/31/footage-released-guardian-editors-snowden-hard-drives-gchq> (accessed July 19 2014)

10. Innis, "The Newspaper in Economic Development," 2.

11. *Ibid.*, 16.

12. Innis, "Technology and Public Opinion in the United States," 187

13. "Freedom of the press as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights in the United States has become the great bulwark of monopolies of time [in the sense of present-mindedness]. . . . Advertisers build up monopolies of time to an important extent through the use of news" ("The Press, A Neglected Factor in Economic History," 95, 94); "Freedom of the press under the Bill of Rights accentuated the printed tradition, destroyed freedom of speech, and broke the relations with the oral tradition of Europe" ("Great Britain, the United States, and Canada," in *Changing Concepts of Time*, 120); "The guarantee of freedom of the press under the Bill of Rights in the United States . . . has meant an unrestricted cooperation of commercial forces and an impact of technology on communication tempered only by commercialism itself" (*Ibid.*, 11).

14. Innis, "Technology and Public Opinion in the United States," 157.

15. *Ibid.*, 163.
16. *Ibid.*, 163–64.
17. *Ibid.*, 161.
18. *Ibid.*, 160.
19. Innis, “The Press, A Neglected Factor in Economic History,” 77.
20. Innis, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” 21.
21. Innis, “The Strategy of Culture,” 5.
22. Innis, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” 22.
23. Recently Mel Watkins has supported Innis in this regard, citing recent scholarship by Christopher Clark (*The Sleepwalkers*) and Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities* and *The Age of Globalization*). See Watkins, “How Globalization Caused the First World War” (August 7, 2014). *Rabble.ca*. <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/mel-watkins/2014/08/how-globalization-caused-first-world-war> (accessed November 21, 2014).
24. *Ibid.*, 21.
25. *Ibid.*, 21; also, “A Plea for Time,” 77–78.
26. Innis, “The Intellectual as Citizen,” 448.
27. Innis, “The Press, A Neglected Factor in Economic History,” 78.
28. Innis, “Technology and Public Opinion in the United States,” 187. Innis quoted Greely: “Remember that ... the tax-payers take many more papers than the tax-consumers,” adding that Greely therefore advised “a policy of opposition to taxes” (p. 185).
29. Innis, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” 27.
30. Innis, “Technology and Public Opinion in the United States,” 162.
31. *Ibid.*, 168.
32. *Ibid.*, 178.
33. Innis, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” 29.
34. Innis, “The Press, A Neglected Factor in Economic History,” 83.
35. Innis, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” 31.
36. Innis, “A Critical Review,” 191.
37. Innis, “A Plea for Time,” 79.
38. Innis, “The Press, A Neglected Factor in Economic History,” 95.
39. Innis, “A Critical Review,” 191.
40. Innis, “The Press, A Neglected Factor in Economic History,” 89.
41. Innis, “A Plea for Time,” 89.
42. Innis, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” 30.
43. Innis, “A Plea for Time,” 82–83.
44. Innis, “The Strategy of Culture,” 10–11.
45. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, 170.
46. Innis, “The Press, a Neglected Factor in Economic History,” 95.
47. Reporters Without Borders, “World Press Freedom Index 2014.” <http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php> (accessed December 5, 2014).
48. Innis, “A Plea for Time,” 82–83; quote is from Ilka Chase, *Past Imperfect* (1942).
49. Innis, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” 30.
50. Innis, “A Plea for Time,” 82.
51. *Ibid.*, 81.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*, 81–82.
54. *Ibid.*, 82.
55. Innis, “The Crisis of Public Opinion.” Address to the 24th Annual Luncheon, Canadian National Newspapers and Periodicals Association, Toronto, ON, May 12, 1943. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31, no. 2 (2006): 314.
56. Innis, “On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors,” 95.
57. Innis, “Political Economy in the Modern State,” 103.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Innis, “An Economic Approach to English Literature,” 55.
60. Quoted in Innis, “The Press, a Neglected Factor in Economic History,” 91.
61. *Ibid.*, 91.

62. Innis, "The Intellectual in History," 453.
63. With humor, irony, yet totally seriousness, Innis announced, for instance: "Lack of unity . . . has preserved Canadian unity." He added, "the necessity of continuous compromise in the interests of religion, regionalism, and race explains the paucity of political thinking and the importance of pretence in mediocrity to political leaders." Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 133.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xiv.
66. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 143.
67. Neill, *A New Theory of Value*, 10, n. 2.
68. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xiii.
69. *Ibid.*, xiii.
70. Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 70; the quote is from Jacob Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom* (1943).
71. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 135.
72. *Ibid.*, 136.
73. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 98.
74. *Ibid.*, 96.
75. Innis, "Preface," *Changing Concepts of Time*, xxvi.
76. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 136. The quote is from *Essays by the Late Mark Pattison*, vol. 2, 427.
77. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 135. The quote is from Lord Acton, *History of Freedom* (1906).
78. *Ibid.*, 135.
79. *Ibid.*, 120.
80. Innis, "A Note on the Universities and the Social Sciences," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 1, no. 2 (May 1935), 286.
81. Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 111.
82. F. R. Scott, "To Certain Friends." *Poetry Magazine*, November 1941: 88–89. The poem is available at: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse/59/2#!/20582789> (accessed October 30, 2014).
83. In a submission of 1940 to the President and Board of Governors of the University of Toronto (defending Frank Underhill, like Innis a veteran of World War I), Innis wrote: "Any returned man who has faced the continual dangers of modern warfare has a point of view fundamentally different from anyone who has not. Again and again we have told ourselves, nothing can hurt us after this. Courage in the face of criticism of friend or foe means nothing to anyone requiring the courage to face imminent physical danger and death . . ." Innis, "Presentation to the President and Board of Governors." Quoted in Watson, *Marginal Man*, 230.
84. Innis, *The Idea File of Harold Innis*, edited by William Christian (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), section 17, number 34, 150.
85. Michael Gordon Luski, *Harold Adams Innis: The Bias of History*. M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Alberta, 1998, 121.
86. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xii.

II

Wilbur Schramm Meets Innis

A PREFATORY NOTE

Separating the scholarship of Schramm and Innis were first, Schramm's patriotism vs. Innis's critical and antipathetic stance toward any and all empires and power, and second, Schramm's favoring Greek sophists over Plato and Socrates compared to Innis's deep admiration of the latter.

These differences would be much less consequential were it not for the facts that Schramm and Innis were founders of media studies in the U.S. and Canada, respectively, and established radically different scholarly trajectories for the two countries. Why such palpably different approaches to what became mainstays in the inaugural years of media studies is a topic for speculation and exploration in these three chapters.

An Appendix accompanies chapter 7, detailing the development of American communication theory.

SEVEN

Beginnings

INNIS, SCHRAMM, AND MEDIA STUDIES

It is unlikely that Wilbur Schramm ever actually met Harold Innis. Schramm had been engaged in “communication study” at the university for only a few years when Innis died, and in any event, Innis’s scholarly reputation to that point rested almost entirely on his staples thesis and other essays in economics. At the very least, Innis would hardly qualify in Schramm’s eyes as being a “communication study” researcher, as Schramm delimited that field to quantitative, empirical, experimental, social scientific approaches to detecting and measuring *media effects*. With time, of course, Schramm familiarized himself with at least some of Innis’s work, which he occasionally cited.

Innis’s references to Schramm, likewise, are scant. In 1949, however, he did review three books for *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, one being *Communications in Modern Society*, edited by Schramm (1948), and a second *Communications Research 1948–1949*, edited by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton (1949). It was only in turning to the third volume, however, that Innis revealed (albeit briefly and casually) his displeasure with the first two, writing: “It is a relief to turn from these volumes of collections of papers to the third volume under review,”¹ namely the *Report* by the British Royal Commission on the Press (1947-1949). Innis then added, somewhat cryptically (even for those acquainted with his broader political-economic approach to media studies): “The [three] volumes under review throw a flood of light on the problems of a society hamstrung by a written constitution and a society in which parliament is supreme.”²

To my knowledge, Innis and Schramm have not previously been compared, their foundational status in their respective countries notwith-

standing. As we will see, although they addressed many topics in common, they took radically different approaches to their subject matters, thereby setting dichotomous and antithetical trajectories for media research for years to come. They exemplify and helped initiate the profound differences between mainstream American and Canadian communication thought that I have described elsewhere.³

SCHOLARLY FORMATION AND CAREER

With Timothy Glander, we might well ask, “Who was this man,” Wilbur Schramm, who published short stories in *The Atlantic Monthly* and won a national literary award for fiction, who was a semi-pro baseball athlete, and who played the flute (for the Boston Pops and/or the Boston Symphony),⁴ who piloted an airplane, and was a sought-after teacher and lecturer despite a speech impediment?⁵

Schramm was born in 1907 to middle-class parents in Marietta, Ohio. He received his BA from Marietta College in 1928, a MA in American literature from Harvard in 1930, and his PhD in English from the University of Iowa in 1932. He joined the English faculty at Iowa in 1934 as an assistant professor and by 1941 was a full professor.⁶ At Iowa, Schramm founded and was the first director of the Writers’ Workshop, established to foster creative writing and equip writers of fiction.

Thoroughly acquainted with the rhetorical-humanist tradition,⁷ Schramm likened the essential task of the creative writer to that of an advertiser—namely, producing an intended effect on the audience.⁸ That slant prefigured both the *communication effects* research Schramm promoted years later and his own activities as a scholar-cum-propagandist during and after World War II.

According to Glander, one factor inducing Schramm to move to Iowa from Harvard for graduate studies had been the presence at Iowa of a renowned speech therapy program. Schramm wanted to overcome his stutter.⁹

Everett Rogers attributed Schramm’s initial interest in empirical, quantitative, experimental approaches for communication study to the speech therapy he received at Iowa. In fact, Schramm spent two years as a postdoctoral student in Iowa’s psychology department where he became immersed in quantitative, experimental research methods.¹⁰ From the University of Iowa, therefore, Schramm brought to the emerging field of communication study knowledge of *both* rhetorical techniques for crafting persuasive messages *and* experimental, quantitative methods for assessing/measuring their effectiveness.

On December 15, 1941—just eight days after the attack on Pearl Harbor—Schramm volunteered his services and those of his university colleagues to Archibald McLeish, then head of the federal government’s

Office of Facts and Figures (OFF). Schramm speculated that “perhaps more than any previous war this is likely to be a war of communication,” and pronounced that at Iowa “we are equipped to furnish a continuous supply of trained men to handle these problems of communication and our laboratories are geared to research ways and means and effectiveness of communication.”¹¹ By year’s end Schramm had joined MacLeish in Washington to assist in wartime propaganda.

Regarding the “ways and means and effectiveness of communication,” Schramm prepared a memorandum for OFF in January 1942, in which he urged that the government treat universities as essential nodes for disseminating persuasive communication:

The educational institutions are an important part of the national mind, a part which accumulates force and potency with the years. . . . The job that is really the purpose of all these [efforts and programs] is bringing the mind of the colleges and universities into closer contact with the mind of which they are a part—the mind of the state.¹²

Schramm insisted that students should be considered key targets for government propaganda. He wrote:

Any salutary direction of the school mind will pay off at compound interest for sixty years. Furthermore, by means of an effective and subtle kind of *re-communication*, the school mind has considerable effect on the minds around it.¹³

Re-communication, as Schramm used the term, is similar to what theorist Jacques Ellul in his classic book, *Propaganda*, termed “horizontal propaganda,” and to what American communication researchers Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz would soon call the “two-step flow”—*except* (and this is a big exception) Lazarsfeld and Katz were trying to *downplay*, even deny, the persuasive power of propaganda whereas Schramm here was highlighting it (see the Appendix to this Chapter).

In fact, Schramm envisaged what he termed “a comprehensive propaganda network aimed at universities and schools”¹⁴ which, he anticipated, could and should persist after the war, “utilizing not only educational broadcasting but also school-based print media.” He called “for the organization of faculty and student groups to both disseminate information and monitor public opinion.”¹⁵

In his capacity as wartime propagandist (he held the title of “Educational Director,” Office of War Information), Schramm not merely theorized on propaganda and advised institutional structures on how to inaugurate and sustain effective propaganda campaigns, but also produced propaganda and assessed its effectiveness: he helped draft radio speeches for President Roosevelt, for instance, including the “fireside chats”; he helped design large scale communication campaigns; and he studied the effectiveness of these campaigns through audience surveys.

Schramm was by no means the only academic to engage in psychological warfare in Washington during the war. According to Christopher Simpson, “virtually all of the scientific community that was to emerge during the 1950s as leaders in the field of mass communication research spent the war years performing applied studies on U.S. and foreign propaganda.”¹⁶ Rogers, too, acknowledged that “World War II . . . created the conditions for the founding of communication study. . . . An invisible college of communication scholars came together in Washington, D.C.”¹⁷

In 1943, the U.S. government bifurcated responsibilities for wartime propaganda: domestic (or “white”) propaganda remained with the now shrunken Office of War Information, but “black” propaganda (propaganda intended for foreign audiences, often using falsified information and hiding the true identity of the sender) was shifted to the Office of Special Services, precursor of the CIA.¹⁸ At that juncture, Schramm returned to the University of Iowa, albeit as Director of the School of Journalism, where he oversaw the inauguration of America’s first doctoral program in mass communication.¹⁹ Schramm also set up a center for audience studies at Iowa.²⁰

After leaving Washington, Schramm continued engaging in wartime propaganda. For instance, he authored a series of short stories for the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. These were, in Glander’s words, “aimed at reaching deep into the United States’ mythic past to create an image of the country that was at once brave, superior, and virtuous.”²¹

In 1947, Schramm moved to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to become inaugural director of the Institute of Communication Research and the world’s first “Professor of Communication,” so-named.²² At its outset, the institute was funded primarily by the U.S. military.²³ If, then, as Rogers suggests, the “conditions for the founding of communication study” in the United States were established in Washington by World War II,²⁴ then “the institutionalization of mass communications research”²⁵ at the universities occurred with the assistance of the deep pockets of the American military during the inaugural years of the Cold War.

However, as Glander points out, “propaganda” was by then an odious term, and media/communication researchers deemed it expedient to use the more neutral-sounding *Mass Communication*, or as Schramm would have it, *Communication Study*, when referring to their line of inquiry. Large-scale contracts for national security-related research were soon awarded to university-based “mass communication” researchers. “Once anchored on university campuses,” Glander remarked, “these communication researchers began to advance and entrench a mainstream research paradigm around communication ‘effects.’”²⁶ The focus on effects might seem perplexing to uninitiated students of the field, given the

lengths to which the same researchers went to publicize the “law of minimum media effects.” That riddle is addressed below.

Rogers noted that in the mid-1940s there were still no communication study textbooks. Schramm quickly rectified that. He organized a three day conference in early 1948 at Illinois, with invited papers by Paul Lazarsfeld, Carl Hovland, Fred Siebert, Leo Lowenthal, Bernard Berelson, and others; Schramm promptly compiled these and published them through the University of Illinois Press (of which he was director). *Communications in Modern Society* (1948)—the very book Innis reviewed—was “in effect the first textbook for the new field.”²⁷ Schramm used the same title for his brief introductory essay.²⁸

Schramm’s introductory essay is noteworthy for several reasons. First, in stark contrast to Innis, Schramm proposed *technological neutrality*: “[Media] are merely servants of men,” he wrote. “Media are neither good nor bad, wasteful nor efficient, except as they are so used. They are neither communistic nor capitalistic. They are equally effective for the dictator and the democrat if those communicators use them equally well. They are potentially whatever we make of them.”²⁹

Second, and consistently with the first point, Schramm maintained that contemporary media are essentially tools for doing *what had always been done* through direct, interpersonal communication—albeit more effectively and efficiently. Prior to industrialization and fast transportation, he noted, communication was largely face-to-face, whereas in the increasingly complex industrialized era individuals *necessarily* utilize media: “Increasingly, individuals have had to depend on intermediaries to inform them, and to inform others for them,”³⁰ he declared. Indeed, Schramm continued, “technical skills have drawn far in front of social skills” and “quick and constant communication, wide and effective information, may . . . be the only way a civilized society can survive.” In sharp contrast to Schramm, Innis was suggesting that unless balanced by oral communication, modern “mechanized” media might actually help bring about the demise of civilization. Innis also opined that mechanized media were instrumental in bringing about two world wars.

Third, in this “Introduction” to America’s first mass communication textbook, Schramm delimited the field to quantitative, social scientific methods: “We are [now] in a better position than ever before to turn the techniques of scientific research to the study of communication problems, and to supply verifiable information in areas where the hunch, the tradition, the theory, and the thumb have ruled.”³¹ The contrast with Innis’s research methods could hardly be greater.

Finally, and consistently with his recommended quantitative, social scientific approach, Schramm forwarded the *transmission model* as the template whereby mediated communication would be investigated: “The classical statement of the communication process,” Schramm declared, “is *A* communicates *B* through channel *C* to *D* with effect *E*.”³² The

book's bibliography lists one hundred works grouped according to the following heads: A. *The Communicator*; B. *The Content*; C. *The Channel*; D. *The Audience*; E. *The Effect*.

The following year (1949) Schramm published a much larger essay collection, *Mass Communication* (also through University of Illinois Press), and in 1954 a third compilation, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*; Chaffee and Rogers reported that this latter volume had origins as an U.S. Information Agency (USIA) training manual. A revised edition was published in 1971. Chaffee and Rogers summarized: "For many students (and future professors) of communication, the Schramm books, especially his 1954 reader, were their introduction to the new field of communication study."³³

In 1950, during the interval between his second and third communication study textbooks, Schramm submitted a proposal to the assistant secretary of state in which he recommended co-opting the Fulbright Fellowship program for purposes of intelligence gathering. Hand-picked Fulbright scholars studying overseas, Schramm suggested, could be commissioned surreptitiously to provide answers to such questions as:

- What are the reading and listening and general leisure time habits of various groups?
- What do different groups tend to trust among media?
- What seems to be the relation among different groups and in different situations, of personal and mediated communication?
- In general, how do these various groups make up their minds? What should the communicator know about the pattern of anxieties, tensions, needs, and wants?³⁴

Shortly after the onset of the Korean War (1950), the U.S. Air Force commissioned Schramm and two others to fly to South Korea "to interview anticommunist refugees and to study U.S. psychological operations."³⁵ Schramm's consultancy likely stemmed from the letter he had sent to the assistant secretary of state volunteering his services and those of his Institute at Illinois to assist in waging war. In his letter, Schramm declared that he had "a deep respect for the effectiveness of Russian propaganda [and a] deep conviction that, no matter how fast we mobilize on the shooting front, we had better mobilize on the propaganda and information front now."³⁶ Resulting from his two months in Korea were, inter alia, the book, *The Reds Take a City: The Communist Occupation of Seoul* (jointly authored with John Riley³⁷), and at least two articles, "Flight From Communism: A Report on Korean Refugees,"³⁸ and "Communication in the Sovietized State, as Demonstrated in Korea" (co-authored with Riley).³⁹

According to the authors of *The Reds Take a City*, there were two dominant elements to North Korea's program to take control of the South: one was "a system of 'thought control'"; the other, "the imposition of a new

political hierarchy."⁴⁰ As a rhetorician versed in the psychology of persuasion, Schramm was particularly qualified to address the first element.

According to Riley and Schramm, "monopoly, reinforcement, and concentration" were the three pillars of "the program of thought control"⁴¹ used by the North Korean government. *Monopoly* meant eliminating so far as possible every non-Communist source of information. *Reinforcement* meant repeating messages through every possible channel. *Concentration* entailed focusing "on a relatively simple line," carefully relating news and other new material to that. The Korean propagandists tried to ensure "that no target was missed, that any given message would be dinned unforgettably into every ear through every channel."⁴²

The authors concluded:

Unfortunately, it can be safely said that the South Koreans learned the main lessons and made the main associations that the Communists intended, because even four months after the occupation, the citizens of Seoul still related the idea clusters and the favorite adjectives. . . . All evidence is to the effect that the propaganda *did* reach the people . . . [and] that three months of sovietizing propaganda in Seoul *did* make considerable progress, from the Communist point of view.⁴³

In 1955, Schramm moved to Stanford University as director of the Institute for Communication Research, where he continued advising the U.S. government on persuasion and psychological warfare; his clients included the War Department, the U.S. Air Force, the State Department, the CIA, the U.S. Army Operations Research Office, the USIA, and the U.S. Department of Defense.⁴⁴ At Stanford, moreover, he began championing the potential of media to foster "economic development." According to Chaffee and Rogers, Schramm became "particularly adept at synthesizing and converting others' findings into useful generalizations."⁴⁵ It would be an understatement, of course, to note that Schramm's publicly expressed position on *communication and development* differed substantially from Innis's stance on *empire and communications*; that contrast is explored in a subsequent chapter.

In 1973, Schramm became director of the East-West Institute for Communication at Honolulu. That institute was funded by the Department of State.⁴⁶ Schramm remained active, in one way or another, until his death in 1987. Indeed, after "retiring" in 1973 from Stanford at age sixty-five, he produced eight more books!

SCHRAMM MEETS INNIS

Schramm and Innis had, in a number of ways, opposite career trajectories. For one thing, Schramm began in the humanities as a professor of English literature with particular expertise in rhetoric and creative writing but later came to champion quantitative, empirical, social science

methods; Innis, trained quantitatively as an economist, embraced humanities-oriented economic history and from there developed a qualitative meta-history of media and civilization. Innis insisted that quantitative analyses are insufficient and should always be supplemented or counter-balanced by qualitative (historical, philosophic) considerations; Innis was more interested in the frameworks within which numbers are generated (especially prices), than with the numbers themselves.⁴⁷

Both Schramm and Innis were university administrators. Schramm inaugurated or solidified three university-based communication research institutes, and a fourth research institute at Hawaii. Innis, in contrast, spent his full career at the University of Toronto, where he served as departmental chair and dean of Graduate Studies. Innis did not organize conferences or edit texts on media/communication as did Schramm (although Innis did edit economics texts⁴⁸). Based on the principle that he who pays the piper calls the tune, Innis distrusted university-based research institutes and commissioned research. He was distressed that university professors were increasingly bending research agendas and findings to suit political-economic power, as opposed to disinterestedly seeking truth and holding governments and businesses to account: "Business men and governments are apt to insist on hearing what they want to hear and read and consequently are provided [by social scientists] with what they want to hear and read."⁴⁹

Both Schramm and Innis traveled abroad to study communism first hand. As noted above, Schramm visited South Korea at the behest of the U.S. military to investigate North Korea's propaganda and to assess the effectiveness of U.S. propaganda; Innis, in stark contrast, visited the Soviet Union at the invitation of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, evidently to pursue his "abiding interest in and concerns regarding the fundamental health of this civilization."⁵⁰ Schramm, of course, saw Soviet and Korean propaganda/governance as evil and totalitarian; he enthusiastically embraced Cold War activism in support of spreading American-style "freedom" and "democracy." Innis, likewise, was critical of authoritarian and propagandistic communist rule; *but*, he was also disdainful of what he saw as "the totalitarianism of the modern ['democratic'] state"⁵¹ — including its penchant for propaganda as manifested particularly in education (including textbooks and scholarship), advertising, news, and public relations. The following extract well summarizes Innis's ambivalence toward both communism and western "democracy":

Western civilization [has] much to learn from Russia and Russia much to learn from western civilization. Danger of each becoming *fanatical* and talking about the merits and demerits of the capitalist system and of the communist system when there is no such thing as a system in either case. System is a fanatical term. Of fundamental importance to the future of civilization [is] that universities take the lead in adopting a neutral position. The search for truth offers common ground to Euro-

pean civilization and the insistence on "truth" as dogma is an invitation to disaster.⁵²

Innis's remarks on education also contrast starkly with Schramm's wartime recommendations (and, arguably, as developed in the next chapter, with Schramm's own postwar scholarly research agenda and publications). Innis quoted approvingly Peter Dunne on education: "It has been said not ineptly of the objectives of universities, 'Whatever ideas may be brought to us from whatever source, we will hear them; if they are false we will explode them; if partly true we will sift them; if wholly true, we will accept them—but always provisionally, always pressing onward and seeking something better.'" Following Locke, Innis added, "To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world and the seed of all other virtues."⁵³

According to Innis, moreover,

The university should . . . produce a philosophical approach which will constantly question assumptions, constantly weaken the overwhelming tendency, reinforced by mechanization, to build up and accept dogma, and constantly attempt to destroy fanaticism.⁵⁴

In contrast to Innis's dialectical cast of mind, Schramm was "Manichean," prone to seeing things in terms of black or white, good versus evil, right versus wrong. Schramm was not one, like Innis, to seek balance or tension, or to recommend countervailing power. Nor did Schramm question, at least not in his publications, whether his activities as an educator-*cum*-propagandist were perhaps inconsistent with the goals of freedom which he publicly professed. Nor did he evidently envisage the university, as did Innis, being the ultimate bastion of human freedom through critical appraisals of *all* orthodoxies. For Schramm, evidently, universities were to be instruments of state propaganda.

Both Schramm and Innis consulted for governments. While Innis consulted in his capacity as a professional economist, he was continuously aware that his training would tend to "bias" or distort his understandings. Hence, he endeavored to be reflexive (even self-effacing) to compensate for this ingrained bias.⁵⁵ Schramm, conversely, consulted government by dint of his expertise in the psychology of persuasion and his certainty that he was on the right side. There is little or no indication that Schramm was reflexive in the manner of Innis. Nor did Schramm question, as did Innis, the efficacy or address the limitations ("bias") of quantitative research methods.⁵⁶

Innis worried that the "communication revolution" then underway was amplifying such *anti*-Enlightenment values, practices, and understandings as irrationalism, rhetoric (persuasion), and force: "The revolution in communication," Innis wrote, "has favoured a return to rhetoric and force."⁵⁷ Schramm was, of course, well versed in rhetoric; moreover, he saw technological advance as the *sine qua non* of human betterment—

particularly advances in the media of communication. Schramm even proposed a bifurcation in the scholarly study of communication between what might be termed a pre-enlightenment dark ages of "folk beliefs"⁵⁸ characterized by "an almost magical belief"⁵⁹ in powerful media effects, *versus* the modern, scientific, enlightened period based on the "scientific" finding of Limited Media Effects.⁶⁰ (See chapter 8 and the Appendix to the present chapter for expansion on these themes.) One irony in all this, as seen in greater detail below, concerns Schramm's wanton use of rhetoric to make a case for what he deemed to be "science" and for the "scientific finding" of limited media effects. In any event, what Schramm deemed enlightened science and technological advance, Innis deemed indicators of an impending new dark age.

Again in contrast to Innis, Schramm was a consummate writer. He was a well-published short story author who maintained that the task of the creative essayist is to induce in readers a sought-after "effect." Innis, to the contrary, was often ambiguous and awkward in his writing. Far from seeing his task as inducing an intended "effect," Innis warned against the authoritarian/totalitarian properties of print and authorship. Innis was worried lest readers be led, step by step, to a writer's premeditated, biased conclusions, and that readers' own critical thought processes would be discouraged by the authoritarian, seemingly all-knowing posture of the author. Innis detested textbooks, which he characterized as powerful instruments for closing students' minds. As Professor William Christian, has suggested, Innis likely adopted his enigmatic writing style as a means of countervailing the authoritarian "biases" of the written form;⁶¹ the intended "effect" Innis wanted to achieve was primarily that readers would think critically, for themselves!

Were Schramm to meet Innis, then, and presuming total candor on both their parts, Schramm would likely upbraid Innis for his lack of grace, clarity, and precision, question his critique of quantitative, experimental methods, and even deem problematic Innis's loyalty to "democracy," capitalism, and the American way of life. Innis, for his part, would likely object to Schramm's clever use of persuasive rhetoric and to his one-sided argumentation, express grave doubts that the U.S. media theorist actually sought after truth at all in light of his military connections and his psychological warfare consultancies, and suggest that far from seeking to improve conditions in "developing" countries, Schramm was a willing instrument for America's space-binding ambitions. In fact, Schramm may well represent the type of scholarship and the fate of universities that Innis feared most, and abhorred.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 7

NOTE ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION STUDY IN AMERICA

To attain a fuller appreciation of Schramm's early contribution to American media/communication studies, a working knowledge of the history, or rather histories, of the study area is useful. There are, to date, at least three distinct historiographies of communication/media studies in the United States. Reviewing these narratives also casts further light on why Innis has been so ignored by American mainstream scholarship, and further elucidates differences between Schramm and Innis in terms of their scholarship and their general reception. The three historiographies addressed in this Appendix may be termed, respectively: (1) The Standard History, (2) James Carey's Revised History, and (3) The *New History*.

(1) THE STANDARD (MANICHEAN) HISTORY

The Standard History comprises two narratives: (1) "From Hypodermic Needle to Limited Effects," and (2) the "Four Founders." Schramm played important roles in publicizing each.

From Hypodermic Needle to Limited Effects

The notion of "Hypodermic Needle" looms large in Schramm's depiction of the history of American media scholarship. The term, evidently, was first used in a 1953 research paper by Elihu Katz for the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR), Columbia University, of which Paul Felix Lazarsfeld was then Director.⁶² In 1954, another report from BASR, *Voting*, used the term again.⁶³ However, Deborah Lubken proposes, it was Katz's subsequent book, *Personal Influence* (co-authored with Lazarsfeld, 1955), that really "contributed [most] to the field's conceptualization of the hypodermic needle model."⁶⁴ In that work, Katz and Lazarsfeld claimed that (unnamed) communication researchers prior to World War II conceived media as "powerful weapons able to rubber stamp ideas upon the minds of defenseless readers and listeners." They continued,

In the 1920's, it was widely held that the newspapers and their propaganda "got us into the war," while in the 1930's many saw in the Roosevelt campaign "proof" that a golden voice on the radio could sway men in any direction.⁶⁵

As asides, it may be recalled first, that Innis supported both these propositions, and second that Schramm helped craft some of the scripts for the “golden-voiced” Roosevelt.

The second part of this Hypodermic Needle story, as narrated by Schramm and others,⁶⁶ is the proposition that during and after World War II, *rigorous* social scientists (e.g., Lazarsfeld and Katz) were unsuccessful in detecting powerful media effects. The two most influential studies substantiating this revised outlook were Lazarsfeld’s *The People’s Choice* (1944) and Katz and Lazarsfeld’s *Personal Influence* (1955).⁶⁷ The principal conclusion of both studies, which became the received doctrine of American Media Study for several decades, is summarized by the phrase and doctrine, *Law of Limited Media Effects*.

Hypodermic Needle and Limited Effects are, then, the antipodes of the standard (Manichean) history of American communication/media studies. According to expositors of the standard history, there are but two choices, and those selecting the first are quite benighted.

Four Founding Fathers

The second mainstream narrative, “Four Founding Fathers,” debuted in 1959 in an article by Bernard Berelson,⁶⁸ who may have intended thereby to establish disciplinary legitimacy for a research area he saw as “withering away.”⁶⁹ Schramm replayed this “four founders” story for the first time in 1963,⁷⁰ and repeated it, in revised forms, several times over the next few decades⁷¹—perhaps most notably in his “personal memoir.”⁷²

Berelson and Schramm’s nominations for the field’s “founders,” also sometimes referred to by Schramm as “forefathers,” were: Harold Lasswell, a political scientist who in the 1920s and 1930s developed quantitative content analysis techniques to study the means of propaganda; Paul Lazarsfeld, an Austrian émigré and sociologist, who carried out quantitative audience survey research and studied the effects of persuasive media on audiences; Kurt Lewin, a European émigré and social psychologist, who investigated the effects of group norms on individual behavior, the effectiveness of various leadership styles (e.g., democratic vs. authoritarian), and decision making in small groups; and Carl Hovland, who conducted experimental research on persuasion for the U.S. Army. Schramm called these researchers “forefathers” because each one eventually left communication research to return to his initial discipline; on other occasions, however, he called them “founding fathers,” because they were among the first to treat communication scholarship in the mode of a behavioral science.

Interestingly, Schramm nominated as “forefathers of the forefathers” Charles Cooley, Robert Park, and Edward Sapir, the first two being members of “the Chicago School.” Schramm identified other “forefathers of

the forefathers," too: Plato, Milton, J. S. Mill, Voltaire, Carlyle, Marx, and Gabriel Tarde, among others. What distinguishes Schramm's "forefathers" or "founders" from the "forefathers of the forefathers" is that they alone "emphasized the empirical approach to communication study [and] were keenly aware of the relationship of mass media to the problems they were studying."⁷³

For Jefferson Pooley, "the two chronicles" merged by the 1960s, furnishing "mass communication studies with a disciplinary memory. . . . The storyline supplied glue to a field with bricks but no mortar."⁷⁴ Or, as Howard Zinn might remark, narrating the past of communication scholarship was also an attempt to control its future.⁷⁵

(2) JAMES CAREY'S REVISED HISTORY

In nominating the "Chicago School" (Charles Cooley, Robert Park, George Herbert Mead, and John Dewey), along with Walter Lippmann, as *founders* of the study of communication in the United States, James Carey was providing support for his alternative conception of what the study of communication is or should be, namely "culture as communication" (also termed "the ritual view").⁷⁶ This alternative approach emphasizes *not* "the extension of messages in *space*," but rather "the maintenance of society *in time*"; "not the act of imparting information," but instead "the representation of shared beliefs."⁷⁷ Rather than proposing that communication alters attitudes and changes minds, Carey wrote, the ritual view emphasizes confirmation of "a cultural world that can serve as a control and container for human action . . . an underlying order of things."⁷⁸ Carey recommended qualitative research methods and a more speculative, philosophical mode of inquiry than practitioners of media effects research ("transmission model") approved or practiced.

Carey was enthused with Innis's work because, he maintained, there one can see a "continuity of concerns" with those of the Chicago School.⁷⁹ According to Carey, Innis took

the concepts of the Chicago School and, with the unvarnished eye of one peering across the Forty-ninth Parallel, [corrected and completed] these concerns, marvelously widen[ing] their range and precision [to create] a conception and historically grounded theory of communication that was purged of the inherited romanticism of the Chicago School.⁸⁰

According to Carey, the Chicago School borrowed from certain continental European thinkers (Weber, Tönnies, and others) in rejecting individualistic and utilitarian views of freedom and communication, to address instead "social integration and domination."⁸¹ Carey noted that these were hardly the concerns of mainstream American researchers, for whom the fundamental questions, as often attributed to Lasswell, were: "Who,

Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, With what Effect?"⁸² In fact, Carey noted, so disparate were the concerns of the Chicago School from the communication mainstream, that "the work of Dewey and his colleagues" (like that of Walter Lippmann and Harold Innis, it can be added), "is omitted from the standard history of mass communication."⁸³

(3) THE NEW HISTORY

The Standard History, Timothy Glander remarked, was written "almost entirely from *within* the field of communication studies." Glander proposed further that "deception of various kinds was at the heart of much early communication research," adding that deception "continues to be reflected in many 'in-house' historical interpretations of this research."⁸⁴

Five scholars most associated with The *New History* are Christopher Simpson, Brett Gary, Timothy Glander, Jefferson Pooley, and J. Michael Sproule. The *New History* derives from archival materials of the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Archives, from files and letters of key postwar figures (Schramm and Lazarsfeld, particularly), and from documents secured through the Freedom of Information Act.⁸⁵

The *New History* begins its account with the launching of the Princeton Radio Research Project by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1937. Under the direction of Frank Stanton and Hadley Cantril, media researchers began studying radio audiences using quantitative, social scientific research methods.⁸⁶ In 1939, however, with an eye on Europe, the foundation set up a "Communication Seminar." Participants in the seminar included Lasswell and Lazarsfeld. "As it evolved," Pooley remarks, "the Seminar came to define the study of mass communications in largely quantitative terms, and identified the question of media effects as its driving problem."⁸⁷ According to Gary, the Seminar's role in defining communication scholarship in America "cannot be separated, intellectually, institutionally, or epistemologically, from the impending crisis of World War II."⁸⁸

Pooley writes that the seminar had two major agendas: one was mapping out mass communication research as a quantitative social science. The other was "to design an extragovernmental plan for combating Nazi propaganda and mobilizing war support."⁸⁹ Part of this latter effort, according to Gary, was to plan apparatus to "monitor and analyze all mass communication channels and produce scientifically generated data useful to the state in advancing the war effort."⁹⁰

The Communication Seminar produced over thirty studies plus a final, unpublished but widely circulated report, "Needed Research in Mass Communications" (October 1940).⁹¹ It produced also two memoranda (or interim reports); the following is an extract from the second of these, a

group report entitled "Research in Mass Communication," dated July 1940:

Government which rests upon consent rests also upon knowledge of how best to secure consent. Research in the field of mass communication research is a new and sure weapon to achieve that end . . .⁹²
 . . . We believe . . . that for leadership to secure that consent will require unprecedented knowledge of the public mind and of the means by which leadership can secure consent. . . . We believe . . . that we have available today methods of research which can reliably inform us about the public mind and how it is being, or can be, influenced in relation to public affairs.⁹³

Some members of the seminar objected strongly to what they saw as unduly authoritarian tendencies in this memorandum.⁹⁴ The Final Report, consequently, pulled back from these declarations to ask instead such central questions as:

How could mass communication serve instead of impeding or even undermining democracy? How could communication technologies enhance legitimate dialogue between leaders and the public? How could experts promote two-way dialogue, instead of one-way communication? Could researchers do those things they understood how to do—conduct interviews, take straw polls, and analyze media content—and enhance democratic processes?⁹⁵

In the early 1940s, with WWII looming, *propaganda studies* (so named) were shut down in the United States: According to Glander's account, "the Institute for Propaganda Analysis [for example] was dismantled by its advisory board because it was feared that its critical approach to propaganda analysis 'might disturb the unity needed for the war effort.'"⁹⁶ On the heels of that closure, several federal government agencies were set up—the Office of Facts and Figures, the Office of War Information, the Office of Emergency Management, the Office of Strategic Services—all tasked, in part, with increasing knowledge regarding techniques for mass persuasion. Scholars from all over the country thereupon descended on Washington to contribute their skills to the war effort, the consensus being that communication research should focus "on studying the effects of communication."⁹⁷ *Effects* for these researchers meant successful persuasion and control through communication. Since "propaganda" was by then an odious word, the research undertaken by and for these government units was termed "communication research," and the scholarly field set up in universities following the war was called *Communication Study*, or *Mass Communication*. Studies on mass persuasion were renamed "media effects."⁹⁸

After the war, Simpson writes, "at least six of the most important U.S. centers of postwar communication studies grew up as de facto adjuncts of government psychological warfare programs." These included Lazars-

feld's Bureau of Applied Social Research (Columbia University), Hadley Cantril's Institute for International Social Research (Princeton), Ithiel de Sola Pool's Center for International Studies (MIT), Rensis Likert's Institute for Social Research (University of Michigan), and of course Schramm's Institute of Communication Research at Illinois.⁹⁹ Simpson summarizes: "The evidence shows that psychological warfare projects became a major, and at times the central, focus of U.S. mass communication studies between 1945 and at least 1960."¹⁰⁰

NOTES

1. Innis, "Reviews of Books", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 15, no. 4 (November 1949): 566.

2. Innis, "Reviews of Books," 567.

3. Babe, *Canadian Communication Thought*; also Babe, "Innis and the Emergence of Canadian Media Studies;" also, "The Political Economy of Knowledge: Neglecting Political Economy in the Age of Fast Capitalism (as Before)." *Fast Capitalism* 2, no.1 (2006) http://www.uta.edu/huma/agger/fastcapitalism/2_1/babe.html (accessed May 28, 2014).

4. According to Chaffee and Rogers, it was for the Boston Symphony Orchestra that Schramm played.

5. Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research*, 135.

6. Rogers, *A History of Communication Study*, 4; Schramm, *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America*, 130–31.

7. Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research*, 141.

8. *Ibid.*, 145.

9. *Ibid.*, 140.

10. Rogers, *A History of Communication Study*, 6.

11. Wilbur Schramm to Archibald McLeish, December 15, 1941, quoted in Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research*, 146–47; emphasis added.

12. Schramm, "Memorandum to Mr. Rich, Mr. Bell, and others interested," 1 January 1942, quoted in Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research* 148–49.

13. Schramm, quoted in Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research*, 147–48; emphasis added.

14. Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research*, 147.

15. *Ibid.* See also Glander, "Wilbur Schramm and the Founding of Communication Studies." *Educational Theory* 46, no. 3 (summer 1996): 373–91. To put this into perspective, in the mid-1950s, the American Association of Universities, in a document prepared by a committee chaired by the president of Yale University, declared the university is "an association of individual scholars . . . united in loyalty to the ideal of learning, to the moral code, to the country, and to its form of government," adding, "free enterprise is as essential to intellectual as to economic progress." According to the document—endorsed by the administrations of thirty-seven universities, incidentally—"world Communism" was the main threat to academic freedom, and no one supporting "world Communism" had a place in the universities. See David Montgomery, "Introduction: Prosperity Under the Shadow of the Bomb," in *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years*, edited by Noam Chomsky et al. (New York: The New Press, 1997), xxii.

16. Simpson, *Science of Coercion*, 25

17. Rogers, *History of Communication Study*, 11, 10.

18. *Ibid.*, 14–15.

19. Schramm, *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America*, 138.

20. Verling C. Troidahl, "The Social Scientific Roots of the Mass Communication Tradition," in *Human Communication as a Field of Study*, edited by Sarah Sanderson King (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 49.

21. Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research*, 151. Schramm's short stories were compiled and published as a book: *Wagon Wheel Smith and Other Yarns* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947). John Nerone notes that during WWII Schramm worked not only for OWI, but also the Navy Department, the War Department, and the U.S. Armed Forces Institute. He was also "consultant on psychological warfare to the U.S. Air Force and consultant to the State Department, the Army Operations Research Office, the Defense Department, and the U.S. Information Agency." Nerone adds: "In the mid 1960s, [Schramm] chaired the Defense Secretary's advisory board on specialized warfare." John C. Nerone, editor, *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 12.

22. Chaffee and Rogers, "Wilbur Schramm: The Founder," in Schramm, *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America*, 139.

23. Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research*, 157.

24. Rogers, *History of Communication Study*, 11.

25. Glander, "Wilbur Schramm and the Founding of Communication Studies," 373.

26. *Ibid.*, 375.

27. Schramm, *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America*, 140.

28. Schramm, "Communications in Modern Society," in *Communications in Modern Society: Fifteen Studies of the Mass Media*, edited by Wilbur Schramm (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1948), 1-6.

29. *Ibid.*, 3.

30. *Ibid.*, 2.

31. *Ibid.*, 5.

32. Schramm, *Communications in Modern Society*, 240.

33. Chaffee and Rogers, "Institutionalization of Advanced Communication Study in American Universities," in Schramm, *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America*, 140.

34. Schramm, quoted in Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research*, 161.

35. Simpson, *Science of Coercion*, 63.

36. Schramm, quoted in Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research* 160.

37. John Riley and Wilbur Schramm, *The Reds Take a City: The Communist Occupation of Seoul* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1951).

38. John W. Riley Jr., Wilbur Schramm, and Frederick W. Williams, "Flight from Communism: A Report on Korean Refugees," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (summer 1951), 274-86.

39. Wilbur Schramm and John W. Riley Jr., "Communication in the Sovietized State, as Demonstrated in Korea" (1951; reprint, *Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts 1919-1968*, edited by John Durham Peters and Peter Simonson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, Publishers Inc. 2004): 310-18.

40. Riley and Schramm, *The Reds Take a City*, 32.

41. *Ibid.*, 34.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*, 38-39, 127; emphasis added.

44. Dallas Smythe, *Counterclockwise: Perspectives on Communication*, edited by Thomas Guback (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 57, n. 7.

45. Chaffee and Rogers, "Wilbur Schramm: The Founder," 147.

46. *Ibid.*, 148.

47. "The advances in political economy have been concentrated on mathematical analysis and a narrowing of the subject to a small number of experts and a consequent decline in the philosophical and political background. . . . Since 1914 the modern state has drawn more heavily on the social sciences and thought has been paralysed." Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 129.

48. Campbell, *Both Hands*, 327-40.

49. Innis, *Changing Concepts of Time*, 91.
50. William Christian, "Preface," *Innis on Russia*, 8.
51. Innis, "An Economic Approach to English Literature," 55.
52. Innis, "Russian Diary," 47; emphasis added.
53. Innis, "Adult Education and Universities," 209–10; also, "The University in the Modern Crisis," 75–76.
54. Innis, "Adult Education and Universities," 209–10.
55. Innis, "Government Ownership and the Canadian Scene" (1933; reprint, *Essays in Canadian Economic History*), 79. He added: "I am sufficiently humble in the face of extreme complexity of my subject to know, first, that I am not competent to understand the problems much less propose solutions."
56. Innis was highly critical of contemporary economics. Regarding the coupling of economics and statistics, he wrote contemptuously: "And so the snake entered the paradise of academic interest in economics." Innis, "The Penetrative Powers of the Price System" (1938; reprint, *Political Economy in the Modern State*), 145. He also stated: "Concentration on the price system, driven by mathematics, involves neglect of the technological conditions under which prices operate." Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 86.
57. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State* (xvi).
58. Schramm and William Porter, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 173.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*
61. Christian, "Preface," *The Idea File of Harold Innis*, vii.
62. Deborah Lubken, "Remembering the Straw Man: The Travels and Adventures of Hypodermic," in *The History of Media and Communication Research: Contested Memories*, edited by David W. Park and Jefferson Pooley (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 22. Also, Pooley, "Fifteen Pages that Shook the Field: *Personal Influence*, Edward Shils, and the Remembered History of Mass Communication Research," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 608 (November 2006): 130–56.
63. Lubken, "Remembering the Straw Man," 23.
64. *Ibid.*, 25.
65. Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication* (1955; reprint, New York: The First Free Press, 1964), 16.
66. For example, Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action" (1948; reprint, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, revised edition, edited by Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 554–78; Schramm claimed in 1982 that this article by Lazarsfeld and Merton still stood "as one of the best essays ever written on mass media." Schramm and Porter, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media*, 173.
67. Critiques of these studies may be found respectively in Steven H. Chaffee and John L. Hochheimer, "The Beginnings of Political Communication Research in the United States: Origins of the 'Limited Effects' Model," in *Mass Communication Review Yearbook* 5, edited by Michael Gurevitch and Mark R. Levy (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985), 75–104; and Gitlin, "Media Sociology: The Dominant Paradigm," *Theory and Society* 6, no. 2 (September 1978): 205–53. For an example of the narrative being subsequently rediffused uncritically in media/mass communication textbooks, see Everette E. Dennis and Ellen Wartella, "Preface," *American Communication Research: The Remembered History*, edited by Dennis and Wartella (1996; reprint, New York: Routledge, 2009), ix; emphasis added.
68. Bernard Berelson, "The State of Communication Research," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 23 (1959): 1–6.
69. Simonson, et al., "The History of Communication History," 28.
70. Schramm, "Communication Research in the United States," in *The Science of Human Communication*, edited by Wilbur Schramm (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 2.

71. See, for example, Schramm, "Human Communication as a Field of Behavioral Science: Jack Hilgard and His Committee," in *Human Communication as a Field of Study: Selected Contemporary Views*, edited by Sarah Sanderson King (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 13–26. Also, Schramm, "Communication Research in the United States," 1–16.

72. Schramm, *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America*.

73. *Ibid.*, 19.

74. Pooley, "The New History of Communication Research," 46.

75. Howard Zinn, *The Indispensable Zinn: The Essential Writings of the "People's Historian,"* edited by Timothy Patrick McCarthy, Foreword by Noam Chomsky, Afterword by Alice Walker (New York: The New Press, 2012), 66–81.

76. For example, Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication" (1975; reprint, Carey, *Culture as Communication*), 13–36.

77. *Ibid.*, 18; emphasis added.

78. *Ibid.*, 19.

79. Carey, "Culture, Geography, and Communications," 75.

80. *Ibid.*, 76.

81. Carey, "The Chicago School and the History of Mass Communication Research" (1996; reprint, *James Carey: A Critical Reader*), 25.

82. Harold D. Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society" (1948; reprint, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*), 85.

83. Carey, "The Chicago School and the History of Mass Communication Research," 24.

84. Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research During the American Cold War*, ix–x.

85. Pooley, "The New History of Mass Communication Research," 147–48.

86. Brett Gary, "Communication Research, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Mobilization for the War on Words," *Journal of Communication* 46, no. 3 (1996): 125.

87. Pooley, "The New History of Mass Communication Research," 52.

88. Gary, "Communication Research," 126.

89. Pooley, "The New History of Mass Communication Research," 52.

90. Gary, "Communication Research," 127.

91. *Ibid.*, 133.

92. Quoted in Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications*, 46.

93. Quoted in Gary, "Communication Research," 140.

94. Gary, "Communication Research," 140.

95. *Ibid.*, 141.

96. Glander, "Wilbur Schramm and the Founding of Communication Studies," 374.

97. Rogers, *A History of Communication Study*, 11.

98. *Ibid.*, 375.

99. Simpson, *Science of Coercion*, 4, 133–34, note 3.

100. *Ibid.*, 5.

EIGHT

Media Process and Effects

PROPAGANDA

In *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (1971), Schramm defined *communication* as “the *sharing* of an orientation toward a set of informational signs.”¹ Way back in 1954, he added, he had likely been the first scholar to propose that communication means sharing information. His intent then, he explained in 1971, had been to counter “the mechanistic psychology much in use at the time to explain communication effects,” and also oppose “the irrational fears of propaganda being expressed in the early 1950s.”² The term, *mechanistic psychology*, refers to the stimulus-response theory pioneered by behavioral psychologists John B. Watson and B. F. Skinner. As detailed below, however, Schramm was far from consistent in dismissing stimulus-response (S-R); in fact, S-R forms the core of his recommended positivist research methodology and constitutes his conception of a media “effect.” For present purposes, however, I focus on “*irrational fears of propaganda*,” and the extent to which Schramm was justified in characterizing the public’s attitude in that way.

In 1954, as Schramm began proposing that *communication means sharing*, the world was beset by the Cold War, which entailed profuse international posturing and propaganda; moreover, a *hot* war had just concluded in Korea and (as noted previously) Schramm was familiar firsthand with the propaganda *that* entailed. However, in neither of his essays (1954, 1971) did Schramm mention the Cold War³ or the Korean War. Nor did he allude to British/American propaganda at home or abroad during World War II. What he did call attention to, was World War I propaganda, fascist propaganda, and Soviet communist propaganda, and it was to *that* (or because of that), evidently, that the public had developed “irrational fears.” Consequently, Schramm advised, the time

was ripe to allay these anxieties, and his method of doing this was to claim that the scholarly consensus was that propaganda is really quite ineffective as stimulus—no consistent response, one might say.

The following extract is revealing, as Schramm does not hesitate to use propagandistic techniques to bolster his claim that propaganda does not work. Here I italicize words, phrases, tropes, and psychological manipulations lacing Schramm text to highlight his rhetorical flourishes:

The most *dramatic change* in general communication theory during the last forty years has been the gradual abandonment of the idea of a *passive audience*, and its replacement by the concept of a *highly active, highly selective audience, manipulating rather than being manipulated by a message*—a full partner in the communication process.

To appreciate the magnitude of this change, one must recall how *frightening* World War I propaganda, and later Communist and Nazi propaganda were to many people. At that time, the audience was typically thought of as a *sitting target*; if a communicator could *hit it*, he would affect it. This became *especially frightening* because the reach of the new mass media. *The unsophisticated viewpoint* was that if a person could be reached by the *insidious forces of propaganda carried by the mighty power of the mass media*, he could be *changed and converted and controlled*. So propaganda became a *hate word*, the media came to be regarded *fearfully*, and laws were passed and actions taken to protect “*defenseless*” people against “*irresistible*” communication . . . I have elsewhere called this *the Bullet Theory* of communication. Communication was seen as a *magic bullet* that transferred ideas or feelings or knowledge or motivations *almost automatically* from one mind to another. . . . [This understanding was wrong, however, because] it is messages, not ideas or thoughts, that pass from communicator to receiver. To sum up, then, in the early days of communication study, the audience was considered relatively *passive and defenseless*, and communication could *shoot something* into them, *just as an electric circuit could deliver electrons to a light bulb*. But scholars began very soon to modify *the Bullet Theory*. It did not square with the facts. The audience, when it was *hit by the Bullet*, *refused to fall over*.⁴ (Emphases added).

Note the alliterations, the passive tense, the metaphors, similes, antitheses, choice of adjectives, “scare” quotation marks. Note also the implicit psychological manipulation: Just how many readers (including professors in front of classrooms!) would like to self-categorize or publicly admit to being “fearful,” “unsophisticated,” or a “sitting target”?

Nor should one mistake the foregoing as an isolated instance. A full decade later (1982), in another widely adopted textbook, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media*, Schramm (with William Porter) again discredited the “magic bullet,” which he there also termed “the silver bullet.” Examples of over-the-top tropes in the 1982 text include: “shooting gallery,” “hit the target,” “target falls down,” “near hysteria,” “frightened people,”

“sensational writers,” “carefully made Silver Bullets of propaganda,” “powerless to resist them,” “funeral sermon for Silver Bullets,” “unreasoning fear of propaganda,” “a curiously girlish attitude toward anyone who might be doing propaganda,” “an almost magical belief,” “these folk beliefs,” “media magic.”⁵

Far from providing dispassionate, “social scientific” reviews and analyses of the literature of communication study, then—in fact, he cited *no sources* to document his claims concerning the pervasiveness of the *magic bullet* “in the early days of communication study” and of “general communication theory”—Schramm was insistently mocking, disparaging, and metaphorical, evidently intent to cajole and shame readers into accepting his propositions. In *Men, Women, Messages and Media*, however—likely for the first time—Schramm did concede that “this belief [in magic bullets] had never been espoused by any scholar of the first rank”⁶—a remarkable reversal from 1971 when he had purported to summarize “the early days of communication study” and “general communication theory.” The qualification also would seem to contradict Schramm’s nomination of Harold Lasswell as one of the four eminent “founders” of communication study;⁷ Lasswell understood propaganda to be hugely effective—and dangerous when in the wrong hands, but eminently useful and necessary when in the right ones.⁸

Schramm’s key explanatory/justificatory sentence, “It is messages, not ideas or thoughts, that pass from communicator to receiver,” is addressed in detail below.

Just why would so many foundational media scholars—not just Schramm, but Lazarsfeld, Katz, and others, beginning in the early 1940s and continuing for several decades after that—so insistently espouse “limited effects”? Harold Innis may have provided clues: he remarked that the social scientist’s contribution “is assumed by those who pay for it to have advanced their interests, probably at the expense of other interests and not necessarily to the advantage of the community as a whole.”⁹ What better way of disarming audiences and *increasing* the effectiveness of propaganda than by convincing people that the scholarly consensus was that propaganda is ineffective and that media have “minimal effects”?

Schramm Meets Innis on Propaganda

Harold Innis deemed propaganda neither innocuous nor ineffective. According to his biographer, Alexander John Watson, “one of Innis’s most bitter memories was of World War I propaganda that encouraged idealistic Christian youngsters [like himself] to enlist.¹⁰ Conversely, regarding the Second World War, Innis credited the “mass propaganda of the Anglo-Saxon world,” directed by press barons such as Hearst and Northcliffe, with playing “an important role in the defeat of Germany.”¹¹

And again, this time writing about the early years of the Cold War, Innis declared:

In radio and in television accessibility to American stations means a constant bombardment of Canadians. The impact of commercialism from the United States has been enormously accentuated by war. Prior to the First World War the development of advertising stimulated the establishment of schools of commerce and the production of textbooks on the psychology of advertising. European countries were influenced by the effectiveness of American propaganda. Young Germans were placed with American newspaper chains and advertising and publishing agencies to learn the art of making and slanting news. American treatises on advertising and publicity were imported and translated¹² . . .

How out of step with the American mainstream Innis was! Concluding his perhaps most impassioned essay, "The Strategy of Culture," Innis admonished:

We are indeed fighting for our lives. The pernicious influence of American advertising reflected especially in the periodical press and the powerful persistent impact of commercialism have been evident in all the ramifications of Canadian life. The jackals of communication systems are constantly on the alert to destroy every vestige of sentiment toward Great Britain. . . . We can only survive by taking persistent action at strategic points against American imperialism in all its attractive guises . . .¹³

Harold Innis, critically cognizant of attempts through media at psychological manipulation and persuasion, sounded alarms about creeping fascism in the United States, Canada, and other Western "democracies."

The Schramm Paradox

Notwithstanding strident denials that propaganda is effective, Wilbur Schramm provided his textbook readers with instructions on how to use media to persuade effectively. First, according to Schramm and his co-author William Rivers, a persuasive communicator must attract attention. Next, the persuader "must control a psychological process in the receiver."¹⁴ Schramm and Rivers added that although it is probably easy to implant "new behavior in a new area," persuasive messages are likely to be rejected when they directly confront "a strong area."¹⁵ Since a receiver's needs, beliefs, attitudes, personal relationships, and understanding of the environment are interdependent, a substantial change in any one of these is likely to induce changes in the others, too. Schramm depicted persuasion as building "cross pressures"—typically emphasizing incongruities or inconsistencies. Since human beings try to achieve balance among what they know, what they believe, and what they do,¹⁶ an effec-

tive persuader will attack cognitive areas that are “lightly defended” by providing new information in that area which is inconsistent with the present position. But, Schramm cautioned, not so inconsistent as to provoke rejection¹⁷—a delicate task, undoubtedly.

Schramm and Rivers identified certain tactics facilitating persuasion in addition to *attaining attention* and *creating dissonance*, namely:

- *Shared Meanings*: messages are more likely to succeed if they use signs whose meanings are shared by sender and receiver.¹⁸
- *Needs*: the message should arouse “personality needs” in the receiving party.
- *Relations*: if those deploying media build close relationships or attachments with their audience, mass media may be “especially powerful.”¹⁹
- *Encoding*: the source should encode a message in a way that makes it easy for the receiver/audience to understand and accept it; this can entail relating the message to the likely experiences of the audience.²⁰
- *Motivation*: the message should suggest ways for meeting needs that are appropriate to the message receiver’s “group situation,” thereby motivating the target “to make the desired response.”²¹
- *Canalizing*: the persuader provides an outlet, object, or “channel” to direct preexisting motives. According to Schramm, messages are more likely to be successful if they fit “the pattern of understandings, attitudes, values, and goals” that the target already has, or at least if it starts with this pattern “before trying to reshape it slightly.”²²
- *Consistency with the group*: Schramm advised that persuasive messages must suggest ways of meeting needs that are “appropriate” to the groups of which the target identifies. Otherwise, the persuasive communication will likely be unsuccessful.²³

Given the forgoing, it is understandable, Schramm continued, why the first principle of what he called *practical mass communication*,²⁴ is *know your audience*. Significantly, Schramm left unmentioned the following in his guidance on how to persuade: truth of the claim(s), supporting evidence, sound logic—interesting omissions for a purportedly dedicated social scientist. Schramm’s focus, then, was on psychological manipulation and rhetorical flair, irrespective of truth or soundness of the claim.

Schramm’s expertise in rhetoric, his skill as a writer of creative fiction, his training in motivational psychology, his experience in devising and carrying out psychological warfare campaigns, and his step-by-step instructions on the art of “practical mass communication,” seemingly contradict his repeated and often strident insistence that mass media are ineffective in persuading and have but “limited effects.” Henceforth, I will refer to this apparent contradiction as the *Schramm Paradox*.

One resolution of the *Schramm Paradox* might be simply that Schramm, through his professional experience as media propagandist, actually knew or believed that media indoctrination seldom succeeds, but nonetheless deemed efforts to persuade necessary or worthwhile. Certainly he offered several explanations as to why communication may be “unsuccessful” in terms of persuading. Let us review those explanations.

One was that it is rare (he claimed) for media outlets to agree, and hence the persuasive power of each outlet will be reduced on account of contradictory messaging.²⁵ Innis, of course, would have disputed the premise, as indicated by his major construct, *monopolies of knowledge* and by his history of press systems. In part III of this book, Chomsky, too, will be found to support the notion of relative *consistency* in messaging among media outlets.

Second, Schramm suggested that persuaders are normally unable to control the circumstances of message reception. These include the situation in which the communication is received, the personality state of the receiver, and the receivers’ group relations and standards.²⁶ This is undoubtedly true, although Schramm’s advice—“know your audience”—could help redress this deficiency.

Finally, as discussed further below, Schramm invoked both the *active reader* thesis and the *two-step flow model* of communication, and insisted that *messages* comprise symbols, not thoughts.

Undermining Schramm’s credibility in downplaying media power, however, are instances where he enthusiastically *affirmed* media’s strength at persuading. For example: “Advertising and public relations represent the great persuaders among the mass media; of their broad effectiveness, of course, there can be no doubt.”²⁷ Previously, Schramm’s remarks regarding the effectiveness of Soviet and Korean propaganda were noted. Contradictions in Schramm’s analyses, too, are addressed at greater length below.

Innis and the Schramm Paradox

A second, more plausible resolution of the Schramm Paradox relates to Innis’s distinction between the “vernacular” on the one hand and scholarly/scientific communication on the other. Innis maintained that popular culture, or the “vernacular,” when controlled by a ruling elite, is used to pacify, preoccupy, indoctrinate, and otherwise control the general public. Conversely, he argued that scholarly/scientific communication is often designed to equip *future* elites. Accordingly, Schramm might be equipping future elites with skills to persuade on the one hand, *and* be lulling/cajoling the masses (albeit indirectly through his university textbooks) into insouciance on the other.

Noam Chomsky, incidentally, may be understood as casting a similar light on the Schramm Paradox. On the one hand, Chomsky writes, for the purposes of governance, the masses must be “diverted with emotionally potent oversimplifications, marginalized, and isolated”;²⁸ on the other, prospective elite decision makers and managers must have “a certain grasp of the realities of the world, or they will be unable to perform their tasks effectively.”²⁹ Chomsky concludes that “elite media and educational systems must find a way to deal with these dilemmas, *not an easy task*.”³⁰ The Schramm Paradox, arguably, manifests the difficulty of the task.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Because the essence of communication, according to Schramm (on some occasions, but not others), is *sharing*, communication is “based on a relationship,”³¹ and the *study* of communication, therefore, investigates *people in relationship*, that is

people relating to one another and to their groups, organizations, and societies; influencing one another; being influenced; informing one another and being informed; teaching and being taught; entertaining and being entertained.³²

According to Schramm, furthermore, a communicatory “relationship,” as a minimum, consists of three elements: a communicator, a message, and a recipient.³³

Anticipating future discussion, Schramm’s depiction here of the communication process as entailing three linear/sequential elements, and his recommended methodology for studying it (namely positivism, methodological individualism, and experimental approaches to discern media “effects”) contradicts his definition of communication as sharing, and his depiction of communication study as investigating people in relationship.

Schramm Meets Innis on the Communication Process

In formulating this preliminary or simplified model of the *communication process*, Schramm differed markedly from Innis, and in several ways:

Media of secondary importance

First, although drawing attention to messages, senders, and recipients, Schramm left out the medium or media. For Schramm, oral communication entails *no medium* (certainly no mass medium). Even after he inserted “media” into his model, to add complexity and realism, he initially deemed media to be of only secondary importance:

[Although media certainly] make communication possible over great distances, they are simply machines, put into the communication process to duplicate man's writing (the printing press) or to extend his senses of sight and hearing (television, films, radio).³⁴

Here, Schramm equated writing (prior to Gutenberg) with orality and enfolded *both* into the "no mass media" category.

Again, this time even more shockingly:

With machines that bring us incomparably more information, from farther away, than ever before, we are again becoming accustomed to looking at the distant environment *without the interpretive filters in print* . . . Television . . . *merely extends man's eyes and ears*, and lets him see reality much as he used to before Gutenberg.³⁵

Although downplaying the significance of mass media in these and other statements, Schramm did acknowledge that "there is a difference in *quality* between communication relationships that are close and direct, and those that are removed in time or space [as] there can hardly be two-way communication with Homer, and the feedback even to a local newspaper or television station is very faint."³⁶ Moreover, he conceded, "given the right situation, these distant communications may have very powerful results."³⁷ Speculating on possibly "very powerful results," Schramm proposed, for instance, a possible power shift:

When radio and print enter a *traditional village* . . . almost overnight, horizons are moved back. . . . Power passes from those with long memories. . . . When it is written down, the past becomes common property.³⁸

Certain affinities with Innis begin to emerge. Innis maintained, of course, that introducing a new medium of communication normally entails a power shift: a new monopoly of knowledge comes to the fore and the previous one recedes. One must note, however, that in discussing the possibly "very powerful results," Schramm confined his attention to modern media entering "a traditional village." The section, "Big Media Effects" later in this chapter provides further consideration of Schramm's position on *development and communication*.

Reciprocal communication

Second, by deemphasizing media in formulating his initial model of the communication process, Schramm depicted *all* communication (mass and interpersonal) as being similar. He thereby casually transferred the reciprocity or *sharing* inherent to some interpersonal contact to mass and other modes of mediated communication. Consequently, as seen previously, he was able to define communication *as sharing*.

On the other hand, once he introduced media to his model of the communication process, he relaxed that position, noting that with mass

media reciprocal communication is actually quite rare or, if present, is greatly attenuated. While Schramm was of course correct in making that qualification, his other claim, namely that media propaganda need not be of concern because *communication means sharing* (not “magic bullets”), becomes less convincing. At any rate, Schramm again contrasts sharply with Innis. Innis’s *starting point* was to differentiate between oral communication and all other modes of communication, whereas Schramm’s starting point was to posit similarity.

Readers/audiences in charge

Third, an extension of the second point, Schramm’s preliminary model did not propose message *senders* (“monopolists of knowledge,” in Innis’s terms) as being empowered.³⁹ Precisely the opposite. If anything, according to Schramm (in some of his essays), *message recipients* are all-powerful—because *they* possess the capacity to select and interpret. Since this is so antithetical to Innis (and to Schramm himself on other occasions), it is worthwhile examining his argument more closely.

Key to Schramm’s proposition is his claim that message senders and receivers are often *unsuccessful* in “sharing” information; attempts to communicate often result in failure. That claim stemmed directly from his conception of a *message*. For Schramm, *messages* are essentially inert:

The message exists as a sign or a collection of signs with no meaning of their own except that which *cultural learning* enables a receiver to read into them. . . . Furthermore, the meaning is probably never quite the same as interpreted by any two receivers, or even by sender and receiver. The message is *merely* a collection of signs intended to *evoke certain culturally learned responses*—it being understood that the responses will be powerfully affected by the *cultural experience*, the psychological make-up, and the situation of any receiver.⁴⁰

Unaddressed in the preceding statement are issues such as: how do “cultural learning” and “cultural experience” differ from what might be called “cultural indoctrination,” and how can *these* possibly empower or help create active, discerning readers. Nonetheless, Schramm pressed on, next depicting the communication process as hit and miss:

The communicator constructs, *as best as he can*, the signs which *he hopes* will call forth the desired responses. . . . That is the first act of the communication process. A receiver selects among the stimuli available to him, selects from the content of the message he chooses, interprets and disposes of it as he is moved to do. That is the second act of the process. *The acts are separate*, separately motivated, but brought together by the collection of signs we call the message.⁴¹

These claims regarding the separate acts of communication would seem to contradict Schramm’s insistence (quoted earlier) that the study of com-

munication is an investigation of people in relationship, of “people relating to one another and to their groups, organizations, and societies; influencing one another; being influenced; informing one another and being informed; teaching and being taught; entertaining and being entertained.”⁴²

Whatever applicability (or inapplicability) the notion of separate acts may have to other situations, it is unlikely to apply to much of formal education, where students’ attention is directed if not dictated by the instructor and where interpretations, to the extent they are permitted, must withstand the examination process. Nor will Schramm’s insistence regarding interpretive freedom have much application to situations where media contents are *consistent*, as is typically the case regarding coverage of foreign affairs. Gitlin quoted Joseph Klapper, who at the time was evidently just beginning to shake loose from the minimum effects model:

A few months ago before Fidel Castro came to power, probably less than 2 percent of the American people so much as knew his name, let alone his political leanings. A year thereafter, however, the American public knew a great deal about him and his political behavior and were quite homogeneous in their opinions about him. . . . The source of their knowledge and the bases of their opinions were obviously restricted, for all practical purposes, to the media.⁴³

Much the same could be said regarding Saddam Hussein, Manuel Noriega, Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and so much else in more recent years. According to Schramm’s model, however, a message resembles a *catalyst* not a thought (“Magic Bullet”⁴⁴) because “there is no meaning in a message except what the people put into it,”⁴⁵ and different people will put in different meanings.⁴⁶

Innis, of course, was not oblivious to differences in interpretation. Indeed, if anything, he was *preoccupied* by them. In emphasizing *bias*, however, Innis was connoting something more than simply talking at cross purposes, important though that was for him. Innis was indicating that interpretations tend *systematically* to deviate from “true” or “best” understandings—for both message senders and message recipients. Furthermore, Innis claimed that the task of scholarship is to strive *to reduce bias* by more closely approximating *truth*.

The biases or misunderstanding that concerned Innis, moreover, were not only within a culture, but also between or among cultures. This observation makes apparent two further differences between Schramm and Innis. First, Innis did not invoke an “active audience” thesis to trivialize the significance of propaganda within a culture; to the contrary, according to Innis a culture consists of people largely sharing common meanings and an effective propagandist will certainly be familiar with and utilize such symbols and meanings. Second, although Innis was con-

cerned about cross-cultural misunderstandings, he certainly did not advocate (as did Schramm, as developed below) that all cultures adopt the American system of values and ways of understanding (i.e., “modernization”); to the contrary, for Innis the American system of interpretation is moribund on account of being unduly present-minded, and is to be resisted at all costs!

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ADVERTISING

Schramm provided a brief and rather sanitized review of the history of PR. He began by remarking that “public relations *has been accepted* as a *responsibility* of elected and appointed officials and candidates, business people, professionals, and activists of all sorts.”⁴⁷ He added that throughout recorded history “shopkeepers, workers for hire, members of councils and parliaments, bankers, and teachers all have been deeply concerned about what people think of them and their services.”⁴⁸ Therefore, it is understandable, he continued, that “political parties, religious organizations, and community organizations [knew] it was essential to them to have a good image.”⁴⁹ And *image*, of course, is precisely what PR is all about.

According to Schramm’s historiography, the first public relations specialist was E. H. Heinrichs. It is enlightening to quote Schramm’s account:

The first formal public relations department was established in 1889 as a part of the newly established Westinghouse Electric Company. It came about as a result of the battle over whether alternating current (AC) or direct current (DC) should be adopted for public use. The Edison General Electric Company used DC and wanted the public to adopt that rather than AC, which was offered by Westinghouse. To frighten purchasers and governments, rumors were circulated about the deadliness of AC, one example being the use of AC to execute criminals in electric chairs. About that time, the state of New York legalized electrocution. George Westinghouse, realizing that he had image trouble, hired a Pittsburgh newspaperman to make sure that the Westinghouse side of the story got to the public, and E. H. Heinrichs thus came to be the first public relations specialist heading a major department in industry.⁵⁰

Significantly, Schramm chose *not* to nominate GE’s fear campaign to discredit AC as the beginning of PR!

Schramm accorded Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays brief mentions. He described Lee as being “best known for his services to John D. Rockefeller, Jr.” Significantly, he refrained from mentioning Lee’s activities surrounding the Ludlow Massacre in support of Rockefeller.⁵¹ Schramm credited Bernays with writing “probably the first book on public relations, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, in 1923,” and with editing *The Engineer-*

ing of Consent, which according to Schramm “made him less than popular among his fellow public relations counselors because of the title’s connotations.”⁵² Not noted, however, were Bernays’s activities on behalf of Lucky Strike cigarettes to induce women to take up smoking, or his PR support for the U.S. invasion of Guatemala on behalf of United Fruit Company,⁵³ among other controversial actions.

Schramm Meets Innis On Public Relations and Advertising

Whereas Innis deemed advertising and public relations major tools used by autocrats in Western “democracies,” helping turn democracy into a “sham,” Schramm evinced no irony in equating advertising/PR *with* freedom and *with* authentic democracy:

Why are advertising and public relations so big in the United States? Because it is a free economy, where prices and sales are little regulated by government and the proceeds of increased sales go to the sellers. Because it is an affluent economy, where people can afford to buy and therefore what people want determines in large part what goods are produced; consequently sales will depend on what *people can be encouraged to decide they want*. And because it is a relatively open political system, where public opinion matters a great deal and where *both individuals and organizations can exert influence through the media and apart from government*. The nature of the system makes a great deal of difference. It is noteworthy that there is relatively little advertising in the media of the Communist states, although the amount has been increasing lately.⁵⁴

Schramm then opined: “It is well at this point to ask some questions about the social effects of the persuaders.”⁵⁵ However, rather than critically exploring “social effects” regarding citizenship, democracy, autocracy, plutocracy, indoctrination, freedom and control, power structure, social justice, environmental health, manufacture of consent, or necessary illusions, Schramm chose to focus on:

- heightened prosperity of business and the industrial system
- free television programming and reduction in prices of newspapers due to the advertising “subsidy,” and
- emphasis in media on “popular culture” rather than “high culture”⁵⁶

Schramm closed his discussion of what he termed the “social effects of the great persuaders” by remarking that “advertising is one of the lucky or prescient discoveries by means of which the Western press (and later the electronic media) have gained the ability to do the news job *expected of them*. . . . Advertising [is] this ingenious discovery by the Western press.”⁵⁷

Confronted with these statements, Innis would likely roll his eyes and respond that yes, the Western press is performing precisely the job expected of it.

METHODOLOGY

Schramm was insistent that *communication study* is the most important form of communication research because it is, by definition, refutable. What the “founding fathers” of communication study brought to communication research, according to Schramm, was *empiricism* (borrowed from “the hard sciences and the social sciences”⁵⁸) and a focus on “the effects of communication.”⁵⁹

We study *the communication process*, Schramm proposed, because we want to understand how communication “achieves effects.”⁶⁰ Given a certain message content, he continued, we would like to be able to predict the effect of that content on its receiver or receivers: “Every time we insert an advertisement in a newspaper, put up a sign, explain something to a class, scold a child, write a letter, or put our political candidate on radio or television, we are making a prediction about the effect communication will have.”⁶¹

The discrepancy is again worth noting. On the one hand, *communication* means effects; *communication study* measures effects. On the other, media have limited effects; communication study has little or nothing to measure; messages are catalysts with no content except what readers, listeners, and viewers put into them.

There are two further, noteworthy aspects to Schramm’s recommended research methodology: methodological individualism and positivism. *Methodological individualism* approaches knowledge acquisition by reducing complex systems to constituent parts and studying each part intensively and in isolation from other parts, the presumption being that an adequate understanding of the whole can be attained by aggregating the components. Although he emphasized elsewhere that a message sender must take into account likely interpretations of the message by its recipients, Schramm also deemed the communicator’s act of message construction (encoding) as being entirely separate from the receiver’s act of decoding, and that the signs comprising the message “exist separately from either of them.”⁶² Schramm specifically claimed also that “society is a sum of relationships in which information of some kind is shared.”⁶³ He also declared, “a single act, however modified by circumstances or equipment, is the foundation of all [communication] study.”⁶⁴ In “How Communication Works,” he provided diagrams of “the communication circuit” and in “The Nature of Communication Between Humans” he replicated Shannon and Weaver’s transmission model. In fact, the word

choice of the aforementioned paper, “*between humans,*” is itself indicative of the transmission model.

Schramm’s *positivism* comes to light clearly through his treatment of consciousness and his emphasis on prediction. “Most of the communication process,” he wrote,

is in the “black box” of the central nervous system, the contents of which we understand only vaguely. When we describe communication, we are therefore dealing with analogies and gross functions, and the test of any model of this kind is whether it enables us to make predictions—not whether it is a true copy of what happens in the black box, a matter of which we cannot now speak with any great confidence.⁶⁵

And again: “The internal processing [of information] takes place in the black box, and we can only infer it. But the [communicatory] relationship and the acts are out in the open,”⁶⁶ and hence *these* are properly objects for study by communication researchers.

In espousing positivism, and insisting that the mind or consciousness is a “black box” to be disregarded in communication study, Schramm’s experimental research methodology was, essentially, the study of observable stimulus-response, which is akin to, if not indeed identical with, the *mechanistic psychology* he dismissed when he was deeming propaganda innocuous. In other words, Schramm insisted that communication study employ a methodology he elsewhere claimed was discredited; and he used results based on applications of that “discredited” methodology to make his case that propaganda is of little or no concern.

Schramm Meets Innis on Methodology

Innis had little or nothing to say about “communication study” as Schramm defined it. But he had a lot to say about positivism, methodological individualism, and quantification in the social sciences generally, and in mainstream economics particularly. To regard prices as quantitative indicators of value, Innis insisted, is to ignore underlying structures that help determine prices. Quantitative study alone, for Innis, was quite superficial and reductionist. By analogy, to insist on observable effects in a laboratory as the sole criterion for affirming “media effects,” Innis might surmise, is to ignore the underlying structures that give rise to (or suppress) what is observed or could be observed. And moreover, Innis would likely adduce, that research methodology is inherently *present-minded*: no rise or fall of empires, or displacement of monopolies of knowledge, no considerations of the past or the future to be detected in S-R experiments in laboratories!

Innis was, if anything, a holistic thinker whose scholarship embraced the sweep of time and focused on power relations among or between

groups. He was a *medium theorist* who maintained not only that control of media empower the controllers, but that media limit/direct/*bias* communication, and that different media *bias* communication differently, thereby empowering different monopolies of knowledge and different monopolists of knowledge. Schramm's research methodology ruled out these topics as even being worthy for research.

Innis maintained, further, that a mechanistic view of people is an over-simplification. Stimulus-response/pleasure-pain psychology, he lamented, nonetheless is at the very heart of modern economics. Innis's dismissal of hedonistic "economic man" indicates an implicit rejection, too, of Schramm's recommended positivistic, experimental approach to communication study. The major difference between Innis and Schramm regarding stimulus-response psychology is that Innis was consistent in his disavowal, whereas Schramm shifted position according to the argument he was making at the moment.

BIG MEDIA EFFECTS

Where media may have "big" effects, Schramm conceded, is over the long term and upon modes of social organization. In neither case, he acknowledged, is the positivist, methodologically individualist approach of communication study suited to investigate.

One likely "big effect" identified by Schramm concerns leisure. Schramm proposed that "the center of home life has moved to the living room. . . . In a few hundred years, humans gave away about five hours a day to communication that did not even exist in 1450 and that hardly existed [in 1888]." ⁶⁷

Another likely "big" area proposed by Schramm concerns *democratization*. Media "stretch[ed] human horizons and [sped] human awareness of what happens beyond those horizons," Schramm rhapsodized. *Far and fast* are the key words to describe what has happened to human knowledge in the last five centuries," ⁶⁸ he proposed. According to Schramm and Rivers, newspapers became "the voice and servant of democracy." ⁶⁹

Third (regarding which he wrote an entire book), media *modernize*. In *Mass Media and National Development*, Schramm claimed that "without adequate and effective communication, economic and social development will inevitably be retarded [but] with adequate and effective communication, the pathways to change can be made easier and shorter." ⁷⁰ Schramm contrasted the hard life in a traditional, "underdeveloped," oral society with the benefits of industrialization and modernity. In traditional society, he stated, there are "incompletely used resources"; ⁷¹ there is rampant illiteracy ⁷² and lack of ambition; ⁷³ there is sickness, ⁷⁴ hunger, ⁷⁵ poor diet, ⁷⁶ poverty, ⁷⁷ inordinate deaths at childbirth. ⁷⁸ There is also "fear and distrust of innovation." ⁷⁹

Change comes hard in that village. The old men are the decision makers, and they usually make conservative decisions. There is a tight caste system, which limits the kinds of jobs any man can aspire to. There are rather rigid customs as to what kind of work a woman can do and what her influence can be. . . . The whole village system tends to enforce what has been, and to oppose what might be.⁸⁰

When mass media enter a traditional society, however, according to Schramm's account, everything changes. (One might even say that mass media become magic bullets.) Media raise aspirations.⁸¹ "No one who has seen modern communication brought to traditional villages will ever doubt its potency."⁸² Schramm declared:

In the service of national development, the mass media are agents of social change. The specific kind of social change they are expected to help accomplish is the transition to new customs and practices, and, in some cases, to different social relationships. Behind such changes in behavior must necessarily lie substantial changes in attitudes, beliefs, skills, and social norms.⁸³

According to Schramm, moreover, becoming enfolded within the international economic order, as when radio enters a traditional village, need not be of concern because, he claimed (writing in 1964), there is a "revival, on a considerable scale, of a *world conscience*":⁸⁴

In part the world conscience has been stimulated by a revulsion against colonialism. Improved communications have helped bring this about, just as they have helped to inform the have-not people how the others live. . . . In the last 25 years the stationing of troops overseas, often in out-of-the-way places, has made it possible for otherwise untraveled young men to see how other people live.⁸⁵

One wonders if Schramm had in mind Korea or Vietnam as being among the "out-of-the-way places" where troops were stationed.

Schramm continued, still seemingly without ironic intent:

History will probably call an emergence of conscience on a broad scale and a point of view that would doubtless have been incomprehensible to some of the economic robber barons of the past—a genuine concern with the economic condition of the have-nots of the earth.⁸⁶

Had Innis been alive, one can imagine the depths of his consternation and indignation.

In *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, Schramm (with William Rivers), moreover, asserted unambiguously (and in fundamental contradiction to much else that Schramm had written), that media normally have huge impacts because we are dependent on them "for a large majority of all the information and entertainment we receive during life." Schramm and Rivers continued, "what we know about public figures and public

affairs is largely dependent upon what the mass media tell us.”⁸⁷ According to Schramm and Rivers,

*We are always subject to journalism and incapable of doing much about it. We can see too little for ourselves. Days are too short and the world is too big and complex for anyone to be sure of much about the web of government. What most of us think we know is not known at all in the sense of experience and observation. . . . The expanse of our knowledge of public affairs must come from the mass media. There simply are no practical alternatives.*⁸⁸

And again:

*Clearly, all of us live in a synthetic world, and the synthesis is fashioned largely from information supplied through mass communication . . .*⁸⁹

It is important to realize, howsoever disconcerting it may be to do, just how seemingly effortlessly, assertively, powerfully, convincingly Schramm—the founder and Dean of American communication study—could make inconsistent, antithetical, mutually negating claims seem like authentic, scientific knowledge.

Schramm Meets Innis on Big Media Effects

Innis would doubtless have been skeptical regarding the following aspects of Schramm’s scholarship on big media effects:

In much of his writing Schramm insisted that media have few effects, and that to be concerned about media having big or important effects is to be fearful, irrational, superstitious, and “girlish.” However, in writings cited and reviewed in this section—most notably in *Responsibility in Mass Communication* (with William Rivers), *The Story of Human Communication*, and *Mass Media and National Development*—Schramm cast those declarations aside to propose instead that media are unrivaled in power as they persuade, bring distant events to our consciousness, and transform/modernize societies. Just exactly what did Schramm really think and believe, if anything, Innis might well have wondered.

Schramm proposed that in the developing world media have immense effects, that they are instrumental in overturning the existing social order, and that is a good thing. Schramm recognized none of the benefits Innis emphasized for oral, traditional cultures; nor did he mention any of the harms Innis emphasized that characterize modern cultures. Schramm did not evince concerns regarding the conjuncture of empire and mass communications, evidently because of the hypothesized dawning of a new age of beneficent world conscience. Innis undoubtedly would have found Schramm’s musings concerning a “world conscience” unduly optimistic in light not only of world history but also world events then occurring. Innis might even have suggested that such conjectures

should be considered to be rather self-serving in light of Schramm's military consultancies.

Innis would have disagreed profoundly with Schramm's equating media innovation and democracy. However, Innis would have agreed, almost entirely, with Schramm/River's contentions expressed in *Responsibility in Mass Communication* that media have huge impacts because we are reliant on them "for a large majority of all the information and entertainment we receive during life." Innis would have called these, "monopolies of knowledge."

Most fundamentally, Innis would have been distressed at the ease with which Schramm made antithetical and mutually exclusive claims, and likely would have regarded Schramm as one of the military's "kept" scholars.

A CONCLUDING, AND ANTICIPATORY, NOTE

Although the three chapters of part II are focused on Schramm, a renowned scholar in his own right, he is also an archetype for an entire school of thought, namely foundational American communication study.⁹⁰ That being the case, comparing Schramm's positions to those of Innis is of much greater significance than merely comparing the works of two noteworthy scholars. We are at the same time comparing the truth value and approaches of two largely antithetical modes of media study. For that reason, Schramm warrants yet another chapter.

NOTES

1. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," in *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, edited by Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, revised, 1971), 13; emphasis added.

2. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," 8; emphasis added. In "How Communication Works" (1954) Schramm depicted the communication process as follows: "Communication comes from the Latin *communis*, 'common.' When we communicate, we are trying to establish a 'commonness' with someone. That is, we are trying to share information, an idea, or an attitude. At this moment I am trying to communicate to you to get you the idea that the essence of communication is getting the receiver and the sender 'tuned' together for a particular message." Schramm proceeded to give some every day examples of two people communicating, and then concluded that "communication always requires at least three elements—the source, the message, and the destination." Schramm, "How Communication Works" (1954; reprint, *Mass Media and Modern Society*, edited by Alan Wells and Ernest A. Hakanan, Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 51–52.

3. Certainly in 1954 McCarthyism was playing on fears of communist propaganda in media, and in that sense Schramm can be viewed as a voice of moderation. Note that his direct pronouncements on inefficacy of propaganda were not made, however, until 1971, not in 1954.

4. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Human Beings," 9.

5. Schramm and Porter, *Men, Women, Messages and Media*, 172–74. At times, in this extract, Schramm is quoting other authorities.

6. *Ibid.*, 172.

7. Lasswell was a major figure studying propaganda in the inter-war period, assessing techniques of propaganda and how propaganda can be made more effective.

8. Noam Chomsky wrote: "The influential political scientist Harold Lasswell explained in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* that when elites lack the requisite force to compel obedience, social managers must turn to 'a whole new technique of control, largely through propaganda.' He added the conventional justification: we must recognize the 'ignorance and stupidity [of] . . . the masses' and not succumb to 'democratic dogmatism about men being the best judges of their own interests.'" Chomsky, "Force and Opinion," *Z Magazine* July-August 1991 <http://www.chomsky.info/articles/199107--.htm> (Accessed July 20 2014).

9. Innis, "The Role of Intelligence: Some Further Notes," 281.

10. Watson, *Marginal Man*, 235.

11. Innis, "An Economic Approach to English Literature," 35.

12. Innis, "The Strategy of Culture," 12.

13. *Ibid.*, 13.

14. William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication* (1957; revised, New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 22.

15. *Ibid.*, 23.

16. *Ibid.*, 25

17. *Ibid.*

18. Schramm, "How Communication Works" (1954; reprint, *Mass Media and Modern Society*, edited by Alan Wells and Ernest A. Hakenan, Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 59.

19. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 27.

20. Schramm, "How Communication Works," 17.

21. *Ibid.*, 59.

22. *Ibid.*, 62.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, 59.

25. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 27.

26. Schramm, "How Communication Works," 63.

27. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), 312.

28. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy" (1990; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*, selected and edited by Barry Pateman (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005), 171. Chomsky continues, "Ideally, each person should be alone in front of the TV screen watching sports, soap operas, or comedies, deprived of organizational structures that permit individuals . . . to discover what they think and believe in interactions with others, to formulate their own concerns and programs, and to act to realize them. . . . The 'rascal multitude' are the proper targets of the mass media and a public educational system geared to obedience and training in needed skills, including the skill of repeating patriotic slogans on timely occasions."

29. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy," 171.

30. *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

31. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," 13.

32. Schramm and Porter, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media*, 3.

33. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," 15. Also, Schramm, "How Communication Works," 51.

34. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," 14.

35. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 16; emphasis added.

36. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," 15; emphasis added.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Schramm and Porter, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media*, 13.
39. Here we see a departure in the later essay from the original. The original, "How Communication Works" (1954), was mostly about how a message sender can successfully "share" ideas with recipients, i.e., how persuasion can be successful. The later essay, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans" (1971) emphasized reciprocal communication as a means of approaching conformity.
40. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," 15; emphases added.
41. *Ibid.*, 16; emphases added.
42. Schramm and Porter, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media*, 3.
43. Joseph Klapper, "Mass Communication: Effects." Quoted in Gitlin, "Media Sociology," 216.
44. Schramm and Porter, *Men, Women, Messages, Media*, 50.
45. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," 17.
46. New in his 1982 book, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media*, however, was the notion of convergence in understanding through time. Schramm wrote: "Understanding is likely to grow closer and closer as the exchange continues . . . a convergence of understanding." An implication of this insight, not mentioned by Schramm, is that media propaganda is likely to become more effective as audiences become more familiar with the point of view of the propagandist. Schramm and Porter, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media*, 42. Furthermore, Schramm proposed several different types of communication relationship relevant to understanding the encoding/decoding dichotomy. One is *entertainment*, which according to Schramm inherently entails "suspension of disbelief" on the part of the message receiver. A second is *persuasion*, in which the receiver's defenses are up, meaning that "persuasion is a buyer's [recipient's] market." Third is *instruction*, wherein the receiver brings "a certain amount of trust in and respect for the teacher's guidance." *Ibid.*, 44–45.
47. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, 307; emphasis added. Note use of the passive tense—"has been accepted"—obscuring the question of "accepted by whom"? Also note Schramm's word selection, "responsibility," as opposed to, say, "strategy."
48. *Ibid.*, 307.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*, 308.
51. Ewen, *PR!*, 78–83
52. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, 309.
53. Larry Tye, *The Father of Spin: Edward Bernays and the Birth of Public Relations* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998).
54. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, 312.
55. *Ibid.*, 312.
56. *Ibid.*, 312–15.
57. *Ibid.*, 316–17; emphasis added.
58. Schramm, *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America*, 19.
59. *Ibid.*, 19; emphasis added.
60. Schramm, "How Communication Works," 59.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," 17.
63. Schramm and Porter, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media*, 3.
64. *Ibid.*, viii.
65. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Humans," 25. Similar remarks regarding the unimportance of descriptive accuracy for modeling are developed by Milton Friedman in his *Essays in Positive Economics*.
66. Schramm and Porter, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media*, 39.
67. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, 144.
68. *Ibid.*, 144.
69. *Ibid.*, 6.

70. Schramm, *Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in the Developing Countries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), ix.

71. *Ibid.*, 4.

72. *Ibid.*, 8.

73. *Ibid.*, 2.

74. *Ibid.*

75. *Ibid.*

76. *Ibid.*

77. *Ibid.*

78. *Ibid.*, 1.

79. *Ibid.*, 32.

80. *Ibid.*, 7.

81. *Ibid.*, 130.

82. *Ibid.*, 20, 31.

83. *Ibid.*, 114.

84. *Ibid.*, 15.

85. *Ibid.*

86. *Ibid.*

87. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 14.

88. *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

89. *Ibid.*, 15.

90. Regarding communication and development, for example, Schramm's views were consistent with those of Ithiel de Sola Pool, Daniel Lerner, Lucien Pye, and Everett Rogers. Sussman and Lent summarized the communication and development views of Schramm and his colleagues in Sussman and Lent, "Introduction: Critical Perspectives on Communication and Third World Development," in *Transnational Communications: Wiring the Third World*, edited by Sussman and Lent (Newbury Park: Sage, 1991), 1–26.

NINE

Media History, Education, Free Press, Democracy

MEDIA HISTORY

Schramm intended his 1988 book, *The Story of Human Communication: Cave Painting to Microchip*, to be used “in departments of communication or other related departments.”¹ Eminently readable, the book unfolds a progressive or “Whiggish” narrative of humankind continuously overcoming nature’s constraints of time and space by innovating “waves” of new media and improving older ones. Another central theme in the “story” is that humankind *shares* ever-increasing knowledge through media.

Schramm covered some of the same historical material in *Responsibility in Mass Communication* (manuscript prepared in 1949, revised in 1969, co-authored with William L. Rivers²). There, however, the central metaphor was a “galaxy of media,” as opposed to four “waves” of media innovation, the central metaphor in *The Story of Human Communication*.

Norman Fairclough reminds us that metaphors are not entirely innocent.³ Rather, they *frame* or set boundaries about discussions; they tell the auditor or reader how the topics *should* be viewed or understood; they obliterate other comparisons or understandings. Let’s take a closer look, then, at these two metaphors. First, the *galaxy* metaphor:

Schramm remarked that innovations in media reminded him of stargazing on summer nights. The first “stars” to appear, he explained, were newspapers and magazines, but these were soon followed by “the first stars of photography,” and then “the motion picture galaxy was spread out for us to admire.”⁴ He continued, “the first stars of sound communication” were the telegraph, telephone, and early sound-recording devices, all of which presaged radio. After radio, however, a new galaxy—“the brightest galaxy of the century”—dominated the night sky: televi-

sion. According to Schramm, even television will be rendered faint, since new innovations, for example computers and digital transmissions, “are beginning to send up a new parade of stars and suggest the advent of various galaxies never before heard of.”⁵

Light from distant stars reach Earth tens of thousands of years after being emitted from the source. Perceiving a star’s light on Earth is, in that sense, *foreordained*. Schramm’s galactic metaphor, then, connotes inevitability, a *technological imperative*. Moreover, the wonder, beauty, and magnificence Schramm effuses through his galaxy metaphor connotes also a relative insignificance, or lack of power, for individual humans certainly, but also for the entire human species—a *technological determinism*. What really can humans do to change starlight?

Likewise, the metaphor of *waves* connotes inevitability—a washing over of humankind. In both cases—galaxies and waves—humans cannot do much to change things. It is peculiar, then, that Schramm would chastise both Innis and McLuhan for being, as he saw it, “technological determinists.”⁶ Although McLuhan did write of a *Gutenberg Galaxy*, Innis certainly never invoked metaphors connoting inevitability; innovation for Innis was always grounded in rivalry, power struggle, political-economic considerations, and in purposive human agency.

According to Schramm and Rivers, *the first wave* began about 1450 with the invention of the printing press. It picked up momentum with high speed presses and the telegraph. It assumed a “vivid quality”⁷ when the camera and photoengraving were introduced. This *first wave*, according to Schramm and Rivers, had enormous consequences. They claimed, for instance, that the first wave was “the voice and servant of democracy.”⁸ I will return to this fundamental dissimilarity with Innis when considering Schramm’s press history later in this chapter.

The *second wave*, by Schramm/River’s account, really got underway in 1876 with the invention of the telephone, added strength with the phonograph, movie camera/movie projector, and then radio and television. The second wave, moreover, coincided with, and contributed to, increased urbanization/industrialization and (according to Schramm and Rivers) the rise of a new psychological predisposition. I consider in turn each of these proposed, concomitant changes.

Urbanization/industrialization meant that people had more leisure, and thereby more time to spend with media.⁹ According to Schramm and Rivers, however, leisure did not mean mere relaxation: rather, citizens *needed* to spend significant time with media simply to stay informed about events occurring in their now extended and more complex environment. *Second wave media* brought news more directly and more instantaneously than print (*first wave media*). In the view of Schramm and Rivers, electronic media became “trusted” extensions of the eyes and ears of individual audience members. The authors declared that the main difference in communication media before and after the invention of the tele-

phone was that humans interposed between themselves and events “efficient machines that could . . . be trusted to listen and see for [them].” They explained:

The second wave of modern communication made a profound change *in shifting the initiative, at least in part, from receiver to sender*. That is, once the receiver had made his basic choice, *the sender was in charge. The machine, or the force behind it, controlled the pace, the repetitions, the emphasis, the timing.*¹⁰

But, one might well ask, exactly what is one to make of this, in light of Schramm’s strident insistence elsewhere that that message *recipients* are almost always in charge? Recall, too, his declarations quoted in the previous chapter that “the most dramatic change in general communication theory during the last forty years has been the gradual abandonment of the idea of a passive audience, and its replacement by the concept of a *highly active, highly selective audience*, manipulating rather than being manipulated by a message—a full partner in the communication process.”¹¹ What Schramm (with Rivers) is now claiming seems akin to what he elsewhere derided as being an unsophisticated belief in “a magic bullet.”¹²

Schramm and Rivers added that in being “much faster than the press,” *second wave media* have about them “a sense of reality, a sense of immediacy, that print has never had.”¹³ Citing polls indicating that audiences found television the most trusted of the mass media, Schramm suggested (in *The Story of Human Communication*) that the most likely explanation was simply that “*audiences tend to believe what they see*,” adding that people tend to believe events “they can look at” and the newscasters they can see are more believed than “a faceless voice” on the radio.¹⁴ Again, all this seems eminently plausible, the important point here being it is all so antithetical to Schramm’s insistent condemnations of “magic bullets” and the like.

Similarly, in concluding a brief description of the public’s behavior during the infamous *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast (by Orson Welles, October 31, 1938),¹⁵ Schramm suggested that the simple reason why so many people crowded bus and train stations and headed for the hills in their automobiles was that they had “*learned to believe the news they heard on radio*,”¹⁶ and that they were quite unaccustomed to being skeptical about the accuracy of the news.

Equally shocking as these reversals, however, are Schramm and Rivers’s conjectures that *second wave media* “have in their essence an emotional quality that is difficult to achieve in print,”¹⁷ which they associated with “a fundamental change in human psychology,” that is, a transformation in human nature! That transformation, according to Schramm and Rivers, was from “inner” to “other” direction¹⁸: from “an individualistic work-success ethic and a future time-orientation to a hedonistic

present-centered ethic concerned mainly with group relations and opinions."¹⁹ Again, Schramm became here, in effect, a *technological determinist*. Arguably, he went way beyond Innis.

Schramm and Rivers proposed also a *third wave*, consisting of communication between people and machines, and a *fourth wave* of communication solely between or among machines, which they also termed, *automation*.²⁰ Schramm's scholarship, however, was confined mostly to the first two "waves."²¹

In his chapter on the advent of writing, Schramm introduced two themes that pervade his "story of human communication" and contrast starkly with Innis. First, Schramm's narrative paints a rosy picture of continuous human betterment: "Modern humans," he wrote, "have come into the world of computers and microelectronics and libraries and television (in which we have a very short history) from a very long history among other animals and other primitives. We are newly human. New communicators."²² According to Innis, in contrast, media's faster speeds, heightened "realism," and increased spatial reach are at best mixed blessings. *Waves of progress* fail to capture, and indeed tend to obscure, the rise and decline of civilizations on the one hand, and *empire* and communications on the other.

The second grand motif Schramm introduced in his chapter on writing, again in marked contrast with Innis (as seen previously), is that human communication primarily entails "sharing," cooperation, and diffusion. Quoting Sir Leonard Wooley, Schramm proposed:

Civilization is indeed due to diffusion, but more of ideas than of models, and not from a single source but from many. . . . No nation, rich or poor, powerful or weak, can work out its salvation in isolation. The answers we are looking for cannot be found by any single culture alone. They can only be found together.²³

To the extent that Schramm touched at all upon conflict in his "story of human communication," his treatment was confined to struggles by determined humans to overcome constraints of time and space, and to otherwise "tame" nature:

Planet Earth's thinking animals have been locked in combat with time and space, natural forces, and other animals. Humans found that one of the greatest weapons was information. We chose, purposefully or unwittingly, a path that led us toward making information readily portable and preservable. . . . The history of language and, indeed, of communication in general has therefore been . . . a social history of *the long march of humankind and society*.²⁴

And again:

The invention of writing . . . gave humans an efficient way to share their knowledge . . . so all people could begin to climb from the highest step any of them had previously reached.²⁵

No “dialectic of Enlightenment” for Schramm! According to him, knowledge (and particularly scientific knowledge), *means* progress, pure and simple. Therefore, to inhibit the flow of (scientific) knowledge is tantamount to delaying the amelioration of the human condition. Recalling ancient Greece, Schramm speculated that by ignoring, scorning, and punishing the scientists of Ionia (Euclid, Archimedes, Ptolemy, Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Democritus), “prejudice and misplaced authority” had caused a loss of “a thousand years of intellectual growth.”²⁶

Significantly, too, Schramm replayed the conflict between Plato/Socrates and the sophists. According to Plato/Socrates (as per Schramm), education should *not* have as its goal power or efficiency, “but rather the disinterested search for the absolute, for wisdom, and for virtue.”²⁷ The sophists, on the other hand (still according to Schramm), were “professional educators, who were concerned with teaching “political effectiveness.” Quoting an entry in *Britannica*, Schramm added that sophists tried neither to attain nor transmit truth, offering instead “a formula for success in political life, which meant, above all, being able on every occasion to make one’s point of view prevail.”²⁸ According to Schramm, then, sophists’ focus on “practical results” helped train successful statesmen.²⁹

Schramm summarized the final consequences of the Plato-sophist controversy this way: “The sophists won financially. Plato won by the reputation of his books. Socrates lost by being sentenced to death.”³⁰ Every indication is that Schramm’s affinity was with the sophists.

As an aside, it should be noted once again that Plato/Socrates are not without controversy regarding their purportedly dogged pursuit of truth. After all, Plato and Socrates did advocate the *noble lie*. Moreover, some maintain that Plato deployed the Socratic dialogues more as a persuasive (rhetorical) device to support autocratic governance than as a means of drawing more closely to truth. These complexities aside, what is absolutely clear is that Innis would have been appalled by scholarship that places expediency or efficiency and political power ahead of the search for truth.

Nor did Innis celebrate science, as did Schramm. Far from viewing humankind as engaging in “a long march” (or people as climbing “from the highest step any of them had previously reached”), Innis was alarmed that science (space-biased, empire-oriented knowledge) was displacing concerns for time as duration and continuity. Innis was aghast, too, regarding conjunctures between media and the military, and with the mechanization of knowledge through mediated communication. Innis’s somewhat apocalyptic position is well summarized by the aphorism of Theodor Adorno: “No universal history leads from savagery to hu-

manitarianism, but there is one that leads from the slingshot to the megaton bomb.”³¹

Another enduring controversy, also noted by Schramm, is whether education should support or question the status quo.³² Stated otherwise, should education strive to add to, improve upon, and test knowledge, or should it merely preserve and transmit existing knowledge? For Schramm, although this conflict had played out continuously over the centuries, in the more recent hundreds of years, he attested, education has increasingly been asked “not merely to teach what had become customary and accepted, but also to question humankind’s picture of the universe and concept of the ideal society.”³³

Innis, though, understood matters quite differently. Innis lamented that education is now so aligned with political-economic-military power as to preclude probing deeply into contemporary life. Through mechanization, Innis maintained, education is increasingly concerned with standardization, as opposed to encouraging students to think critically. Innis maintained that education is becoming more present-minded, addressing only superficially issues of the day, and almost never probing enduring issues such as the nature of power, existence, knowledge, ideal human community, bias and misunderstanding, balance and proportion, the ideal human life.

Schramm acquiesced that contemporary mass media do have “least lovely aspects”: they are “thieves of time,” for instance; they are “ballyhooers of advertising or political candidates”; they are “purveyors of the cheapest content to attract the most people.” But, he quickly added, “let us not forget that these same media have performed an unequalled service in stretching human horizons and speeding up awareness of what happens beyond those horizons.” Whereupon he reiterated, “Of course, *we have had to trust the media* that represent us, for although they have become able to look and see and hear for us they still ask us to depend on them for what they look at and listen to. . . . It is hard to comprehend the power of the communication media until we realize *how much responsibility we delegate to them* to know and tell us what we need to know.”³⁴

So, just why would Schramm propose that we “trust the media that represent us”? One response is simply that we have little choice. Media *are* our eyes and ears for distant events. Schramm explained:

What we are asking the mass media to do is to sit on the hill and look down the valley for us—just as we did with the watchers 15,000 years ago. We are asking them to look where we do not have the time or opportunity to see, to be alert *for us*. . . . What a power we are delegating to the media!³⁵

That explanation by itself, however, provides cold comfort. Simply because there is little choice does not mean that media are adequate or even principled in constituting our eyes and ears.

Schramm emphasized an additional reason for trusting the media: *the ethos of journalism*. Even though media are increasingly concentrated, and although groups do try to exert influence over them, Schramm suggested that journalistic “responsibility” normally suffices to safeguard the public’s interest:

Taught from the beginning to seek out and report fact, the young journalist takes it as an article of faith that he is not to slant news toward private, personal, or group interest. This ethic pervades the news operation.³⁶

Innis, in contrast, proposed that the primary “responsibility” of newspaper *proprietors* is to advertisers. He quoted Ray Holland of Scripps-Howard for substantiation: “We come here simply as news merchants. We are here to sell advertising and sell it at a rate profitable to those who buy it. But first we must produce a newspaper with news appeal that will result in a circulation and make that advertising effective.”³⁷

Both Schramm and Innis, then, considered “responsibility” in the press; they differed widely, however, as to the identity of the party to whom the press is responsible. Nor did Innis share Schramm’s declared belief that newspaper reporters doggedly quest after truth. According to Innis: “*Slanting* the news . . . followed the growth of advertising and the use of press agents and publicity men.”³⁸ And quoting Laski, “The most important service rendered by the press and the magazines is that of educating people to approach printed matter with distrust.”³⁹

Here we see a major disparity in understanding, one might say a dialectic of opposing forces. Further light is cast on this in part III.

DIALECTIC OF DEMOCRACY

Both Innis and Schramm constructed what might be termed a *dialectic of democracy*. In this regard there are similarities, but also, of course, major differences.

According to Schramm, “cultural production is shaped by a culture, and a culture is shaped by people.” But, he added, there are also “people who are behind the culture that is behind the art,”⁴⁰ whose identity has shifted with time. Prior to mass media, people “behind the culture” comprised “a cozy little in-group” made up of patrons in royal palaces and cathedrals; at that time, therefore, artists made no effort to appeal to mass audiences.⁴¹ With the arrival of the middle class in the 1700s, however, as accompanied by the appearance of printed books, music halls, and other venues for middle-class audiences,⁴² art and entertainment began to enter the marketplace, to be bought and sold as commodities.⁴³ The “people behind the culture” thereby shifted from the wealthy few to the middle

class. According to Schramm, this was tantamount to a democratization of culture and art.

Moreover, according to Schramm, mass media/democratization utterly transformed the nature of art. Since the mass audience was less skilled/discerning than the art patrons of the previous era, art no longer encouraged participation, just spectatorship.⁴⁴ Schramm added,

The new system assigned a much more important role to the entrepreneur, the manager, and the salesperson than they had played in the old days. They represented the artist and the audience. Truly, art had become a commodity and education a business.⁴⁵

Rivers and Schramm asked boldly, "What is the effect of the mass media on American culture?"⁴⁶ Citing de Tocqueville, they responded: "A democracy cannot develop a culture of high quality and unquestioned merit." Continuing to cite de Tocqueville, they added that whereas in aristocracies a few great pictures were produced, in democracies a vast number of insignificant ones are produced: "In the former, statues are raised of bronze: in the latter, they are modeled in plaster."⁴⁷ Citing Dwight Macdonald, Rivers and Schramm continued that "mass culture is not just bad in and of itself: [rather] it homogenizes [i.e., debases] *all* culture."⁴⁸ They concluded: "The real thrust of the mass media is certainly not aimed at providing culture of the sort intellectuals approve."⁴⁹

Schramm and Rivers next touched on the question of whether it is the mass media or the "democratic" public that is most to blame for the lowering of artistic standards. On the one hand, they noted that some charge that mass media "prostitute themselves by pandering to the very lowest denominator of public taste."⁵⁰ On the other, they proposed, one should never overestimate the public's taste. In fact, they suggested, responsible content providers actually try to give audiences something better than what they think they want: "What can be claimed, clearly," they added, "is that the level of Mass Culture has risen perceptibly even as the mass media have become more powerful."⁵¹ And again: "The standards of media executives . . . unquestionably result in a better product than a mere parroting of taste would make possible. . . . The leaders of the popular-art media [try] to raise standards of public taste."⁵²

The essential paradox, or dialectic, regarding media and democracy, as formulated by Schramm and Rivers, therefore, is this: On the one hand, "man, as viewed by popular art, is what we might call *generalized man* or *common-denominator man*. . . . Popular art conceives man to be rather immature in his reactions to the teaching content of entertainment, and highly susceptible to moral corruption."⁵³ On the other hand, democratic theory requires that citizens be intelligent, rational, of good will, and capable of distinguishing between truth and error. How can these two, seemingly antithetical views of the average person be reconciled? Rivers and Schramm proposed two resolutions.

First, when experiencing “entertainment,” people may have “a different attitude and expectation” than when turning on the evening news or reading a newspaper: “They are much readier, in a motion picture theater or in a comfortable chair before the television set, to suspend their critical faculties.”⁵⁴

Second, as just noted, Schramm and Rivers proposed that media owners strive to raise the public’s tastes, standards, and powers to discern. Hence, the dialectic of democracy fades over time.

Like Schramm, (as seen previously in part I) Innis saw a basic contradiction between the extension of democracy to what he called the “lower literary types” vs. sound decision making. However, whereas Schramm maintained that mass media act responsibly to inform the public, to present all sides, and elevate tastes and understandings, Innis viewed media as the communication arm of established military, political, commercial, and economic power. Far from responsibly striving to elevate tastes and understanding, Innis saw media as intentionally distracting people from important issues, as presenting illusions (including the sham freedom of democracy), with which to manufacture consent; he viewed media as inculcating a monopoly of knowledge centered on superficiality, sensationalism, consumption, and hedonism—what might be termed, *present-minded possessive individualism*.

Moreover, Innis made no distinction between people in their entertainment mode vs. people in their citizenry mode. He maintained that “lower intellectual types” prefer distractions, entertainments, and superficialities to anything that might cause them to think.

Innis, then, offered no “resolution” to the democratic dilemma—except, perhaps, less democracy! However, he did advocate a renewed commitment to disinterested scholarship as a means of engaging in the struggle for clarity in the face of autocratic efforts to promote “necessary illusions.” Innis’s anti-democratic stance is taken up again in some detail in part III, with comparisons to Chomsky.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Schramm and Innis were founders of media/communication studies in their respective countries, and that fact is reason enough to compare their positions on media and communication. Their differences are stark. In the judgment of the present author, those differences stem in large part from the fact that Schramm was an “insider” in a powerful country, whereas Innis willfully remained at heart an “outsider” in a marginal country.

Consistent with his prioritizing practicality and efficiency over the search for truth, Schramm largely omitted from his scholarship considerations of human conflict and oppression, choosing instead to paint rosy

pictures of collective harmony, steady progress through the millennia, and good-will toward all. Schramm did not shy away from abundant self-contradiction. Nor did he acknowledge these self-contradictions, let alone attempt to resolve them.

The contrast with Innis could hardly be greater. Contradictions abound in Innis's work, too. But they are usually aspects of his dialectical cast on mind, and his insistence that we strive for balance and proportion, that we not be "fanatical," and that there are few simple solutions. Innis was devoted to pursuing truth (even while denying the capacity of anyone to attain it), and did so irrespective of where his inquiries might lead or the consequences (personal or otherwise) that could ensue. Far from insistently telling his readers how things are, Innis often admitted he knew nothing with certainty, that he was on a never-ending voyage of discovery. Far from viewing history as a steady march of human progress "from cave painting to microchip," Innis surveyed the fall as well as the rise of civilizations, emphasizing biases in human understanding, and warning of an impending new dark age. Furthermore, (as seen previously) Innis railed against totalitarianism in our day; he saw Western "democracies" as manifesting important similarities to totalitarian modes of governance, and deemed our democracy to constitute a "sham freedom."

Innis was not a glad-hander. He pursued his most critical research alone, without support from colleagues, without lucrative consultancies, and without the backing of research institutes and philanthropic foundations. Innis was not an academic entrepreneur; he was a scholar, and an honest one.

If asked to sum up the most important lessons to be drawn from comparisons of Schramm with Innis, I would propose the following:

- Scholarly acclaim need bear little or no positive correlation with scholarly integrity.
- Deception and dissembling in scholarship do not necessarily go unrewarded.
- Truth seeking among scholars is not necessarily bereft of retribution.
- But, seeking truth can be its own reward. "To love truth for truth's sake," according to John Locke as quoted by Innis, "is the principal part of human perfection in this world and the seed plot of all other virtues."⁵⁵ Or, to paraphrase Holy Writ (in deference to Innis's custom): *seeking truth shall set you free.*

NOTES

1. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, xvi.
2. William H. Rivers (1925–1996) was a practising journalist and later communication professor at Stanford, who authored or co-authored twenty-nine books. See Ste-

ven Chaffee et al., "Memorial Resolution: William L. Rivers." Presented to the Senate of the Academic Council, Stanford University, May 29, 1988, <http://historicalsociety.stanford.edu/pdfmem/RiversW.pdf> (accessed September 1, 2014).

3. Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: Hodder, 1995), 114.
4. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, 140.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Schramm, *Men, Women, Messages, and Media*, 115.
7. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 7.
8. *Ibid.*, 6.
9. *Ibid.*, 8.
10. *Ibid.*, 7; emphasis added.
11. Schramm, "The Nature of Communication Between Human Beings," 9.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 7.
14. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, 235; emphasis added.
15. This Halloween broadcast was intended as a prank. Nonetheless, thousands believed the simulation of news bulletins and so crowded train and bus stations, afraid that martians were landing.
16. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, 228.
17. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 7.
18. The authors cite David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd* (Yale University Press 1950), reprinted many times.
19. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 8.
20. *Ibid.*, 8, 9.
21. *Ibid.*, 10.
22. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, 29–30.
23. *Ibid.*, 30.
24. *Ibid.*, 45; emphasis added.
25. *Ibid.*, 64, emphasis added.
26. *Ibid.*, 111, 112.
27. *Ibid.*, 92.
28. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 92.
29. *Ibid.*, 91–92.
30. *Ibid.*, 92
31. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966; reprint, translated by E. B. Ashton, New York: Continuum, 2007), 320.
32. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, 99.
33. *Ibid.*, 99.
34. *Ibid.*, 144–45; emphasis added.
35. *Ibid.*, 291; emphasis in original.
36. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 4
37. Innis, "Technology and Public Opinion in the United States," 181–82.
38. Innis, "The Newspaper in Economic Development," 31.
39. Innis, "Industrialism and Cultural Values," 139; emphasis added.
40. Schramm, *The Story of Human Communication*, 254.
41. *Ibid.*, 254.
42. *Ibid.*, 260.
43. *Ibid.*, 255.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 190.
47. De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, quoted in Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 191.
48. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 192; emphasis added.
49. *Ibid.*, 195.

50. Ibid., 198, 197.

51. Ibid., 196, 195. Film critic Roger Ebert, reviewing the 1976 movie, *Network*, comments that the film “stirred up much debate about the decaying values of television; seen a quarter of a century later, it is a prophecy; when Chayefsky created Howard Beal, could he have imagined Jerry Springer, Howard Stern, and the WWF?” Roger Ebert, *The Great Movies* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), 320.

52. Rivers and Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, 201.

53. Ibid., 204, 205.

54. Ibid., 218.

55. Innis, “The University in the Modern Crisis,” 76.

III

Chomsky and Innis Meet

TEN

Meet Noam Chomsky

BEGINNINGS

Noam Chomsky's penchant for linguistics likely sprang from the influence of his father, William, a teacher and scholar who "wrote a definitive study of the Hebrew language."¹ Emigrating from the Ukraine in 1913, William initially worked in the "sweatshops" of Baltimore before attaining a position to teach Hebrew in elementary schools. Later, graduating from John Hopkins University, he became the principal of a religious school in Philadelphia.

As a child Noam Chomsky "was immersed in Jewish and Hebraic culture."² He declared, "My immediate family was kind of a Jewish ghetto in Philadelphia. My father was extremely orthodox, from an east European shtetl."³ His mother, born in Lithuania, also taught Hebrew in schools. Her relatives, many of whom were unemployed, included communists who were likewise "involved in a rich, vibrant intellectual life—ranging from music and art to political activity."⁴

Among Chomsky's earliest memories are those of people during the Depression "coming to the door selling rags," and of "riding in a trolley car with my mother and seeing women strikers being beaten up by security forces outside a textile plant."⁵ Young Chomsky heard Hitler's speeches on the radio, and was struck by the fear they aroused in his mother. "By the time I was nine or 10," he revealed, "I was reading newspapers, and [the quest for social justice] went on from there."⁶

Between the ages of two and twelve, Chomsky attended an experimental, progressive school premised on John Dewey's concept of "free and unstructured exploration"—as opposed to an "imposed curriculum."⁷ Chomsky recalled: "There was no sense of competition, no ranking of students." He added,

There was a tremendous premium on personal creativity, not in the sense of slapping paints on paper, but doing the kind of work and thinking that you were interested in. . . . It was a lively atmosphere, and the sense was that everyone was doing something important. . . . At least as a child, that was the sense that one had—that, if competing at all, you were competing with yourself. What can I do? But no sense of strain about it and certainly no sense of relative ranking.⁸

High school, however, differed altogether. “I was very surprised . . . that I was getting all A’s and that was supposed to be a big deal. That question had never arisen in my entire education. . . . And then there was the whole system of prestige and value that went along with that. And the intense competitiveness and regimentation.”⁹ Reflecting on those high school years, Chomsky confided, “There is a dark spot there. . . . It’s almost an absolute blank in my memory apart from the emotional tone, which was quite negative.”¹⁰

After enduring two more years of academic regimentation, albeit as an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania, Chomsky considered abandoning formal education entirely to live on a kibbutz. However, he had the good fortune to meet Zellig Harris, professor of linguistics at Penn. Not only had Harris inaugurated linguistics as a scholarly field in the United States,¹¹ but his left-Zionist (anti-state) anarchism and his left anti-Bolshevist and anti-Marxist politics¹² resonated with Chomsky. Consequently, Chomsky became a major in linguistics.

Upon attaining his undergraduate degree, Chomsky continued at Penn to study with Harris for a MA. By 1951, however, he had distanced himself from Harris’s linguistics, and by 1953, according to his editor, had broken “almost entirely from the [linguistics] field as it existed.”¹³ Whereas Harris focused on the surface structures of sentences (his goal being classification), Chomsky proposed a “deep structure” through which a “transformational grammar” produces those surface structures. The difference between Harris and Chomsky (briefly put), is the difference between description and explanation.¹⁴

In 1951, attaining a three-year fellowship (later extended to 1955), Chomsky moved on to Harvard, primarily to study with philosopher, W. V. Quine, whose behaviorist-related philosophic theories Chomsky subsequently denounced.¹⁵ In 1955, awarded a PhD by the University of Pennsylvania, Chomsky took up a position at MIT, purposefully choosing a university *without* a linguistics department in order to be less constrained in developing new ideas and new paradigms.¹⁶

At MIT, his undergraduate language course led to his first book, *Syntactic Structures* (1957), about which Professor Jean Aitchison of Oxford remarked: “In less than 120 pages, he turned linguistics from an obscure discipline, studied by missionaries, into a major social science; he shifted the question from the corpus of actual utterance to the mental system that produces it.”¹⁷ For his part, though, Chomsky has insisted there are im-

portant commonalities between his position and ideas circulating several hundred years before—in the writings of Descartes particularly.¹⁸ In 1961, Chomsky became full professor, with tenure, at MIT.

Beginning about 1964, Chomsky began engaging with students opposing the Vietnam War and the military draft. In October 1965, he and other protesters were, in his words, “attacked by hordes of people, and [we] were only saved by the state police: they didn’t like what we were saying but didn’t want people murdered on Boston Common.” In 1967, he was arrested (for the first time) at a Pentagon protest.¹⁹

Chomsky’s first major essay relating to political economy, “The Responsibility of Intellectuals,”²⁰ appeared in *The New York Review of Books* in 1967. There he wrote: “It is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak the truth and to expose lies.” Following that, he published dissident essays in periodicals like *Ramparts*, *New Politics*, and *Socialist Revolution*, thereby qualifying for Richard Nixon’s “enemies list.” His editor, Anthony Arnove, remarked: “From this point on, he was the subject of intense vilification by apologists for the system.”²¹ Chomsky’s first book of political economy, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, appeared in 1969. With time, Chomsky extended his activism from opposing the Vietnam War to critiquing and protesting American foreign policy in Palestine, Central America, South America, Iraq, Indonesia, Cambodia, and elsewhere.

CHOMSKY AND INNIS

In some respects, the formative years of Innis and Chomsky could hardly differ more. Chomsky was raised in a Jewish ghetto of metropolitan Philadelphia, Innis on a dairy farm in rural Ontario. Chomsky’s parents were teachers and scholarship permeated his household; Innis’s parents read little and never spoke “proper English.”²² Whereas Chomsky “grew up [with] an intense Jewish and Hebraic background,”²³ Innis was steeped in Baptist faith and theology.

On closer examination, however, striking parallels become evident. Both were born into lower middle class, albeit not impoverished, families. Both were marginalized at or by birth—Chomsky by dint of ethnicity and the anti-Semitism rampant in his neighborhood,²⁴ Innis by his rural roots (and, on a grander scale, his nationality). As children, both were immersed in ancient traditions bearing important commonalities. (In adulthood, Innis drew even closer, becoming agnostic as compared to Chomsky’s atheism.) Their deep familiarity as children with Christianity and Judaism, respectively, must have lingered, however, setting both apart in adulthood from existential nihilists like, say, Nietzsche and Foucault—and from fundamentalist zealots, whether patriotic, religious, or economic.

Although Chomsky's attending a progressive (Deweyite) school and Innis a one-room rural schoolhouse might at first blush seem antithetical, Innis's primary education likely corresponded with Chomsky's in important ways: "Specialization was avoided," Innis confided to his diary, "and the student given the best opportunity for rapid promotion." Neither Innis nor Chomsky, it would seem, was required or encouraged during their early formative years to conform rigidly to an established curriculum. Arguably, their mature years reflected that early freedom, both scholars striking out against the mainstreams of their initial disciplines to establish new fields, new paradigms, new understandings.

Both Chomsky and Innis were/are simultaneously insiders and outsiders. Innis was an insider in the sense of becoming the most respected academic in Canada, much honored and sought after as a policy adviser; he was also a highly-placed administrator at the University of Toronto. Chomsky, too, is an insider: "a graduate of the prestigious University of Pennsylvania, a former fellow at Harvard, a well-paid full professor and holder of a named chair at MIT, and the recipient of countless professional awards."²⁵ At the outset of his career, however, Chomsky (like Innis) initially was an outsider, rejecting and rejected by the mainstream of his first discipline. Interestingly, they both eschewed investigating surface phenomena: in Chomsky's case, he separated from Harris by insisting that in languages there is a "deep structure" producing surface phenomena (speech); according to Innis, similarly, there are "deep structures" producing the surface phenomena known as relative prices, relative prices being the preoccupation of mainstream economics.

Most significantly, having successfully challenged the mainstreams of their respective initial disciplines to forge their own approaches, both Innis and Chomsky took up as second disciplines, at least in part, political-economic analyses of media/knowledge/communication. In both cases, they earned the enmity of powerful establishments—the major difference here being that Chomsky has posed a far greater threat to political-economic-military power than Innis ever did; hence, arguably, the much greater negative response to Chomsky than to Innis. Still, the difference is one of degree, not of kind.

It is interesting to pause here and speculate on differences and similarities between Chomsky and Innis regarding factors motivating their political-economic analyses. As I argued in chapter 2, Innis saw the world about him collapsing into war and totalitarianism, universities capitulating to military-political-economic power, and scholars besieged on all sides by domestic enemies; he felt obligated to contribute to improving understanding in the hope that that might help slow down if not reverse such developments. Chomsky, too, was/is appalled by violence in the world and by the deceptive cloak of self-righteousness under which so much of that violence takes place—including cloaks woven by celebrated scholars and the world's most prestigious universities.²⁶

Also warranting some speculation are the ways in which the initial disciples of Innis and Chomsky relate to their political-economic analyses of media and knowledge. In the case of Innis, the relation between his two theses—the staples thesis and the medium thesis—is dual. On the one hand, they bear important similarities: Innis acknowledged that he was redeploying the tools used in the former thesis for his new project because they had proved useful (as well as wishing to test their limitations by putting them into a different analytical context). On the other hand, Innis's ontology and his method changed fundamentally: a quest for absolutism (also known as “a plea for time”) largely replaced his previous insistence on relativity. Arguably, this was a wrenching transformation, making it extremely unlikely Innis could ever have proceeded with both theses simultaneously for an extended period, no matter how long he might have lived. In his final, unfinished paper, Innis even called for a *universalist* economics, so imbued had he become with the quest for absolutes.

In Chomsky's case, the relation between his two disciplines is, if anything, equally complex. On the one hand, Chomsky has insisted that connections between the two strands of his scholarship are “tenuous”²⁷ to nonexistent.²⁸ Most importantly, he adamantly relates linguistics to science, whereas his political-economic analyses, he insists, derive merely from common sense.²⁹ As explained by Sperlich, unlike his political analyses, “Chomskyan linguistics takes years of training and dedication to the scientific method to advance new theories and make new discoveries.”³⁰ Elites, of course, routinely profess that formulating political-economic policy, too, requires deft skills, intense knowledge, and much experience. And that is a major reason, Chomsky affirms, why he hesitates “to try to link my work in linguistics to analyses of current affairs or of ideology. . . . I do not want to contribute to the illusion that these questions require technical understanding, [or that they are] inaccessible without special training.”³¹ A second likely reason why Chomsky chooses to emphasize disparities between linguistics and his political economy also is strategic. If the two areas became conflated in people's minds, linguistics might be less able to support his capacity to speak out and be listened to on public affairs.

On the other hand, Chomsky's two major areas *do* share much in common. Unlike the case of Innis, there is no fundamental bifurcation in philosophical orientation here! For example, Chomsky insists that humans' capacity to learn and use language points to freedom and creativity as being innate to the human species—a position consistent with (and likely grounding) his political-economic analyses.³² Chomsky's forceful and compelling critique of B. F. Skinner's behaviorist theory of language acquisition,³³ therefore, is not unrelated to his anarcho-libertarian political stance or to his crusades against injustices perpetrated by autocracies and plutocracies.³⁴ (More on this later.) Furthermore, Chomsky has spec-

ulated on similarities between a child's capacity to acquire language and his or her acquisition of moral judgment. In both cases, what a child acquires—a particular language, a specific moral judgment—Chomsky surmises, conforms to a deep and innate *structure* (or code) that delimits possibilities.³⁵ I will return to this ground for his political-economic analyses and his optimism in the next chapter.

In summary, whereas Innis underwent a fundamental (and likely agonizing) transformation as he shifted from staples to medium theory, Chomsky definitely did not. Chomsky's linguistics are fully consistent with, and support, his political-economic analyses of media, education, and knowledge. Hence, Chomsky (unlike Innis) can engage in his two fields simultaneously—and has done so for decades.

As developed at length below, the political-economic analyses of the two scholars conform in some remarkable ways. Like Chomsky, Innis related control over discourses (which he termed "monopolies of knowledge") to elite control of media and education. No objection from Chomsky here! Furthermore, both maintain such control is usually for totalitarian or at least self-aggrandizing purposes, as opposed to noblesse oblige or pursuing the common good. Both are/were very distrustful of those in positions of power, and consequently both have displayed an anarchic bent in their scholarship, more explicitly formulated in Chomsky's work, admittedly.

As adults, Chomsky and Innis were skeptics of the first order. Despite their deep skepticism, however, both have insisted that *truth is the goal*—always to be pursued, regardless of "inconveniences," personal and otherwise, that may in consequence arise. Importantly, then, their skepticism did not and does not extend to the ultimate skeptical position: namely, that the very notion of truth is itself delusional, or merely a self-serving construct of the powerful (see the Foucault-Chomsky exchange,³⁶ quoted below, for instance).

It would appear that both Innis and Chomsky adopted their ontological stance regarding truth after staring into the dark abyss. For Chomsky, that abyss comprised the fascist take-over of Spain, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki,³⁷ witnessing beatings of female strikers, riot squads killing/arresting/dispersing war protesters, the Vietnam War and the government's lies pertaining thereto, the military draft which resulted in the profuse killing of students and other citizens, both foreign and domestic—in brief, the banality of evil in high places, to borrow a phrase from Hannah Arendt. Innis, of course, stared evil in the face, too—while in the trenches of World War I, an experience one senses that was inextricably stamped onto his conscious and subconscious. Innis avoided attending Remembrance Day services, so painful were his memories.³⁸ In the 1930s, the rise of fascism and the prospect of another world war undoubtedly were strong motivators for Innis to shift fields, to pio-

neer inquiries into the political economy of media and communication, to study totalitarianism and misunderstanding in contemporary society.

The next two chapters identify and develop, respectively, differences (particularly regarding strategies and prospects for the future) and similarities in the media and communication thought of these two seminal scholars. Similarities in their understandings, significantly, shine through once their differences have been acknowledged and accounted for.

NOTES

1. Barsky, *Noam Chomsky*, 7.
2. *Ibid.*, 20.
3. Jaggi, "The Guardian Profile: Noam Chomsky."
4. *Ibid.*
5. Amy Goodman, "The Life and Times of Noam Chomsky: Noam Chomsky Interview," *Democracy Now*, November 26, 2004. <http://www.chomsky.info/interviews/20041126.htm> (accessed June 23 2012).
6. Jaggi, "The Guardian Profile: Noam Chomsky."
7. Barsky, *Noam Chomsky*, 16.
8. "Interview," *The Chomsky Reader*, 3–55; excerpted as "Personal Influences," <http://www.chomsky.info/books/reader01.htm> (accessed June 11, 2014).
9. Chomsky, "Personal Influences."
10. *Ibid.*
11. Sperlich, *Noam Chomsky*, 18
12. Chomsky, quoted in Barsky, *Noam Chomsky*, 58. One reason for Chomsky's rejection of some versions of Marxism is their denial of intrinsic freedom: "Within the Marxist left—not including Marx—there's a strong tendency to insist there is no human nature; that people are just constructed by their historical circumstances and environment. This makes no sense, but these ideas are very convenient for those who aspire to managerial politics; they remove moral barriers to manipulation and coercion. [But] if people have no fundamental human nature based on some instinct for freedom that can challenge and overthrow aggression and hierarchy, then there really are no moral values; if people are ignorant, malleable creatures who can be modified by experience and training, they can be controlled for their own good. That's an appealing idea to intellectuals across the political spectrum. Leninism is one expression of it, and social democracy is another." Quoted in Jaggi, "The Guardian Profile." Chomsky holds essentially a dialectical position on nature and nurture, not disputing that environment indeed plays a pivotal role in the formation of character: "The whole purpose of libertarian socialism is that it will contribute to [a fundamental change in human nature]. It will contribute to a spiritual transformation—precisely that kind of great transformation in the way humans conceive of themselves and their ability to act, to decide, to create, to produce, to enquire—precisely that spiritual transformation that social thinkers from the left-Marxist traditions . . . have always emphasized." Chomsky, "The Relevance of Anarcho-Syndicalism" (1976; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*), 147.
13. Anthony Arnone, "Foreword," *The Essential Chomsky*, viii.
14. Sperlich, *Noam Chomsky*, 33.
15. *Ibid.*, 34.
16. Chomsky related: "I had no prospects in a university that had a tradition in any field related to linguistics, whether it was anthropology, or whatever, because the work that I was doing was simply not recognized as related to that field—maybe rightly. Furthermore, I didn't have real professional credentials in the field. I'm the first to admit that. And therefore I ended up in an electronics laboratory. I don't know

how to handle anything more complicated than a tape recorder, and not even that, but I've been in an electronics laboratory for the last thirty years, largely because there were no vested interests there and the director, Jerome Wiesner, was willing to take a chance on some odd ideas that looked as if they might be intriguing. It was several years, in fact, before there was any public, any professional community with which I could have an interchange of ideas in what I thought of as my own field, apart from a few friends. The talks that I gave in the 1950s were usually at computer centers, psychology seminars, and other groups outside of what was supposed to be my field." See "Interview with James Peck, *The Chomsky Reader*, 15–16. See also, Chris Knight, "Noam Chomsky: Politics or Science?" *libcom.org*. <http://libcom.org/history/noam-chomsky-politics-or-science> (accessed November 8, 2013).

17. Jaggi, "The Guardian Profile: Noam Chomsky."

18. Barsky, *Noam Chomsky*, 93. Regarding Descartes, Chomsky states: "A central part of Descartes' argument for a sharp, even ontological distinction between humans and everything else in the world was that if you pose a question to a human being about a new topic using phrases that the person has never heard before, they can give you a new response relevant to what you said, which is not caused by any external circumstances, but which somehow comes out of some creative capacity of their mind. But the same thing won't be true of an automaton or an animal or anything else. . . . In human language, the product that comes out is *not* predetermined—it's undetermined, but still somehow appropriate to situations. . . . There was an attempt, right through the classical liberal period, by Rousseau and Humboldt, and others, to link up these elements and identify sort of a need and a right to freedom, an *instinct for freedom*." Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 216; emphasis added.

19. Jaggi, "The Guardian Profile: Noam Chomsky."

20. *The New York Review of Books* February 23 1967. <http://www.chomsky.info/articles/19670223.htm> (accessed 6 June 2013).

Originally a talk in 1966 to a meeting of Hillel at Harvard, this was his first major speech to other than a small circle of activists; therefore, it marked "his entry as an important political commentator." Sperllich, *Noam Chomsky*, 83. "Responsibility of Intellectuals" later became a major chapter grounding his first book on political economy, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, New York: Pantheon, 1969. The essay is also reprinted in at least two of Chomsky's compilations: *The Chomsky Reader* and *The Essential Chomsky*.

21. Arno, "Foreword," *The Essential Chomsky*, viii.

22. Personal correspondence, Mary Innis Cates to the author, October 17, 2014.

23. Quoted in Barsky, *Noam Chomsky*, 20.

24. Chomsky recalls that "for a large part of my childhood [we were] the only Jewish family in a neighbourhood that was mainly German and Irish Catholic—very anti-Semitic. . . . The neighbourhood was pro-Nazi—this was the 1930s—and I recall celebrations when Paris fell." Chomsky, "Noam Chomsky Interviewed by Eleanor Wachtel," *Queen's Quarterly* 101 (1), spring 1994, 64–65.

25. Barsky, *The Chomsky Effect*, 40.

26. In 1939, at the age of ten, he wrote an essay on the fall of Barcelona to the fascists. Years later, in an interview with Amy Goodman, he recalled the opening sentence: "Austria falls, Czechoslovakia falls, now Barcelona falls; what's going to come next?" He enlarged: "I mean, at that time it felt as if this black cloud of fascism was really spreading over the world. And it was very ominous." Elsewhere he remarked, "I was always on the side of the losers—the Spanish anarchists, for example." Chomsky, "Interview," *Chomsky Reader*, 13.

27. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 215.

28. Goodman, "The Life and Times of Noam Chomsky." Also, Interview with Chomsky by French linguist Mitsou Ronat (1977), as quoted in Robinson, "The Chomsky Problem," *New York Times*, February 25, 1979. <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F50B1EFE3B5511728DDAC0A94DA405B898BF1D3&scp=1&sq=>

arguably%20the%20most%20important%20intellectual%20alive&st=cse (accessed June 2 2014).

29. Asked just what qualifications entitle him to continually speak out and write books on world affairs, Chomsky responded: "None whatsoever. I mean, the qualifications I have to speak on world affairs are exactly the same ones Henry Kissinger has, and Walt Rostow has, or anybody in the Political Science Department, professional historians—none, none that you don't have. The only difference is, I don't *pretend* to have qualifications, nor do I pretend that qualifications are needed. I mean, if somebody were to ask me to give a talk on quantum physics, I'd refuse—because I don't understand enough. But world affairs are trivial: there's nothing in the social sciences or history or whatever that is beyond the intellectual capacities of an ordinary fifteen-year old. You have to do a little work, you have to do some reading, you have to be able to think, but there's nothing deep. . . . In fact, I think the idea that you're supposed to have special qualifications to talk about world affairs is just another scam. . . . It's just another technique for making the population feel that they don't know anything, and they'd better just stay out of it and let us smart guys run it. . . . The fact is, that's a joke." Chomsky, "The Fifth Freedom." Interview by Stephen Marshall. *Guerilla News Network*, November 2001 <http://www.chomsky.info/interviews/200111-04.htm> (assessed May 29, 2014).

30. Sperlich, *Noam Chomsky*, 9.

31. Chomsky and Foucault, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*, 74.

32. Chomsky, "Language and Freedom," *The Essential Chomsky*, 79.

33. Chomsky, "A Review of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*" (1959; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*), 1–32.

34. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 216; emphasis added.

35. Chomsky, "The View Beyond: Prospects for the Study of Mind." (1988; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*), 245; emphasis added.

36. Also, Foucault's essay, "Truth and Power," both in Chomsky and Foucault, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*, edited by John Rajchman (New York: The New Press, 2006), 140–71.

37. When the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Chomsky was sixteen. "I was in a Hebrew-speaking summer camp when news came. I found it shocking, and equally shocking to me was that nobody seemed to care. . . . No one saw it as an atrocity." Jaggi, "The Guardian Profile: Noam Chomsky." Also, Chomsky, *Class Warfare*, interviews with David Barsamian (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1997), 188–98.

38. Bladen, "Harold Adams Innis 1894–1952," 2.

ELEVEN

Visions and Strategies

This chapter surveys some of the stark differences between Chomsky and Innis, particularly with regard to their *visions* and *strategies*. Concerning *visions*, their most prominent (and core) point of departure is Chomsky's relative optimism vs. Innis's seemingly congenital pessimism. Regarding strategies, most manifest is Chomsky's direct engagement with political issues vs. Innis's repudiation of activism by scholars. Beneath the surface, however, and helping explain these differences, are other dissimilarities—for example, regarding their views on human nature, medium theory, basic levels of human intelligence, the ideal of the university—matters to be explored in this chapter.

By *visions*, Chomsky means, "the conception of a future society that *animates* what we actually do, a society in which a decent human being might want to live."¹ Chomsky's vision entails releasing or enabling *human nature*—allowing human nature to flourish. Before addressing in greater detail Chomsky's vision, therefore, it is necessary to be familiar with his understanding of human nature—an understanding that differs markedly from Innis.

CHOMSKY ON HUMAN NATURE

Is There Such a Thing?

According to Chomsky, "every form of engagement in social life is based on assumptions about human nature, usually only implicit."² Furthermore, every "animating vision must rest on some conception of human nature, of what is good for people, of their needs and rights, of the aspects of their nature that should be nurtured, encouraged and permitted to flourish for their benefit and that of others."³ A person's conception of

human nature, then, according to Chomsky, grounds and broadly shapes *animating visions*.

To even propose such a thing as “human nature” these days, however, Chomsky notes, is to open oneself up to accusations of being regressive.⁴ And understandably so! Problematic human behaviors—sexism, racism, war, possessive individualism, territoriality, competitiveness, and so on—have too frequently been deemed innate (a “selfish gene,” for instance, or an inherent “territorial imperative”), in which case authoritarian control, it can be argued, is both needed and justified to protect society against itself. To deny the existence of human nature, in this context, can seem liberating, progressive, and as opening possibilities for creating a more just, tolerant, and democratic social order.

While assuredly committed to a new social order, Chomsky nonetheless is of a much different mind—for two reasons. First, he regards the contention that there is no such thing as human nature as being utterly absurd: “Is my granddaughter no different from a rock, a salamander, a chicken, a monkey? . . . There is nothing ‘regressive’ about the fact that a human embryo is so constrained that it does not grow wings . . .”⁵

There is also a second reason why Chomsky rejects the claim that there is no such thing as human nature: namely, the horrendously totalitarian implications of there *not* being such thing. If people are inherently blank slates, he reasons, then any and all moral barriers to manipulation and coercion—even torture and genocide—disappear.⁶ Without an intrinsic human nature, in other words, there is no quality inherent to the human being that must be respected. For that reason, Chomsky speculates, elites often favor the empty organism view: It tends “to legitimate structures of hierarchy and domination.”⁷ Chomsky therefore distances himself from both Skinnerian behavioral psychology and from the authoritarian wing of Marxism, both in his view pronouncing “human nature” as being highly malleable, as being merely a product of the material conditions (or of operant conditioning), implying that human “progress” requires improving upon or remaking “human nature.”

What, then, in Chomsky’s view, *is* human nature? Here I discuss three aspects: an instinct for freedom, an innate moral code, and sufficiency of common sense.

What Is Human Nature?

- Instinct for freedom

In the first of his two *Russell Lectures*, Chomsky provided an overview of his linguistics, a major element being his premise that the human mind is not a blank slate (not a *tabula rasa*, as John Locke put it); rather, the mind is fitted to learn languages that share a common “deep” structure. The capacity to learn languages, Chomsky proposes, “constitutes an essential part of human nature.”⁸ On that basis, he surmises, freedom and creativ-

ity must be innate to the human species, too.⁹ Otherwise, how could children who have never been formally taught the rules of grammar ever use language—indeed, “say things [they] never said before and never heard before?”¹⁰ Humans are free and creative in using language, and that fact, according to Chomsky, points to a more general *instinct for creativity and freedom*. That instinct comprises (among other things) “the need for creative work, for creative inquiry, for free creation without the arbitrary limiting effect of coercive institutions.”¹¹

Chomsky concedes that science has not yet proved the existence of an instinct for freedom. Consequently, he suggests also a “Pascal-type wager,”¹² *choosing* to accept the existence of an instinct for freedom because denial is so dreadful in its implications.¹³ Suppose, for instance, that instead of an *instinct for freedom*, humans are beset by an *instinct for subservience* (or alternatively, as discussed above, at birth are empty vessels—a *tabula rasa*). Then, in Chomsky’s view, there would be few, if any, moral constraints to the exercise of power. The horrendous tactics used by Dr. Ewen Cameron and others during the Cold War to “de-pattern” patients, that is to “return” their minds to a *blank slate* through electric shock, drugs, noise, sleep deprivation, hypnosis, sensory deprivation, isolation, verbal and sexual abuse, and other tortures and indignities, is ample proof of Chomsky’s claim,¹⁴ as is the very title of behavioral psychologist B. F. Skinner’s famous 1971 book, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. Persistent contemporary attacks on the Enlightenment are easy to fathom, Chomsky explains, as Enlightenment consistently pursued “challenges the legitimacy of established coercive institutions”¹⁵ and supports fundamental “Rights of Man” (Thomas Paine).

- *Innate moral code*

According to Chomsky *moral judgment*, too, is rooted in human nature. In rejecting the proposition that morality is merely circumstantial, he departs from Skinnerian behavioral psychology, from poststructuralism/postmodernism, and from the *Realpolitik* (i.e., “*might makes right*”) of such celebrated political figures and theorists as Leo Strauss,¹⁶ Michel Foucault,¹⁷ Henry Kissinger,¹⁸ various U.S. presidents,¹⁹ and many others occupying high political office.²⁰

Chomsky’s first argument in support of an innate moral code is similar to his reasoning regarding an innate capacity to acquire language. According to Chomsky, “We can hardly doubt that [moral judgment] is rooted in fundamental human nature. It cannot be merely a matter of convention that we find some things to be right, others wrong.” He explains,

Growing up in a particular society, a child acquires standards and principles of moral judgment. These are acquired on the basis of limited evidence, but they have broad and often quite precise applicabil-

ity. . . . The acquisition of a specific moral and ethical system, wide ranging and often precise in its consequences, cannot simply be the result of “shaping” and “control” by the social environment. As in the case of language, the environment is far too impoverished and indeterminate to provide this system to the child in its full richness and applicability. . . . It seems reasonable to speculate that the moral and ethical system acquired by the child owes much to some innate human faculty. The environment is relevant, as in the case of language, vision, and so on; thus we can find individual and cultural divergence. But there is surely a common basis, rooted in nature.²¹

A possible objection to this argument could be that the child learns basic, or general, moral rules from the society, but must then apply them to myriad specific circumstances, many of which could not be anticipated during the time of acquisition. A test of Chomsky’s proposition, in such case, would be cross-cultural comparisons to detect a common or “deep” structure of moral code—not an exercise he has undertaken, to my knowledge. (This was precisely what Innis hinted at undertaking in his surveys of ancient civilizations! In this regard, see also C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*,²² where the author posits *The Tao* as a morality common to all civilizations.)

Likely realizing that objections could be mounted to his speculations, Chomsky completed his case by deducing the implications of the opposite presupposition: If humans do *not* possess an inherent moral code, arguably, the default axiom becomes either *might makes right* (Foucault, for example) or *anything goes* (Thomas Hobbes’s “state of nature”).²³ Chomsky’s position became crystal clear in his debate with poststructuralist, Michel Foucault, from which I now quote the most pertinent passages:

Foucault: *One doesn’t speak in terms of justice but in terms of power. . . . The idea of justice in itself is an idea which in effect has been invented and put to work in different types of societies as an instrument of a certain political and economic power or as a weapon against that power. . . . One makes war to win, not because it is just. . . . When the proletariat takes power, it may be quite possible that the proletariat will exert towards the classes over which it has just triumphed, a violent, dictatorial, and even bloody power. I can’t see what objection one could make to this.*²⁴

Chomsky: Well, here I really disagree. I think there is some sort of an absolute basis. . . . For example, if I could convince myself that attainment of power by the proletariat would lead to a terrorist police state. . . . I wouldn’t want the proletariat to take power. In fact the only reason for wanting any such thing, I believe, is because one thinks, rightly or wrongly, that some fundamental human values will be achieved by that transfer of power.²⁵

Chomsky's extensive political analyses indicate, sadly, that much of the world's foreign policy is driven by the axiom, *might makes right*, despite posturing by public officials to the contrary. One brief example may suffice to illustrate this point: When the World Court condemned the U.S. for increasing aid to Contras in Nicaragua, the UN Security Council called on all nations to observe international law, but the resolution was vetoed by the U.S. on a vote of 11 to 1; when the General Assembly passed the same motion 94 to 3, the press did not even report the vote. "Well, that's what it means to be a great power," comments Chomsky: "you do whatever you feel like."²⁶

To achieve social justice in the world, Chomsky might say, *innate moral code* must triumph over *might makes right*. Although in world affairs, the opposite all too often is the case, Chomsky's optimism, nonetheless, derives from his belief that a tension at least exists—as opposed to nihilists like Foucault who deny any such tension or dialectic is possible, maintaining instead that *might makes right* "is all that there is" (to slightly alter the words to the old Peggy Lee song)—that moral code, so-called, is merely a ruse foisted by elite power to ensnare the unsuspecting rascal multitude into supporting their nefarious ends.

- *Sufficiency of Common Sense*

A third property of human nature, according to Chomsky, is a common sense sufficient to enable everyday people (given enough information) to comprehend political affairs: "There is no body of theory or significant body of relevant information beyond the comprehension of the layman,"²⁷ he declares. And elsewhere: "There's nothing in the social sciences or history or whatever that is beyond the intellectual capacities of an ordinary fifteen-year old."²⁸ Chomsky adds, "My suspicion is that plenty of people in the crafts, auto mechanics and so on, probably do as much or more intellectual work as plenty of people in the university" where, he judges (correctly), much of the work is merely "clerical."²⁹

On the other hand, Chomsky does concede that most people do not have time, financial resources, or even the inclination to undertake in-depth research—to "read Pentagon records and figure out what happened,"³⁰ for instance. Consequently, the vital obligation of scholars and public intellectuals is to uncover and publicize facts that are difficult for the public to access, and use those facts to test assertions, slogans, platitudes, pieties, and policies of elites and their minions. In brief, the heavy responsibility of intellectuals is "to speak the truth and to expose lies."³¹ (Issues of intellectuals' responsibility and the nature of proper education are addressed below in greater detail.)

Innis On Human Nature

Innis was not one to speculate much on human nature. A likely reason for this was his medium theory, whereby he deemed human understanding to be subject to the intrinsic properties of communication medium as deployed by power elites. Nonetheless, Innis did make some remarks regarding aspects of human nature, so-called, as delineated by Chomsky. As seen previously, there is at least one instance in Innis's oeuvre where he mentioned an "instinct for freedom," for instance. There is also an occasion, however, where he mentioned "an instinct of subservience." Where Innis was much more insistent and consistent was with regard to the corruptibility of power, as detailed above at the close of chapter 6. In that regard, at least, Chomsky and Innis were largely agreed.

Nor was Innis, unlike Chomsky, inclined to place much confidence in "common sense." As seen previously, he distrusted the judgments of the "lower levels of intelligence," and even attributed the century of war to the press pandering to the interests and inclinations of the masses.

Finally, one would be hard pressed to detect in Innis support for propositions concerning an innate moral code. Like Foucault and others, Innis more likely subscribed to the view that powerful elites (deploying the then-predominant medium of communication) emboss the pliant minds of their subjected populations with "morality" suited to achieving their political-economic goals.

However, Innis rejected totally the proposition that might actually makes right. He did this by proposing that there is *natural law*, an "absolute or universal value,"³² a "state of permanence beyond time."³³ One suspects that Innis may even have intuited a "Pascal-type wager" as he scoured ancient civilizations in the hope of detecting absolute or universal value. Certainly, like Chomsky, he continuously affirmed the scholars' primary duty as seeking and speaking truth to the best of their abilities, albeit while always being open to other points of view.

Undoubtedly the most interesting question to come out of this discussion concerns the deeper implications of affirming a human nature along the lines of Chomsky vs. Innis's quest for natural law/moral principles beyond space and time. Both are supported, in the end, by a Pascal-type wager. I would argue, however, that Chomsky's position is the more egalitarian of the two, as he credits common people with sufficient common sense to govern themselves; Innis, in contrast, indicates that universal principles may not be all that obvious, that one needs to comb ancient civilizations in order to detect and affirm them; even Innis, renowned scholar that he was, in the end, did not pronounce what these moral principles actually are beyond striking balances between extremes and speaking truth. Innis's position is more Platonic than Chomsky's—more supportive, in other words, of philosopher-kings.

On the other hand, Innis was, if anything, dialectical. He affirmed that *power corrupts*. Presumably, that axiom applies to philosopher-kings, too. The other thing that Innis's proposition (and Lord Acton's) points to—and this he shares wholeheartedly with Chomsky—is his outright rejection of the slogan, *might makes right*. If power corrupts, might can *never* make right! Both Innis and Chomsky, albeit in their different ways, affirm objective value.

CHOMSKY'S VISION: ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

Chomsky's *vision*, known as *libertarian socialism*, and alternatively as *anarcho-syndicalism* is, he remarks, "the confluence of the two great [Enlightenment] currents, [namely] Socialism and Liberalism."³⁴ Chomsky regards anarcho-syndicalism as "the libertarian wing of socialism."³⁵ Elsewhere he remarked that anarcho-syndicalism

can be conceived as a kind of voluntary socialism . . . in the tradition of say Bakunin and Kropotkin and others [who] had in mind . . . a society that was organized on the basis of organic units, organic communities. And generally they meant by that the workplace and the neighborhood, and from those two basic units there could derive through federal arrangements a highly integrated kind of social organization, which might be national or even international in scope.³⁶

Of course Chomsky disdains *libertarianism on the right*, also known as *individualist anarchism*, for which novelist Ayn Rand³⁷ has been perhaps the best known recent exponent. University of Chicago economists, such as Friedrich von Hayek, Ronald Coase, George Stigler, Gary Becker, Milton Friedman,³⁸ and jurist Richard Posner, too, largely embraced this position, as does much of the Tea Party; acolytes have included economist Ludwig von Mises, central banker Alan Greenspan,³⁹ vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan, and movie *auteur* Christopher Nolan.⁴⁰ This "ultra-right," Chomsky notes, "is just loved by the big corporations,"⁴¹ adding that "the [U.S.] libertarian party would create the worst totalitarian monster that the world has ever seen."⁴² This is because "right-wing libertarianism . . . gives an ideological justification for [one] to have power and have no other value."⁴³ In brief, *might is right*.⁴⁴

Chomsky distinguishes also between right wing, or authoritarian ("state") socialism, vs. left wing (libertarian) socialism. *Right wing socialism*, he insists, is antithetical to freedom because it proposes bureaucratic control over the means of production. According to Chomsky, "democracy is severely limited when the industrial system is controlled by any form of autocratic elite—whether of owners, managers, and technocrats, a 'vanguard' party, or a state bureaucracy."⁴⁵ Like Innis, Chomsky saw strong parallels between so-called capitalist democracy and Soviet-style communism.⁴⁶

Although recommending as his *vision* anarcho-syndicalism, Chomsky rejects all rigid formulas; he opposes “ideological uniformity,”⁴⁷ whether ecclesiastical or political.⁴⁸ He denies, too, that “anybody, certainly not me, is smart enough to plan in any detail the working of a perfect society—or even to show in detail how a society based on humane commitments and concern for human values would function.”⁴⁹ He conceives anarcho-syndicalism, therefore, as dynamic, adaptable, and pragmatic—more as a “tendency in human thought”⁵⁰ than as an action plan or a model. His adaptability is well illustrated by his willingness to postpone *visions* for the sake of (short term) *goals*:

My short-term goals are to defend and even strengthen elements of state authority which, though illegitimate in fundamental ways, are critically necessary right now to impede the dedicated efforts to “roll back” the progress that has been achieved in extending democracy and human rights.⁵¹

Quoting Bakunin, Chomsky proposes that authentic liberty “consists in the full development of all of the material, intellectual and moral powers that are latent in each person, liberty that recognizes no restrictions other than the laws of our own nature.”⁵² And, citing Bertrand Russell: “The true end of social reconstruction [is] the ‘liberation of the creative impulse.’”⁵³ Accordingly, “any structure of hierarchy and authority carries a heavy burden of justification.”⁵⁴ If that burden cannot be met, Chomsky declares, the structure “should be dismantled.”⁵⁵ Quoting J. J. Rousseau, he notes that since “governments inevitably tend toward arbitrary power,”⁵⁶ they require particularly close and continuing attention.

Innis’s “Vision”

Innis recited the biblical injunction, “Without vision the people perish.”⁵⁷ For readers acquainted with Innis, that declaration must summon up a degree of melancholy. For, as noted previously, if Innis may be said to have had a “vision” at all, it was a negative one—slowing down civilization’s collapse. It was in that negative regard that he chastised contemporary present-minded scholars for their lack of “pre-vision.” In his preface to *Political Economy in the Modern State* he announced that he would present “no panaceas or answers to questions but rather [merely] raise new questions or at least . . . draw attention to the necessity of a carefully balanced approach to complex problems.”⁵⁸

The difference between Chomsky and Innis regarding visions stems ultimately from their different presuppositions concerning human nature, from Innis’s always-dialectical cast of mind, and from Innis’s extreme skepticism regarding the sufficiency of human knowledge. Also detracting from a possible “vision” on Innis’s part is the contradiction he saw between the inevitable corruptibility of those with power on the one

hand, and his stance that only a minority are interested in or intellectually capable of discerning/drawing closer to the “state of permanence beyond time,” on the other.

Freedom and democracy being central to Chomsky’s vision, one surmises that he would view Innis as placing his bet with the dark side of the Pascal-type wager. (Innis did foresee “the prospect of a new Dark Ages,”⁵⁹ after all!). Or, if not the dark side, at least as being unduly hesitant in affirming the side of light. To be sure, regarding democracy, Innis did exclaim: “Always keep a hold of nurse, for fear of finding something worse.”⁶⁰ Hardly a ringing endorsement, but an endorsement, nonetheless.

STRATEGIES

Since their views on human nature and their visions differ, so do their *strategies*. This section compares several of them.

Knowledge and Activism

Chomsky and Innis shared the conviction that scholars’ primary obligation is to seek and speak truth. With regard to seeking truth, Chomsky revised Marx’s famous maxim as follows: “If you want to change the world in a constructive direction, you better try to understand it first.”⁶¹ Knowledge, then, for Chomsky is a prerequisite to improving society. But one need not, and must not, await the perfection of knowledge before acting:

On all such matters [for example, regarding human nature] our knowledge and understanding are shallow; as in virtually every area of human life, we proceed on the basis of intuition and experience, hopes and fears.⁶²

Goals involve hard choices with very serious human consequences. We adopt them on the basis of imperfect evidence and limited understanding, and though our visions can and should be a guide, they are at best a very partial one. They are not clear, nor are they stable, at least for people who care about the consequences of their acts. Sensible people will look forward to a clearer articulation of their animating visions and to the critical evaluation of them in the light of reason and experience.⁶³

Innis, it seems fair to say, likewise devoted his scholarly life to attaining better understanding of the world, with the intent of contributing to improvements to (or, more likely, delaying deterioration in) the human condition. For him, however (as noted above), activism on the part of scholars *biases* their understanding due to the lack of detachment activism

necessarily entails. Furthermore, Innis agonized over the ineluctable incompleteness of (i.e., biases in) our knowledge, and deemed anyone “fanatical” who claimed certainty. Innis’s opposition to scholars becoming activists is his most basic difference from Chomsky.

Speaking Truth to Power

Not only is the need for experts much overstated, in Chomsky’s view, but speaking truth to power is quite useless anyway, he says, because those in power already know the pertinent truths. Moreover, *all* experts, even hitherto *authentic* ones, once conversing with power, will inevitably face temptations to become corrupt. Quoting Bakunin, Chomsky writes, “A new class, a new hierarchy of real and counterfeit scientists and scholars [would] seek to create the reign of scientific intelligence, the most aristocratic, despotic, arrogant and elitist of all regimes.”⁶⁴ Instead of speaking truth to power, then, Chomsky recommends that truth be spoken to “audiences that matter.” For him, audiences that matter encompass virtually entire populations lacking elite status. In his view, one important component of that population is students.

Innis on the other hand envisaged detached scholars disinterestedly informing public officials about objectively-attained findings, thereby contributing (he believed) to greater rationality in policymaking. In fairness to Innis, he did insist, too, that *all* power corrupts. Therefore, Innis did not recommend that scholars hold the reins of power (as did Plato)—merely that they increasingly *advise* power, or at least disinterestedly appraise policies enacted by power. In fact, Innis actually referred to a possible “tyranny of learning,” and advised that social science had become an “opiate of the people,”⁶⁵ indicating that his faith in the benign nature of scholarship was far from absolute. On the other hand, it is a narrow demarcation between disinterestedly advising power on the one hand, and identifying with power on the other. Innis knew that, as does Chomsky.

Freedom of Speech

Chomsky insistently supports freedom to speak, even for those whose views he finds abhorrent: to suppress the expression of repugnant views opens a dangerous door, he maintains. Chomsky has faith, as noted previously, in the intelligence and good judgment of common people to sift truth from error and to choose the moral over the immoral.

Searching through the corpus of Innis’s writings, in contrast, one is hard pressed to find corresponding support for unlimited freedom of expression, although (as noted above) Innis was unflinching in his support for *academic* freedom. One likely reason for this omission is Innis’s contention that “freedom of speech” inevitably favors “monopolies of

knowledge." In all ages, according to Innis, "common sense" and "intelligence" are biased by the means of communication. Free expression of ideas, therefore, will not necessarily resolve contemporary problems. Most likely another factor dissuading Innis from persistently championing universal freedom of speech was his skepticism regarding the intellectual capacity of the general public (as opposed to scholars) to reach sound judgment.

Both Chomsky and Innis claimed that elites (including scholars and public intellectuals) often *intentionally* propagate illusions to help shield themselves from scrutiny and accountability and otherwise to promote their own interests. In Innis's view, virtually the entire mainstream economics profession was doing just that!

Innis, more than Chomsky, maintained, however, that the general public actually *craves* illusions, deceptions, and entertainments, and that the general public is really not very interested in truth. To the extent that Chomsky would agree with Innis regarding these supposed traits of the general public, he would likely place a good deal of blame on the educational system, which (he maintains) inculcates possessive individualism from kindergarten on, and even *trains* students to be distracted from events important to the future well-being of society.⁶⁶ The views of these two scholars on education are treated more extensively in the next chapter, although some attention is paid immediately below.

Education

According to Chomsky, students are key to a better future. That is why education is so important. Reforming education, therefore, is a major strategy to implement his vision. The present system of pedagogy, however, he writes, largely misjudges students and therefore mis-educates them:

[Students] should not be seen merely as an audience but as a part of a *community of common concern* in which one hopes to participate constructively. We should be speaking not *to* but *with*. That is second nature to any good teacher, and it should be to any writer and intellectual as well. A good teacher knows that the best way to help students learn is to allow them to *find the truth by themselves*.⁶⁷

One can imagine Innis nodding his assent.

Both scholars expressed grave misgivings regarding authoritarian pedagogy. Innis's main concerns were that partial or biased accounts could be mistaken by students for the whole truth and that they would thereby be discouraged from engaging their own, critical thought processes; Chomsky's major concerns are that authoritarian pedagogy does not respect students' inherent *instinct for freedom* and that it indoctrinates them into an authoritarian/hierarchical cast of mind. Chomsky recom-

mended that teachers expose students to truth but never try to impose truth upon them. His proposal that “teaching should not be compared to filling a bottle with water but rather to helping a flower to grow in its own way,”⁶⁸ finds an almost exact correlate in Innis who remarked that graduate students ought not be “regarded as sausages to be stuffed with the particular brand of material produced” by their discipline.⁶⁹

Despite these commonalities, there is a major difference in the positions of Chomsky and Innis regarding higher education. Innis believed that wide access to higher education debases standards and results in present-minded curricula. Chomsky’s attention, in contrast, has been focused on reforming pedagogy for mass education, imbuing students with critical reading skills, and reinforcing their inherent creativity. For Chomsky, wide access to higher education is a *sine qua non* of democracy and human liberation

Ways for Attaining Knowledge

Important for attaining understanding, according to Innis, are orality and experiencing directly the places one plans to write about. Chomsky would seem to agree wholeheartedly. Regarding the importance of oral dialogue for attaining new knowledge, for example, Chomsky declared:

Very few people do scientific work by sitting alone in their office all their lives. You talk to graduate students, you hear what they have to say, you bounce ideas off your colleagues. That’s the way you get ideas, that’s the way you figure out what you think.⁷⁰

You learn through participation. You learn from others. You learn from the people you are trying to organize. . . . In many ways the most exciting aspect of the Occupy movement is the construction of the associations, bonds, linkages and networks that are taking place all over⁷¹ . . .

Chomsky, then, has an additional, important reason for advocating oral communication:

The only way to mobilize the American public that I’ve ever heard of—or any other public—is by going out and joining them. Going out to wherever people are—churches, clubs, schools, unions—wherever they may be. Getting involved with them and trying to learn from them and to bring about change of consciousness among them.⁷²

Remarkably, too, just as Innis traversed the Canadian wilderness by canoe to converse with the miners, trappers, and lumberjacks, so has Chomsky repeatedly visited areas afflicted by the American military to speak with the wounded, the terrorized, and the dispossessed—in large part to gain knowledge first hand.

Although both scholars emphasized the importance of conversation, in Innis, significantly, there is no hint of oral communication being a vital tool to ferment revolt or that scholars should take to the streets to help bring about reform. In fact, he was dead-set against all that!

Clarity

Chomsky is a crystal-clear writer. In his view, too much scholarship is intended *not* to be understood! Too often the style of exposition is *designed* to flaunt the virtuosity of the writer, as opposed to clarifying issues for readers.⁷³ Opaqueness in scholarship, moreover, can be a means of surreptitiously convincing the public that “experts” *must* decide.

Were Chomsky to read Innis’s media/communication works, therefore, he might well be dismissive, or at least frustrated, on account of the opaque style, and Innis’s lack of clarity of vision. In defence of Innis, however, his mode of exposition *is* consistent with his insistence that scholars refrain from declaring their findings and opinions as being the final word. Recall also that Innis stated that writing is useful for disseminating truth once attained but useless or counter-productive in searching for new truth.⁷⁴ Arguably, Innis’s “mosaic” style of writing was his strategy for using that medium to seek new truth, and accordingly is consistent with Chomsky’s proclaimed goal of encouraging readers discover truth for themselves. Furthermore, we made note previously of Innis’s apprehensions that elites might well suppress academic freedom should scholars unduly embarrass or contradict them. Innis had direct experiences with university administrators *not* supporting academic freedom in the face of clamor by politicians and the press,⁷⁵ and he would have been familiar with the witch hunts in U.S. universities.⁷⁶

But then, of course, Chomsky might well ask: Why possess the freedom to speak from the cloister of the university, if it only results in self-censorship for fear of losing that “freedom”?

MEDIUM THEORY

A final area addressed here where the views of Chomsky and Innis diverge significantly is *medium theory*. In his debate with Foucault, Chomsky stated that advancements in media technologies have the potential to *increase* democracy: through new media, “relevant information and relevant understanding can be brought to everyone quickly.”⁷⁷ He added:

[Media do not] have to be concentrated in the hands of a small group of managers who control all knowledge, all information, and all decision-making. So technology, I think, can be liberating, it has the property of being possibly liberating; it is converted, like everything else, like the system of justice, into an instrument of oppression because of the fact

that power is badly distributed. I don't think there is anything in modern technology or modern technological society that leads away from decentralization of power, quite the contrary.⁷⁸

And elsewhere:

In my view technology is a pretty neutral instrument. . . . [It] is a choice as to how to use technology and it's kind of class warfare, but it has nothing to do with the inherent nature of technology.⁷⁹

However, Chomsky quickly qualified those remarks: "Kids growing up [today] live in an imaginary world [on-line]. And they are even interacting with people who are adopting false personalities When much of your life is in an imaginary world with characters who you have created, and who have created themselves, and you don't have face-to-face interactions with—that can have psychic effects which I don't think we understand. It could be pretty malevolent."⁸⁰

A key aspect of Innis's *medium theory*, as noted previously, is the notion of *monopolies of knowledge*. According to Innis, through human history, albeit with rare exceptions, elite groups have dominated their society, culture, and polity by controlling the predominant medium of communication. By controlling the medium, they influenced the information and knowledge circulating in the society and thereby affected decisively the ways of thinking, ideologies, myths, concerns, norms, beliefs, values—indeed "the common sense"—of their populations. The "rare exceptions," for Innis, concerned those all-too-brief periods when no single medium predominated and hence no one group was in charge. In particular, Innis pointed to, and celebrated, the countervailing influences of time-binding orality and space-binding print.

In his media/communication writings, Chomsky paid relatively little attention to former civilizations.⁸¹ His focus on the contemporary period, then, may have inhibited him from emphasizing that diffusion of ownership/control of any particular medium may be insufficient to redress the prevailing *monopoly of knowledge*. According to Innis, on the other hand, groups controlling a medium, by definition, propagate knowledge affected by the properties of the medium itself; hence, there can be a monopoly of knowledge (summarized by the phrases, "space-bias" and "time-bias") even if ownership of the particular medium is unconcentrated.

Arguably, one can detect some support for Innis's position by Chomsky: organizations at the neighborhood, community, and occupational levels, and larger federations derived from these (such as Chomsky envisions), necessarily indicate a revitalization of oral communication. Moreover, Chomsky reminisces fondly about the small, progressive, Deweyite school of his early education, as opposed to the larger, autocratic, regimented one of his high school years. Furthermore, Chomsky's appre-

hensions regarding on-line interactions in place of face-to-face contact indicate some support Innis's medium theory.

One should not take this suggested "reconciliation" too far, of course: Innis definitely did not accede that contemporary media can be used to counter the prevailing monopoly of knowledge. "The technological advantages in communication shown in the newspaper, the cinema and the radio *demand* the thinning out of knowledge to the point where it interests the lowest levels and brings them under the control of totalitarian propaganda," Innis declared, then adding caustically: "The disappearance of the newspaper editorial has been offset by the rise of the comic strip."⁸²

The differences between Chomsky and Innis regarding *medium theory*, then, although subject to overstatement, are real. Perhaps Chomsky paid too little heed to inherent properties of media, and perhaps he would have benefited from explicitly taking Innis's notions of time-bias/space-bias/present-mindedness into account. Innis, conversely, may have given too little attention to the structures of ownership and control underlying media operations; media content may have greater autonomy from media technology *per se* than Innis thought. Juxtaposing the rich thought of these two seminal writers enriches our own understanding of the issues and the complexities involved.

This chapter has been dedicated to exploring differences between Chomsky and Innis, and to reconciling those differences so far as possible, while still being true to the authors' intent. The next chapter, devoted to their analyses of the contemporary political-economic situation, shows there is truly a remarkable convergence in their views.

NOTES

1. Chomsky, "Goals and Visions." (1996; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*, selected and edited by Barry Pateman, Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005), 190.

2. Chomsky, "The View Beyond: Prospects for the Study of Mind." (1988; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*, edited by Anthony Arno, New York: The New Press, 2008), 246–47; emphasis added.

3. Chomsky, "Goals and Visions," 190; emphasis added.

4. Chomsky, "Anarchism, Marxism and Hope for the Future" (1995; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*), 185.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Chomsky, "The Relevance of Anarcho-Syndicalism" (1976; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*), 147.

7. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy" (1990; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*), 174.

8. Chomsky, *Problems of Knowledge and Freedom: The Russell Lectures* (1971; reprint, New York: The New Press, 2003), 49.

9. Chomsky, "Language and Freedom" (1970; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*), 79.

10. Sperlich, *Noam Chomsky*, 9.

11. Chomsky and Foucault, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*, 37.

12. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy," 172.

13. Ibid.
14. Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 28–55. The CIA’s MK-Ultra program, supported financially by the Canadian government, enlisted eighty institutions, including forty-four universities and twelve teaching hospitals, including McGill University where Dr. Cameron carried out his experimental treatments.
15. Chomsky, “Containing the Threat of Democracy,” 172
16. Strauss was a University of Chicago philosopher who (like Plato) advocated the *noble lie*. Strauss inspired many in the Bush Cabinet, including Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz. See Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (1988; updated edition, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
17. Foucault is treated immediately below.
18. Quoting Henry Kissinger, Chomsky proposed that those considered to be experts in foreign affairs are mostly those “who grovel before authority, irrespective of the truth—or as he [Kissinger] would say, the ‘truth.’” Chomsky then commented: “The word ‘truth’ is placed in quotes, reflecting the contempt that Kissinger has always felt for the concept.” Kissinger’s actual statement was: “[The statesman] judges ideas on their utility and not on their ‘truth.’” See Chomsky, “Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia” (1978; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*), notes 16 and 18, p. 454.
19. Then-Vice President Bush proclaimed, “I will never apologize for the United States of America, ever—I don’t care what the facts are.” Statement reported in *Newsweek*, August 15, 1988. Supported by abundant documentation, Chomsky asserts that “by the principles of the Nuremberg trials, every single American President since [WW II] would have been hanged.” Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 56.
20. Innis quoted, with irony, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes: “‘Truth is the majority vote of the nation that can lick all the others.’” Innis, “The University in the Modern Crisis,” 79.
21. Chomsky, “The View Beyond,” 245.
22. C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*. 1943. <http://samizdat.qc.ca/cosmos/philof/AbolitionofMan.pdf> (accessed November 9, 2014).
23. Although Innis provides another possibility, namely a “state of permanence beyond time,” as discussed momentarily.
24. Chomsky and Foucault, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*, 50ff.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., 86.
27. Chomsky, “The Responsibility of Intellectuals” (1967; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*, edited by Anthony Arno. New York: The New Press, 2008), 47.
28. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 137.
29. Ibid., 96.
30. Ibid., 7.
31. Chomsky, “The Responsibility of Intellectuals,” 40; emphasis added.
32. Innis, “A Plea for Time,” 89; emphasis added.
33. Ibid.
34. Chomsky, “Preface to *Anthologija Anarhizma*.” (1986; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*), 149.
35. Chomsky, “Notes on Anarchism,” 123. Quote is from Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (1937).
36. Chomsky, “The Relevance of Anarcho-Syndicalism” (1976; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*), 133.
37. In a television interview (1959), Ms. Rand pronounced: “I am primarily the creator of a new code of morality which has so far been believed impossible, namely a morality not based on faith, not on arbitrary whim, not on emotion, not on arbitrary edict, mystical or social, but on reason; a morality that can be proved by means of logic which can be demonstrated to be true and necessary. Now may I define what my morality is? [I guess.] Since man’s mind is his basic means of survival [. . .] he has to hold reason as an absolute, by which I mean that he has to hold reason as his only guide to action, and that he must live by the independent judgment of his own mind;

that his highest moral purpose is the achievement of his own happiness [. . .] that each man must live as an end in himself, and follow his own rational self-interest." Quoted in Maria Bustillos, "When Alan Met Ayn: 'Atlas Shrugged' and Our Tanked Economy." *The AWL*, April 12, 2011. The web site includes a video extract from the original interview. <http://www.theawl.com/2011/04/when-alan-met-ayn-atlas-shrugged-and-our-tanked-economy> (accessed November 9, 2014).

38. See, for example, Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits." *The New York Times Magazine*, September 13, 1970.

39. Maria Bustillos, "When Alan Met Ayn: 'Atlas Shrugged' and Our Tanked Economy."

40. Ross Douthat, "The Politics of 'The Dark Knight Rises.'" *New York Times*, July 23, 2012. http://douthat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/23/the-politics-of-the-dark-knight-rises/?_r=0 (accessed November 9, 2014)

41. Chomsky, "Anarchism, Intellectuals and the State." (1996; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*), 215.

42. *Ibid.*, 215.

43. *Ibid.*, 218. Chomsky's assertion regarding power as the sole value, unmodified by any other, is affirmed, *inter alia*, by Milton Friedman's infamous letter to the *New York Times*. Here I quote merely from the concluding paragraph: "In my book *Capitalism and Freedom*, I have called it [i.e., the doctrine of social responsibility for businesses] a 'fundamentally subversive doctrine' in a free society, and have said that in such a society, 'there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.'" Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits," *New York Times*, September 13, 1970. <http://www.colorado.edu/studentgroups/libertarians/issues/friedman-soc-resp-business.html> (accessed 27 October 2013). That Friedman was not averse to terror and authoritarian rule, despite all his talk about "freedom," can be inferred from his consultancy with Argentine dictator and mass murderer, Jorge Videla, over an extended period of time. See Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 56ff.

44. And here we find explanation for "libertarian" Milton Friedman's advisory support to Argentine dictator, Jorge Videla. See *Ibid.*

45. Chomsky, "Notes on Anarchism." (1970; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*), 127.

46. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy," 169.

47. "Guardian Profile: Noam Chomsky."

48. Chomsky, "Notes on Anarchism," 118.

49. Chomsky, "Noam Chomsky Interview with Eleanor Wachtel," 71.

50. "Guardian Profile: Noam Chomsky."

51. Chomsky, "Goals and Visions," 193. He writes also, "The state is an illegitimate institution. But it does not follow from that that you should not support the state. Sometimes there is a more illegitimate institution which will take over if you do not support this illegitimate institution." Chomsky continues: "When you minimize the state, you maximize something else—and it isn't popular control. What gets maximized is private power, domestic and foreign. . . . When you eliminate the one institutional structure in which people can participate to some extent—namely the government—you're simply handing over power to unaccountable private tyrannies that are much worse. So you have to make use of the state, all the time recognizing that you ultimately want to eliminate it." Chomsky, *How the World Works*, 262–63.

52. Chomsky, "Notes on Anarchism," 122.

53. Chomsky, *Problems of Knowledge and Freedom*, 57.

54. Chomsky, "Goals and Visions," 191, 192.

55. Chomsky, "Anarchism, Marxism and Hope for the Future," 178.

56. Chomsky, "Language and Freedom," 77–78, quoting Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* (1755).

57. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 91.
58. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xvii.
59. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 138.
60. Innis, "On the Significance of Cultural Factors," 95.
61. Chomsky, *Occupy* (Brooklyn, NY: Zuccotto Press, 2012), 44.
62. Chomsky, "Goals and Visions" (1996; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*), 190.
63. Chomsky, "Goals and Visions," 190.
64. Chomsky, "Preface to *Antologija Anarhizma* (1986; reprint, *Chomsky on Anarchism*), 151. The quotations are from *Bakunin on Anarchism*.
65. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 120; and Innis, "A Note on the Universities and the Social Sciences," 286.
66. *Possessive individualism*, according to Innis's former student and colleague, C. B. Macpherson, means that humans are intrinsically covetous, implying that there should be in principle no restraint on their right to accumulate and that individuals need have no concerns for the well-being of others. According to Macpherson, inculcating this doctrine is the *real* business of political philosophers, or at least those with ambitions to consort with power. In *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* he traced through the origin and development of this doctrine, focusing particularly on the writings of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.
67. *Chomsky on Anarchism*, 21; emphasis added.
68. Chomsky, "The View Beyond," 233.
69. Innis, Untitled Address. Harold Innis Papers, UTA, Box 22, file 11, B72-0025, p. 7. Quoted in Massolin, "Academic Modernization and the Decline of Higher Learning." <http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1022/928>.
70. Chomsky, quoted in Barsky, *The Chomsky Effect: A Radical Works Beyond the Ivory Tower* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 5.
71. Chomsky, *Occupy*, 44–45.
72. *Ibid.*, 46–47.
73. "Don't forget, part of the whole intellectual vocation is creating a niche for yourself, and if everybody can understand what you're talking about, you've sort of lost, because then what makes you special?" He adds, "When I look at a page of Marxist philosophy or literary theory [he makes special reference to Derrida, Lacan, and Althusser], I have the feeling that I could stare at it for the rest of my life and I'd never understand it. . . . I don't believe that literary theorists or Marxian philosophers have advanced to some new intellectual level that transcends century after century of hard intellectual work. . . . My honest opinion is, I think it's all a fraud." Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 229–31.
74. "The oral dialectic is overwhelmingly significant where the subject matter is human action and feeling, and it is important in the discovery of new truth but of very little value in disseminating it." Innis, "A Critical Review," 191.
75. See Philip Massolin, *Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity, 1939 – 1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 82–83.
76. Arguably Western countries are experiencing a new wave of suppression of free speech. According to *New York Times* reporter, James Risen, for instance, President Obama is "the greatest enemy of press freedom in a generation" as he aggressively pursues journalists," including Risen himself, who report "sensitive stories that reflect poorly on the US government." According to *The Guardian*, "Risen faces jail over his reporting of a botched intelligence operation that ended up spilling nuclear secrets to Iran." See Joanna Walters, "James Risen Calls Obama 'Greatest Enemy of Press Freedom in a Generation.'" *The Guardian*, 17 August 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/17/james-risen-obama-greatest-enemy-press-freedom-generation>.
77. Chomsky and Foucault, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate*, 64.
78. *Ibid.*, 64.
79. Chomsky, "Interview With Barry Pateman," *Chomsky on Anarchism*, 225.
80. *Ibid.*, 226.

81. The most notable exception of which I am aware was his article of September 4, 2014, in which he referenced both Minerva's Owl and the birth of civilization "almost 10,000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent, stretching from the lands of the Tigris and Euphrates, through Phoenicia on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean to the Nile Valley, and from there to Greece and beyond." Even there, though, the major focus is on current atrocities and tragedies. See Chomsky, "The End of History?"

82. Innis, "The University in the Modern Crisis," 74.

TWELVE

Propaganda and Democracy

The previous chapter identified areas where Chomsky and Innis differ. This chapter reviews areas where they are substantially agreed.

FORCE AND OPINION

Chomsky has defined *politics* as “the organization of ordinary human life,”¹ adding that there are two basic methods of doing this: *force* and *opinion*.² *Force* is clear; *opinion* less so, and hence warrants further attention.

Opinion can refer to what governors respond to—a situation conforming to the ideal of bottom-up, or “authentic,” democracy. However, *opinion* can also be manipulated, in which case it is turned into a device for anti-democratic governance. Chomsky maintains that to mistake manufactured consent³ for democracy is to be beguiled by the *necessary illusion*.⁴

According to Chomsky, moreover, authentic (or bottom-up) democracy is quite rare; the democratic illusion, in other words, is pervasive. Governments we often term “democratic,” he says, are usually little more than “a conspiracy by the rich to guarantee their plunder.”⁵ Elsewhere, he described liberal democracy as a “relentless attack of the prosperous few upon the rights of the restless many.”⁶

However, although “plunder” (arguably) is common to most systems of governance, the *means* do change: “As the state loses the capacity to control the population by force,” Chomsky proposes, “privileged sectors must find other methods to ensure that the public is marginalized and removed from the public arena.”⁷ Hence, the importance to elites of manufacturing opinion.

Data, now well publicized, support Chomsky's claim that elites plunder less privileged citizens in Western "democracies." Table 12.1 depicts the distribution of U.S. household wealth for 2010: the top 1 percent of households accounted for 35 percent of net worth and 42 percent of financial wealth; the lowest 80 percent of households accounted for just 11 percent of net worth and 5 percent of financial wealth. Table 12.2 displays the distribution of household income in the U.S. for 2011. Again, the picture is clear: income, like wealth, is extremely concentrated. The wealthiest 1 percent of the U.S. population as a whole received twice the income of the poorest 50 percent combined. No wonder Chomsky maintains that autocratic or plutocratic leaders, intent on "plunder," regard their own country's population as their primary enemy.⁸ "Fear of [authentic, or bottom-up] democracy," Chomsky writes, is "deeply entrenched."⁹

Recently, more refined (and more shocking) data have been published. Economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, for the prestigious National Bureau for Economic Research, state that the wealthiest 0.1 percent of the U.S. population (about 160,700 families) accounted for 22 percent of wealth in 2012, up from 7 percent in 1979.¹⁰ Decomposing the distribution of wealth among the wealthiest 160,700 families for 2012, the authors found that 0.01 percent (or 16,070 families) accounted for 11.2 percent of the wealth of the richest 160,700 families. Meanwhile, the bottom 90 percent of families (144,600,000 families) accounted for 22.8 percent of household wealth. The wealth accounted for by the richest 0.1 percent equals the combined wealth of the lower 90 percent of U.S. families. According to the National Center of Family Homelessness, 2.5 million, or one in thirty, American children were homeless in 2013.¹¹

In the absence of blatant or extreme force, Chomsky asks, how is such bald-faced inequality possible? His answer: the über-wealthy *control* opinion (as opposed to merely responding to it), making "democracy" in the U.S. an illusion—albeit a *necessary* one from the perspective of the small, wealthy minority.¹²

The next section will review some of the ways whereby populations are inculcated with the necessary illusion, which is to say with the belief that they actually live in a democracy. First, though, comparisons between Innis and Chomsky on the relations between force and opinion are in order.

Chomsky and Innis Meet on Force and Opinion

Innis's understanding of governance in contemporary Western "democracies" accords well with Chomsky's. Innis declared: "The fundamental problem of civilization is that of government or of keeping people quiet, or following Machiavelli 'to content the people and to manage the nobles.'"¹³ As noted previously, Innis also maintained that "the political

Table 12.1. Net Worth and Financial Wealth Distribution in the U.S. 2010

Net Worth Distribution (%)	Financial Wealth	Distribution (%)
Top 1 percent	35	42
Top 5 percent	63	72
Top 10 percent	77	85
Top 20 percent	89	96
Bottom 80 percent	11	5

Source: G. William Domhoff, "Wealth, Income, and Power," *Who Rules America?* <http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html>, accessed Nov. 12 2013

realization of democracy invariably encourages the hypnotist," and that contemporary democracy is a "sham"¹⁴ because "political duplicity has become an asset of first importance in democratic countries."¹⁵ Innis also asserts that in propagating cultural uniformity, states and corporations discourage "all exercise of the will or the belief in human power," thereby "paralyzing"¹⁶ the population.

Significantly, Innis also proposed that governors have at their disposal two broad means for keeping people in line, namely *force* and *opinion*. In fact, Innis quoted the same passage from Hume as Chomsky (albeit more briefly):

As Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. 'Tis, therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular.¹⁷

Although Chomsky and Innis both affirmed Hume's contention that to stay in power governors must have popular opinion on their side, both modified Hume's larger claim, namely that force is always on the side of the governed. According to Chomsky, as a matter of historical record, governors often brutally crushed popular uprisings. For him, therefore, *force* (or what he has also termed "objective power"¹⁸), is not always or even usually on the side of the governed—in the short run. Moreover, Chomsky went beyond Hume to propose that control of thought is *more* important for "free and popular" governments than it is for "despotic and military ones,"¹⁹ simply because the former have largely set aside (or at least are more reluctant to blatantly use), the harshest means of keeping people in line.²⁰ Thereupon, Chomsky revised Hume's dictum as follows: "Government is typically founded on modes of submission short of force, even where force is available as a last resort."²¹ And as an alternative reformulation: "The public must be reduced to passivity in the

Table 12.2. Distribution of U.S. Household Income, 2012, by Percentile

% of Households	% of Income
Top 1 percent	22.5 percent
Top 5 percent	38.6 percent
Top 10 percent	50.5 percent
Bottom 90 percent	49.5 percent

Source: Noah Chestnut, "17 Charts About Income Inequality Obama Should Read Before the State of the Union," *New Republic* n.d. <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116361/17-charts-about-inequality-obama-should-read> accessed July 7 2014

political realm, but for submissiveness to become a reliable trait, it must be entrenched in the realm of belief as well."²² However, Chomsky is, if anything, nuanced. Despite the foregoing, he also states that nonviolence *can* win against state violence, at least in the *longer term*. No matter how many people the army or police gun down, he proposes, there will be many others to take their places. Even more importantly, when people protest nonviolently, it is less likely they will be slaughtered; over time, non violent protests *will* likely topple autocratic regimes. Nonviolence, according to Chomsky, effectively counters objective power.²³

Similarly to Chomsky, Innis distinguished between Hume's *force* (based on sheer numbers) and *organized force* (what Chomsky termed, *objective power*): Innis wrote: "Ultimate power rests in the hands of the army. . . . Armed force based on the effective linkage between economic power and political power becomes supreme."²⁴ However, whereas Chomsky optimistically foresees a democratic future where the means of coercion have been set aside, Innis pessimistically doubts that democracy is sustainable. In Innis's writings, there is little or no mention of peaceful protest. Here, then, we spot yet another source of Innis's pessimism—and an indication of the conflict he must have felt in his scholarship: the more scholars (like himself) succeed in de-illusioning people, the more likely it becomes that the coercive and repressive powers of the state will be aroused and brought to bear to restore compliance.

As noted in chapter 6, Innis deemed both organized force and democratic public opinion as being undesirable extremes, with the dialectic between them playing out through the manufacture of consent. Innis, of course, did not endorse the manufacture of consent any more than he favored organized force; perhaps forlornly he pined instead for middle/upper-class opinion (informed by authentic scholarship) plus the rule of law. Chomsky, on the other hand, exuberantly supports authentic democracy, deeming the general public's intelligence and good judgment to

be far more sound than Innis ever did. Reasons for Chomsky's exuberance and optimism in this regard were discussed in the previous chapter.

However, notwithstanding these deep and real differences, Chomsky and Innis were largely on the same page in addressing *current* governance, propaganda, persuasion, media, and education. Such is the subject matter of this chapter.

MANUFACTURING CONSENT

For Chomsky, in *formally* democratic societies—that is, where mechanisms exist whereby “ordinary people may, *in theory*, play some role in shaping their own affairs”²⁵—*the manufacture of consent* is absolutely required for elites to sustain gross inequalities. Both Chomsky and Innis devoted considerable attention as to how formally democratic mechanisms, such as the First Amendment and the right to vote, fail to ensure authentic (or bottom-up) democracy. This section reviews several of the ways, according to Chomsky and Innis, whereby plutocrats successfully retain control in formally democratic countries. In other words, we explore some of the means for manufacturing consent and for concocting/maintaining the necessary illusion.

1. Formal Education

Chomsky views mainstream schools as being primarily “institutions for indoctrination and for imposing obedience.”²⁶ Training for obedience, he asserts, begins in kindergarten²⁷ and continues thereafter. Schools inculcate “passivity, submissiveness to authority, the overriding virtue of greed and personal gain, lack of concern for others, fear of real or imagined enemies, etc.”²⁸ (These are not the only things schools do, of course, but Chomsky's listing is important as its components are seldom acknowledged, let alone questioned.)

Chomsky maintains that throughout history, schools have been tasked with the role of inculcating deference and compliance.²⁹ In the nineteenth century, he notes, working class parents in the United States often resisted compulsory mass education for their children as they understood it to be primarily a device to instill elite (capitalist) values. Employers and professional classes, on the other hand, welcomed and supported compulsory mass education, viewing it as an effective way of “promoting social and political stability” and of preparing workers “for the labor market through testing, vocational guidance, and vocational education.”³⁰ Employers knew, too, that mass education could be used to malign collectivities/collective action (e.g., unions, strikes, protests, boycotts, not-for-profit, and co-operative enterprises), to save employers

some expenses in training workers, to imbue punctuality in employees, and to promote acceptance of business values.³¹

Schools today, Chomsky remarks, likewise instill “obedience and subordination,”³² and do this in a number of ways. One way is through the competitive testing of memorized materials, which discourages students from critically assessing or creatively building on course materials. (As an aside, if students show too much creativity, they may even be accused of “plagiarism,” as was my son Michael when his parody of Mordecai Richler’s *Jacob Two-Two* was insistently but erroneously deemed by his Grade 5 teacher to be beyond his skill level.)

Second, by imbuing students with *patriotism*³³ and linking that to elite leadership, schools implant an outlook that is likely to cloud critical faculties for years to come (cf. part II of the present book). Patriotic citizens are prone to accept uncritically elite policies marketed as being in “the national interest” (free trade agreements, for example, or NSA spying). Chomsky remarks, “Once you have been well educated, you have already been socialized in ways that support the power structure, which, in turn, rewards you immensely.”³⁴

The problems identified by Chomsky pertain not only to primary and secondary schools, but to universities as well. He states: “I have no illusions about the intellectual community. It is conformist; it possesses techniques for marginalizing or trying to eliminate critical and independent thought. It has always been true, remains true today.”³⁵

Despite the foregoing, Chomsky also affirms, however, that “one of the great achievements of American democracy has been the introduction of mass public education, from children to advanced research universities.”³⁶ From that statement one can infer that Chomsky sees great *potential* in mass education to contribute to a more just and more democratic social order. For democracy to become real instead of merely an illusion, Chomsky writes, a “whole series of things . . . have to happen, [but] they begin with awareness; you don’t do anything without awareness.”³⁷

Chomsky and Innis Meet On Formal Education

Innis agreed that a principal means whereby elites control their populations has been education. In ancient Babylon, for instance, priests controlled the art of writing, and consequently “scribes, teachers, and judges assumed the religious point of view in general knowledge and in legal decisions.”³⁸ Similarly, in the middle ages, parchment was controlled by the monasteries, supporting thereby another monopoly of knowledge. Later, “paper supported the growth of trade and of cities and of education beyond the control of the monasteries.”³⁹ Likewise, according to Innis, mechanized education today supports commercial and military power by emphasizing present-mindedness.

Serving as a member of the Manitoba Royal Commission on Adult Education (1945-1947), however, Innis did not say any of that—at least not initially. Rather, he and his fellow commissioners proposed as their point of departure the opposite, namely that governments are sincere in trying to facilitate democratic participation. If that proposition were true, Innis and his colleagues reasoned, then educational policies and practices would reflect that intent.⁴⁰ Sadly, they found, the evidence did not support that assumption. They concluded instead that education rarely equips or even encourages students “to make up their own minds”; for the most part, rather, the educational system stultifies intellectual capability:

An emphasis on uniformity of examinations is accompanied by an emphasis on uniformity of subjects. . . . [There has been] a systematic closing of students' minds. Initiative and independence have been weakened. Factual material, information, classification, reflect the narrowing tendencies of the mechanization of knowledge in the minds of staffs and students. . . . The university graduate is illiterate as a result of the systematic poisoning of the educational system. Student and teacher are loaded down with information and prejudice. The capacity to break down prejudice and to maintain an open mind has been seriously weakened.⁴¹

Both Chomsky and Innis, then, expressed grave misgivings over the effect of contemporary compulsory mass education. Where they differed was that Innis factored in what he believed to be the consequences of the predominant media used by educators, whereas Chomsky is more direct. For instance, Innis drew attention to textbooks and other “mechanical” modes of instruction: by discouraging oral dialogue,⁴² he argued, the textbook becomes “a powerful instrument for the closing of men’s minds.”⁴³

Chomsky, too, addressed the authoritarian property of the printed word; in doing this, moreover, he contributed an insight not found explicitly in Innis: “You’re supposed to read [“Great Works”] because it’s the truth, or it’s the great thoughts or something. And that’s kind of like the worst form of theology. The point is, it doesn’t matter *what* you read, what matters is *how* you read it.”⁴⁴ Chomsky, in other words, stressed critical reading skills, whereas Innis merely bemoaned the authoritarian power of print. On the other hand, (and this is an important “other hand”), Innis likely adopted his fragmented style of writing to encourage readers into assuming a critical, thoughtful, creative stance in their studies, as well as to expose through contrast the normally authoritarian properties of print.

Chomsky and Innis also expressed similar views regarding what an *authentic* education would be like. Quoting Bertrand Russell, Chomsky advised:

The goal of [authentic] education . . . is “to give a sense of the value of things other than domination,” to help create “wise citizens of a free community,” to encourage a combination of citizenship with liberty and individual creativeness, which means we regard “a child as a gardener regards a young tree, as something *with a certain intrinsic nature*, which will develop into an admirable form, given proper soil and air and light.”⁴⁵

Likewise, according to Innis, “the task of the social sciences is to discover, not persuade.”⁴⁶ Education “should produce a philosophical approach which will constantly question assumptions, constantly weaken the overwhelming tendency, reinforced by mechanization, to build up and accept dogma, and constantly attempt to destroy fanaticism . . . to produce the open mind.”⁴⁷ For Innis, moreover, education should enable students to discriminate, which to him meant being able to “appraise problems in terms of space and time [and] to take the proper steps at the right time.”⁴⁸ That recommendation aligned with his insistence that education develop “character” in students, as opposed to merely cramming their heads with more facts.⁴⁹ According to Innis,

We should be concerned like the Greeks with *making men* [i.e., with enabling “men”] to choose the facts and reach their own decisions, not with overwhelming them by facts disseminated with paper and ink, film, radio and television. . . . One of the aims of education [should be] to break the strong hold of the present on the mind.⁵⁰

2. Manufacturing Fear

A second means for promoting docility and compliance in formally democratic countries, according to Chomsky, is to instill fear in the domestic population. Chomsky goes even further: “*Every* government has a need to frighten its population.”⁵¹ Governors must do this, Chomsky writes, because they *know* their “system of domination is fragile”;⁵² hence, “communism, crime, drugs, terrorism,” and other scary things are continually publicized. “Pretexts change,” Chomsky adds, but “policies remain rather stable.”⁵³

Crises are particularly opportune times for elites to implement measures that shift “wealth and power even more into [elite] hands.”⁵⁴ In mock advice to political leaders, Chomsky writes: “Inspire fear of terrible enemies about to overwhelm us, and awe for our grand leaders who rescue us from disaster in the nick of time.”⁵⁵ He summarizes, “Jingoism, racism, fear, religious fundamentalism . . . are the ways of appealing to people if you’re trying to organize a mass base of support for policies that are really intended to crush them.”⁵⁶

Furthermore, manufacturing fear, Chomsky notes, increases support for military spending which, he points out, “is our method of industrial

management—it's our way of keeping the economy profitable for business."⁵⁷ Without fear, military spending would seem like sheer waste.

Ominously, Chomsky relates fear mongering on the one hand and government subsidization of armaments industries on the other, to *fascism*. He declares that "fascism does not mean gas chambers; it means, rather, a special form of economic arrangement with state coordination of unions and corporations and a big role for big business. . . . [It means] massive government intervention in the economy to coordinate it and protect it from hostile forces such as too much competition."⁵⁸ Military spending to sustain the economy is ideal, from the perspective of elites, precisely because it is *so anti-democratic*:

Military spending doesn't redistribute wealth [progressively] . . . it doesn't create popular constituencies or encourage people to get involved in decision-making. It's just a straight gift to the corporate manager. . . . Stuart Symington [first Secretary of the Air Force] put the matter very plainly back in 1948; he said: "the word to use is not 'subsidy,' the word to use is 'security.'"⁵⁹

Chomsky and Innis Meet On Fear Mongering

Innis also emphasized that modern economies are war economies. In order to justify military expenditures (and the siphoning of wealth from the general populace to select groups), enemies must be found. Quoting Fuller, Innis wrote: "'The dependence on war becomes even more vital to our economic system than the dependence of war on industry.' 'Should an enemy not exist he will need to be created.'"⁶⁰ And again quoting Fuller: "'A war cannot be carried on without atrocity stories for the home market.'"⁶¹ Thereby, Innis enfolded news media into the military-industrial complex.

3. Rendering Power Invisible

Another way of "detering democracy," of manufacturing consent, is by obscuring the real locus of power. Reminiscent of Plato's *shadow in the cave*, Chomsky quoted John Dewey: "Politics is the shadow cast on society by big business."⁶² Today, however, according to Chomsky, the source casting the shadow has been rendered almost invisible; it is now so remote from consciousness "that we're left with antipolitics."⁶³ Although democratic forms persist, Chomsky continued, still reflecting on Dewey, they have become quite ineffectual, and will remain so until "the system of actual power, the source of coercion and control, is unraveled."⁶⁴

There are numerous ways whereby the "ideological institutions"⁶⁵ obscure real power. One is mindless entertainment. Television, for instance, "distract[s] people from understanding their real problems or

identifying the sources of their problems. Instead, those mindless shows socialize the viewer to become a passive consumer. . . . The goal is to keep people isolated from real issues and from each other.”⁶⁶

Another way of hiding power is by inducing people to internalize their oppression. Regarding wage labor, for example, Chomsky writes:

Anyone who thinks it’s legitimate to be a wage laborer is internalizing oppression in a way which would have seemed intolerable to people in the mills, let’s say, 150 years ago. So that’s again internalizing oppression, and that’s an achievement. . . . It’s a tremendous achievement of the oppressor to instill their assumptions as the perspective from which you look at the world.⁶⁷

Arguably, textbooks are major instruments whereby the assumptions and perspectives of the oppressors are instilled in formative and unsuspecting minds of students, thereby inducing them to internalize their own oppression—present and future. Textbooks instruct readers on how things were, are, how they can be, and should be, and according to Chomsky at least, the consistent perspective imparted is that of the plutocratic/corporate/military elite.

A third way of rendering power invisible is by dissociating *policies* from *politics*.⁶⁸ By *politics*, Chomsky means the razzle dazzle of elections and electioneering, parliamentary debates, political conventions that select leaders and candidates, horse race journalism, emphases on the personalities of professionally-managed image candidates, party organizations and membership drives, rallies and other spectacles such as photo-ops, sound bites, political polls, PR and political advertising, press coverage of peccadilloes of those in high political office, honors bestowed, ceremonies attended, and so on . . . and on. By *policies*, in stark contrast, he means (for example) free trade agreements, “right to work” legislation, corporate tax cuts, corporate subsidies, social welfare-net reductions, bank bailouts, regressive tax enactments (in Canada, the Tax Free Savings Accounts legislation comes particularly to mind), whistle-blowing suppressions, *Espionage Act* charges, deregulation of business, use of drones for targeted assassinations, secret NSA surveillance of citizens, Homeland Security, lapse of civil liberties, police misconduct, defense spending, waging wars, propping up fascist-like regimes abroad, UN Security Council vetoes, environmental despoilments, shipping detainees to Guantanamo, and so on. (In Canada and the U.S., other ways policy is separated from politics, are by rushing giant *omnibus bills* through the legislature, foreclosing meaningful debate and public scrutiny, and negotiating so-called “free trade” agreements behind closed doors.)

Policies linger and/or are repeated. Chomsky reviewed for example, consistency in Vietnam *policies* through five presidential administrations (*politics*), even though several presidents when campaigning (*politics*) fa-

vored peace. Compare, too, President Obama's electioneering proposals (*politics*) regarding whistleblowers to his actual *policies*.⁶⁹

Chomsky also observes that political leaders are drawn almost exclusively from "the business world."⁷⁰ That places business interests at the heart of political decisionmaking, thereby reducing corporations' need to manage legislation directly.

More generally, the simplest yet effective way of obscuring power is simply misdirection: "One of the serious illusions we live under in the United States, which is a major part of the whole system of indoctrination," Chomsky claims, "is the idea that the *government* is the power"; in reality, "the government is one segment of power. Real power is in the hands of the people who own the society."⁷¹ Corporations and corporate boardrooms—the real loci of power—are of course far from democratic. And they are generally far from public scrutiny. Hence, Chomsky's particular interest in the seldom-mentioned Trilateral Commission and its publication concerning the "excess of democracy."⁷²

Chomsky concludes: "People have their opinions; they can even vote if they like. But policy goes on its merry way, determined by other forces."⁷³

Innis and Chomsky Meet on Invisible Power

Innis would find little with which to disagree in Chomsky's analyses of distraction and invisible power. Innis wrote, after all: "As modern developments in communication have made for greater realism they have made for greater possibilities of delusion. We are under the spell of Whitehead's *fallacy of misplaced concreteness*."⁷⁴ The shell and pea game of the country fair has been magnified and elevated to a universal level."⁷⁵

Innis understood, moreover, there is a tight nexus among media, business, and government—so much so, he exclaimed, that "the fourth estate has disappeared."⁷⁶ Newspapers strive to attain readers in order to garner revenues from advertisers. Advertising, in turn, "narrows relations between the newspaper and the commercial world."⁷⁷ Quoting Kennedy Jones, Innis declared that with advertising, journalism changed from a profession into "a branch of commerce." He continued, "Slanting of the news which has followed the growth of advertising and the use of press agents and publicity men has enabled government departments to maintain representatives to inform the press . . . to interpret and to guarantee the *right* interpretation to newspapers in search of news."⁷⁸

Are Innis's indictments unduly harsh, one might well ask? Journalists have faced and continue to face prison, for example, for failing to heed governments' insistence they reveal their sources.⁷⁹ Journalists have forfeited and continue to risk their lives in order to send stories home.⁸⁰ Chomsky has always taken pains to acknowledge that there *are* responsible journalists, that the press system *is not* entirely closed. What he (and

Innis) describes, rather, are the main currents (as he sees them), the more general truths that may be overlooked on account of the brave actions of journalism's minority.

4. State Religion, Secular Priesthood

Essential to perpetuating illusions of democracy, according to Chomsky, is the *secular priesthood*,⁸¹ also termed the *caste of propagandists*. It functions to "disguise the obvious, to conceal the actual workings of power, and to spin a web of mythical goals and purposes [represented as being] utterly benign."⁸² In brief, this group spins state actions in ways so that they seem to conform to *the official ideology*,⁸³ termed also the *state religion*.⁸⁴ To criticize the tenets of the state religion, Chomsky adds, is to risk being ex-communicated (or, one might add, being denounced as a "left-wing nutbar" — as was Pulitzer Prize winner, Chris Hedges, on CBC television in an interview with arch conservative Kevin O'Leary).⁸⁵

So what exactly *is* the state religion? According to Chomsky, it comprises several axioms (we might say, *canons*), including:

1. "*The nation is an agent in international affairs, not special groups within it.*" Chomsky writes that foreign policy is normally "designed and implemented by narrow groups [who] control the domestic economy."⁸⁶ He explains, "within the nation-state, the effective 'national purpose' will be articulated, by and large, by those who control the central economic institutions."⁸⁷ A corollary would be that each and every use of such terms as *nation* and *national interest*, purporting to justify government action, is really "just mystification."⁸⁸ For instance, "the standard observation that the United States stood alone in rejecting the Kyoto protocols is correct only if the phrase, 'United States,' excludes its population, which strongly favors the Kyoto pact."⁸⁹
2. "*The nation is guided by certain ideals and principles, all of them noble.*"⁹⁰ Regarding the U.S., that canon is some times referred to as *American exceptionalism*.⁹¹ Chomsky calls it "the cloak of moralistic righteousness."⁹² It entails viewing history and current affairs not on the basis "of the factual or documentary record," but rather "in terms of professed ideals."⁹³ It, too, in Chomsky's view, is utterly false. "States [governments] are not moral agents," he avers; rather, they are "vehicles of power which operate in the interests of the particular internal structures of their societies."⁹⁴ "The United States, in fact, is no more engaged in programs of international good will than any other state has been."⁹⁵
3. *The beneficence of profit seeking and of monopolistic markets.* As Chomsky explains, the canon is "that private vices lead to public benefits." According to that doctrine, each individual narrowly seeking

his or her advantage unintentionally benefits everyone else. The economy “is *supposed* to be driven by greed,” Chomsky remarks. “No one’s supposed to be concerned for anybody else, nobody’s supposed to worry about the common good—those are not things that are supposed to motivate you, that’s the principle of the system. . . . That’s what they teach you in economics departments. It’s all bullshit, of course, but that’s what they teach you.”⁹⁶

4. “*Universal validity for what is in fact a class interest.*”⁹⁷ Among other things, Chomsky points to “free trade” agreements as instances where this canon is operationalized. Other examples, Chomsky might agree, include tax cuts for the wealthy, deficit reductions and balanced budgets, building and filling bigger prisons, whistleblowing legislation, “right-to-work” policies, reduced minimum wages, and an over-blown military.

Like other religions, the *state religion* has “taboos.” These are the unmentionables. After reviewing primary documentation regarding the formation of American foreign policy in the 1950s and 1960s (including the Pentagon Papers), for instance, Chomsky notes that academic scholarship completely ignored the primary materials.⁹⁸ He asks: Why would scholars ignore the primary documentary record? For Chomsky the answer is obvious: the documentary record reveals the hypocrisy of the canons of the state religion,⁹⁹ for example the canons of American exceptionalism and the state as a moral agent. Ignoring the documentary record is “a marvelous device for obscuring social reality.”¹⁰⁰

Another issue assiduously avoided by mainstream scholarship, thereby constituting a *taboo*, is the influence of American corporations on foreign policy.¹⁰¹ Chomsky suggests that “an anthropologist observing the phenomenon . . . would have no hesitation concluding we are dealing here with a form of taboo.”¹⁰²

Although Chomsky points to certain intellectuals as being or having been preeminent members of the secular priesthood—Martin Heidegger (in Germany),¹⁰³ Arthur Schlesinger, W. W. Rostow, Irving Kristol, Walter Lippmann, and Edward Bernays in the United States, for instance—in his view the problem is far more endemic than a mere listing of names would indicate. He attests, “The resulting subversion of scholarship is systematic, not individual.”¹⁰⁴

Chomsky and Innis Meet on State Religion and Secular Priesthood

Whereas Chomsky wrote of the *state religion* and the *secular priesthood*, Innis wrote about *secular religion*, *high priests of science*,¹⁰⁵ *witch hunts*, *exorcisms*, and *medicine men*.¹⁰⁶ According to Innis, with regard to experts from abroad advising the Canadian government during the Depression: “Medicine men from Great Britain tend to be regarded as more potent . . . In the past a medicine man from abroad has been regarded as worth

about six of the local product.”¹⁰⁷ Innis drew attention also to “the miraculous,” to the “fantastic things” the high priests, “or perhaps it would be fair to say the pseudo-priests,” had conjured up—most notably the atomic bomb.¹⁰⁸ He declared that the “decline of philosophy and theology has brought demands for new temples and for new prophets. . . . The accountant has penetrated the holy of holies. . . . Economics have displaced creeds.”¹⁰⁹ According to Innis, contemporary individuals now embrace “new religions evident in fascism, communism, and our way of life.”¹¹⁰ Again: “And so we entered the open seas of democracy in the twentieth century with nothing to worship but the totalitarianism of the modern state.”¹¹¹

Innis certainly would agree with Chomsky that “states are not moral agents.” Innis declared, after all, that “power is poison.”¹¹² Innis also would agree with Chomsky that political leaders have a congenital loathing and fear of authentic democracy. Like Chomsky, Innis warned against “experts,” and against all those who claim to “have found the truth.”¹¹³ Innis disdained the prevailing “intolerance . . . to skepticism,”¹¹⁴ and warned against “a fanatical nationalism.”¹¹⁵ He cited James Joyce’s remark that “nationalism, religion, and language are nets set for [a country’s] children.”¹¹⁶ Innis even proposed that “the divine right of nations has replaced the divine right of kings.”¹¹⁷ He also declared that “the rapid growth of bureaucracies recruited from highly specialized social sciences has brought the rapid growth of ecclesiasticism and the rapid decline of skepticism.”¹¹⁸

For Innis, present-mindedness suits secular authoritarian control, as citizens are thereby deprived of “anchors” (moral principles), rendering them unable to judge; Chomsky made a similar point in his call for a sense of memory to detect patterns through time, and his contention that education and media tend to efface intrinsic moral judgment by propagating possessive individualism. There is, in fact, a remarkably close correspondence between Innis’s concept of “present mindedness” and Chomsky’s notion of “possessive individualism.”

5. Obliterating Class

Elites can take actions disadvantaging the broader domestic population, according to Chomsky, because in the United States, at least, mentioning “class” is *taboo*: “You’re not allowed to talk about class differences,”¹¹⁹ he notes. “As soon as you say the word ‘class,’ everybody falls down dead; there’s some Marxist raving again.”¹²⁰ Chomsky writes: “The myth that we live in a classless society is a joke but believed by most people. . . . You will never find *ruling class* [mentioned by the media or in classrooms] for sure. It is just suppressed. And working-class students like those in my daughter’s class do not consider themselves working class.”¹²¹

Given that all talk of *class* is stigmatized, governments and corporations are freed to pursue narrow class interests. If everyone believes we are all “Americans,” or all “Canadians” —just “one happy family [with] a national interest . . . all working together”¹²²— then policies and decisions will tend to go unchallenged, or at least not be challenged in terms of class interest.

(Chomsky might agree that obliteration of *class* is likely a key reason why most national governments support the Olympic Games; their support is aimed not merely at diverting attention from things that matter— although that assuredly is an aim—but more importantly at unifying domestic populations behind the national banner, thereby adding credence to the notion that governments likewise invoking national symbols are acting in the “national interest.”)

Class in America is, of course, ever-present. For the past thirty years or so, Chomsky declares there has been “a really quite bitter class war that has led to social, economic and political arrangements in which the system of democracy has been shredded. . . . For the past generation, policies have been initiated that have led to an extremely sharp concentration of wealth in a tiny sector of the population . . . literally the top tenth of one percent of the population.”¹²³

Chomsky and Innis on Obliterating Class

Innis did not refrain entirely from using the word, “class.” He wrote, for instance, of the “penetration of journalism to the lower classes.”¹²⁴ He quoted Lord Acton approvingly that “government by the whole people, being the government of the most numerous and powerful class, is an evil of the same nature as unmixed monarchy.”¹²⁵ He wrote also that “in the economic history of literature and journalism in England and the United States the class structure occupies a dominant position.”¹²⁶ Nonetheless, the *word* “class” appears only infrequently in Innis’s oeuvre. On the other hand, the *concept* of “class,” is omnipresent—through such constructs as monopolies of knowledge, empire, control, force, opinion, power, persuasion, hierarchy, governors, centralization, domination.

Innis’s concern regarding the obliteration of class from people’s consciousness, however, seems if anything to be the opposite of Chomsky’s. Innis was concerned that by obliterating the notion of class, the “lower levels of intelligence” were attaining too much clout. However, it is certainly worth remembering that Innis expressed grave doubts also about the ruling class: regarding the working class, he doubted its competence; regarding the ruling class, however, he distrusted its integrity.

THE "FREE PRESS"

Like Innis, Chomsky claims that far too much credit is accorded the First Amendment as guaranteeing freedom of speech and freedom of the press.¹²⁷ A major reason for Chomsky's skepticism pertains to the political-economic structure of ownership and control of the press. It is not considered to be an infringement on freedom of speech or of the press, Chomsky notes ironically, if a handful of business corporations dominate the media system.¹²⁸

So extensive (and empirically-verifiable) are the systematic limitations of free expression in the United States, that Chomsky (with Edward S. Herman) famously proposed a *Propaganda Model*. According to the authors, the *Propaganda Model* comprises "a complex system of filters in the media and educational institutions which ends up ensuring that dissident perspectives are weeded out or marginalized in one way or another."¹²⁹ Among a myriad of examples, Chomsky points to the paucity of press coverage pertaining to the downing of civilian aircraft by America's "friends," which he compared with the exuberance of the press in covering the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 by the Russians in 1983.¹³⁰

Consider another example: just prior to the U.S. invasion of Panama (1989), Panamanian authorities arrested and beat the spouse of an American officer. As partial justification for invading Panama, President George Bush proclaimed that "this President" would not stand by while American womanhood was being threatened,¹³¹ all of which was duly reported, of course. However, Chomsky notes, "the press did not explain why 'this President' refused even to issue a protest when, a few weeks earlier, an American nun, Diana Ortiz, had been kidnapped, tortured, and sexually abused by the Guatemalan police [Guatemala being a U.S. ally and client state]—or why the story was not worth reporting when it appeared on the wires on November 6. Nor were Bush's 'deep feelings' contrasted with the response of 'this President' to the treatment of American women and other religious and humanitarian workers in El Salvador [another U.S. ally and client state] a few weeks later."¹³²

The bias in reportage is so severe and of such grand importance that Chomsky and Herman developed acerbic terms—for example, "benign and constructive blood baths," and "politically correct holocausts"—to underline through irony the immoral or amoral thinking of military elites and their comrades in the press corps:

Bloodbaths carried out by counterrevolutionary regimes ordinarily are given very little attention in the U.S. mass media. Thousands have been slaughtered by the Rightists installed and/or supported by the United States in Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, but even a sharp media watcher would have to be alert for the small back-page items in which these events are hinted at. The huge rape and slaughter of Ben-

galis in East Pakistan carried out by West Pakistani military forces in 1971 was given greater publicity, however, and a small segment of the American public became aroused and active in opposition to American policy in this area. This resulted in part from the sheer magnitude of the massacres, which one authority described as “the most massive calculated savagery that has been visited on a civil population in recent times.” For the Nixon administration, nevertheless, this was a “benign” bloodbath, and its scope and brutality failed to deter Washington from continuing military and economic aid to the government engaging in the slaughter. This was a bloodbath imposed by a friendly military elite with which U.S. authorities had a traditional affinity.¹³³

The foregoing extract, incidentally, is emblematic of constraints on press freedom that go well beyond the case studies cited. The book from which the aforementioned extract was taken, *Counterrevolutionary Violence: Bloodbaths in Fact and Propaganda*, was pulped by Warner Communications, as were all other books of its subsidiary, Warner Modular, the subsidiary itself being shut down and liquidated,¹³⁴ so “unpatriotic,” evidently, were the publisher and its publications.

So, although formally there is freedom of inquiry and of speech in the U.S., Chomsky summarizes, “we cannot pretend that there is freedom of opinion in any serious sense.”¹³⁵ To the contrary, the media and the press “are vigilant guardians protecting privilege from the threat of understanding and participation.”¹³⁶

As may be evident from the foregoing, a primary method Chomsky and Herman developed for testing the *Propaganda Model* was the pairing of examples—which differs markedly, incidentally, from traditional press content analyses as set forth in mainstream research methods textbooks.¹³⁷

Again, it is to be emphasized that Chomsky acknowledges, however, that media are not completely closed to dissent. When there is division among elites themselves, journalism has much greater freedom to maneuver. When there is little or no disagreement among elites, however—which is often the case (particularly regarding foreign policy in the U.S. and “free trade” agreements in Canada)—then professional journalism is usually quite univocal. *Even then*, however, Chomsky grants, openings for investigative reporting *do* exist and “*there are* people in the media who look for them and find them.” He concludes, “So the main point is not total suppression of information by the media—that’s rare, although it certainly exists; the main point is the shaping of history, the selection, the interpretation that takes place.”¹³⁸

On the other hand, Chomsky concedes, in some important respects, the U.S. *is* an open society: dissenting opinions are not usually crushed by state violence; freedom of inquiry and expression surpass that of most other countries.¹³⁹ That degree of openness that *is* permitted, however, he

surmises, is because the system of indoctrination, beginning with the schools, is so effective.

Chomsky and Innis Meet on The "Free Press"

Innis, likewise, maintained that freedom of the press in America is much overrated, the First Amendment notwithstanding. According to Innis (as seen previously), the First Amendment *reduced* freedom of speech. And Innis would certainly agree with Chomsky that the press today is in large part a publicity/PR arm of the military-industrial establishment. More generally, Innis contended that the predominant medium of communication in any culture or civilization is normally aligned with political-economic-military power.

Again, consistently with Chomsky, Innis saw media as serving similar functions as schools, namely closing people's minds and inhibiting critical thought. He wrote:

A later American publisher insisted on printing "what any human being would be interested in—something that will not cause people to think, that will not even invite them to think—to enable them to forget rights and wrongs, ambitions and disappointments. . . . Success in the industrialized newspaper depends on constant repetition, inconspicuous infiltration, increasing appeal to the subconscious mind, and the employment of tactics of attrition in moulding public opinion."¹⁴⁰

Innis and Chomsky agreed, too, that the press often serves elite power by making citizens fearful and hateful, thereby preparing them to support war and inuring them to atrocities performed at the behest of their wise and compassionate leaders. Innis wrote, for example, "the influence of the press has been evident in the saturation of all classes with feelings of instability and bitterness,"¹⁴¹ and again: "A war cannot be carried on without atrocity stories for the home market."¹⁴² According to Innis, moreover, "A period of tension and war enormously increases the executive power."¹⁴³

Innis did differ somewhat from Chomsky in his analyses of the relations between the press and war. Chomsky, of course, views the press as the publicity arm of the military, selling war on behalf of the militarized government to normally peace-loving civilians. Innis, in contrast, maintained that publishers saw war coverage as an opportunity for tapping new markets to increase newspaper subscriptions. Writing at the close of World War II, Innis claimed that "European civilization [had] turned from persuasion to force or from ballots to bullets,"¹⁴⁴ and proposed that an important explanation was the press responding to the interests of the lower classes: "The delicate machinery for maintaining peace in the last century . . . apparently disappeared; the press thrived on personalities

and instability followed."¹⁴⁵ Democracy, he averred, "obsesses" on fear, and bureaucracies "capitalize on fears."¹⁴⁶

It is difficult to say how much we should make of these differences. As James Winter (in private correspondence) asked: "Does this just represent differences over time? Are the two objectives of making profits or selling papers and supporting the military mutually exclusive? Did they [Innis and Chomsky] both believe it was both, but with Innis emphasizing the former more?" What is crystal clear, however, is this: Innis and Chomsky both discerned a strong alignment between the press system and the military, important victims of this unholy alliance being freedom of expression—and peace.

OPTIMISM/PESSIMISM REVISITED

Chapter 11 contrasted Chomsky's optimism with Innis's pessimism. Innis, it will be recalled, even contemplated "the prospect of a new Dark Ages."¹⁴⁷ Sad to say, Chomsky may now be moving in that direction.

On September 4, 2014, Chomsky published "The End of History?," which is likely the most pessimistic piece he has ever written. "The End of History?" recounts (very briefly) the rise and fall of civilizations over the past 10,000 years. Interestingly, it opens and closes with references to Minerva's Owl, Innis's signature classical allusion. Chomsky's article, not unlike Innis's bleakest works, presages an apocalyptic end to human civilization. Here is an extract:

It is not pleasant to contemplate the thoughts that must be passing through the mind of the Owl of Minerva as the dusk falls and she undertakes the task of interpreting the era of human civilization, which may now be approaching its inglorious end. The era opened almost 10,000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent, stretching from the lands of the Tigris and Euphrates, through Phoenicia on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean to the Nile Valley, and from there to Greece and beyond. What is happening in this region provides painful lessons on the depths to which the species can descend. . . . The likely end of the era of civilization is foreshadowed in a new draft report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the generally conservative monitor of what is happening to the physical world. The report concludes that increasing greenhouse gas emissions risk "severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems" over the coming decades. The world is nearing the temperature when loss of the vast ice sheet over Greenland will be unstoppable. Along with melting Antarctic ice, that could raise sea levels to inundate major cities as well as coastal plains . . . Arundhati Roy suggests that the "most appropriate metaphor for the insanity of our times" is the Siachen Glacier, where Indian and Pakistani soldiers have killed each other on the highest battlefield in the world. The glacier is now melting and revealing

“thousands of empty artillery shells, empty fuel drums, ice axes, old boots, tents and every other kind of waste that thousands of warring human beings generate” in meaningless conflict. And as the glaciers melt, India and Pakistan face indescribable disaster. Sad species. Poor Owl.¹⁴⁸

REACTIONS

Both Innis and Chomsky, after experiencing an initial silence, received much praise for their path-breaking works in their initial disciples. However, neither received much in the way of favorable response from mainstream commentators or scholars regarding their subsequent, equally path-breaking forays into the political economy of media and communication. The reaction Innis provoked, however, was significantly less severe than Chomsky’s—and for reasons easily understood. For one thing, during his lifetime, Innis’s media writings went largely unread; his *Political Economy in the Modern State* had a press run of a few hundred, and Innis stacked remaindered copies in his office. Chomsky’s media work, on the other hand, has always been in the public eye (if not that of media pundits and scholars) on account of his many formal speaking engagements and his speaking at rallies, his radio and newspaper interviews, his articles for nonscholarly journals, his making movies, and so on. Chomsky’s media analyses and criticisms, in other words, have been much harder to ignore than Innis’s—so *of course* the reaction setting in against Chomsky has been much more severe. Furthermore, and this is a key, Innis’s media analyses, while highly critical, remained abstract. Certainly he chastised university administrators, journalists, political leaders, advertisers, scholars, and so forth; but very rarely, if ever, did he name names. Moreover, he quoted almost exclusively from parties with whom he agreed, forsaking what must have been for him delightful opportunities to quote directly elite prevaricators with their hands in figurative cookie jars and feet enmeshed discomfitingly in their mouths. Chomsky, in contrast, has always illustrated his main points with myriad and detailed examples, and has quoted elites profusely, choosing that they damn themselves through their own words.

Questions arising from juxtaposing Chomsky alongside Innis are summarized in the next, concluding chapter.

NOTES

1. Sperlich, *Noam Chomsky*, 74.
2. Noam Chomsky, “Force and Opinion.” (1991; reprint, *Deterring Democracy*, London: Vintage Books, 2006), 361–405. Also, Chomsky, “Force and Opinion,” *Z Magazine* July–August 1991. <http://www.chomsky.info/articles/199107--.htm> (accessed January 9, 2014).

3. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988; New York: Pantheon Books, 2002).
4. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions*. Massey Lectures (Toronto: CBC, 1988).
5. Chomsky, "Language and Freedom," 77. Here he is quoting J. J. Rousseau.
6. Chomsky, *How the World Works*, 129.
7. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy," 170–71.
8. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 70; emphasis added. Also, Chomsky, *How the World Works*, 59.
9. Chomsky, *Chomsky on MisEducation*, 44.
10. Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, "Wealth Inequality in the United States Since 1913: Evidence From Capitalized Income Tax Data." NBER Working Paper 20625 (Cambridge: National Bureau for Economic Research, October, 2014) <http://www.nber.org/papers/w20625> (accessed November 14, 2014). Also, Saez and Zucman, "Wealth Inequality in the United States Since 1913." October 2014 <http://gabriel-zucman.eu/files/SaezZucman2014Slides.pdf> (accessed November 14, 2014).
11. Alan Yuhas, "One in 30 US Children Are Homeless as Rates Rise in 31 States, Report Finds." *The Guardian* 17 November 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/nov/17/report-one-in-30-us-children-homeless> (accessed November 17, 2014).
12. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy," 170–71.
13. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 97.
14. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 90.
15. Innis, "The Canadian Economy and the Depression," 127, 133, 134.
16. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 87, 90.
17. Hume, *Principles of Government* (1748), quoted in Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, 352, and in "Containing the Threat of Democracy," 153.
18. Chomsky, *Class Warfare*, 62–63. Chomsky notes that *objective power* pertains crucially to ownership.
19. Chomsky, "Force and Opinion," *Deterring Democracy*, 357.
20. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy," 157.
21. Chomsky, "Force and Opinion," 357.
22. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy," 155.
23. Chomsky, "On Resistance." *The New York Review of Books*, December 7, 1967. <http://www.chomsky.info/articles/19671207.htm> (accessed February 5, 2014). Many thanks to James Winter for bringing this article to my attention.
24. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xii.
25. Chomsky, "Force and Opinion," 36; emphasis added.
26. Chomsky, *Chomsky on MisEducation*, 16.
27. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 111.
28. Chomsky, *How the World Works*, 69.
29. Chomsky, *Chomsky on MisEducation*, 16.
30. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, Chapter 7, note 31. Quotation is from Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945–1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 190–91.
31. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, Chapter 7, note 31.
32. Chomsky, *Chomsky on MisEducation*, 48.
33. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 153. He writes: "Part of our brainwashing, you know [is] to have that concept of patriotism drilled into our heads."
34. Chomsky, *Chomsky on MisEducation*, 16.
35. Chomsky, "Noam Chomsky Interview with Eleanor Wachtel," 66.
36. Chomsky, "Corporations and the Richest Americans Viscerally Oppose Common Good." *AlterNet*, 2013. <http://www.alternet.org/visions/chomsky-corporations-and-richest-americans-viscerally-oppose-common-good> (accessed November 18 2013).
37. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 186–87; emphasis added.
38. Innis, *Empire & Communications*, 28–29.
39. *Ibid.*, 135–36.

40. In "Revised Extracts" from the Report of the Manitoba Royal Commission on Adult Education (1947), Innis noted: "We have assumed that government in democratic countries is based on the will of the governed, that people can make up their minds, and that every encouragement should be given them to do so. This implies that the state is concerned with strengthening intellectual capacity, and not with the weakening of that capacity." Innis, "Adult Education and Universities," 203.

41. Innis, "Adult Education and Universities," 208.

42. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 100.

43. Innis, "A Critical Review," 194.

44. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 235.

45. *Ibid.*, 38 (emphasis added).

46. Innis, "The Intellectual in History," 453.

47. Innis, "Adult Education and the Universities," 209–210.

48. Innis, "The Bias of Communication," 85–86.

49. "We should, then, be concerned like the Greeks with making men, not with overwhelming them by facts disseminated with paper and ink, film, radio, and television. Education is the basis of the state and its ultimate aim and essence is the training of character." Innis, "Adult Education and Universities," 203.

50. *Ibid.*, 204, 205, 203; emphasis added. The quote is from *General Education in a Free Society: Report of the Harvard Committee*.

51. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 11; emphasis added.

52. Chomsky, "A World Without War." (2003; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*), 325.

53. *Ibid.*, 325.

54. *Ibid.*, 326. See also Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*.

55. Chomsky, *How the World Works*, 57. Terrorizing citizens, Chomsky also notes, builds "support for the attack on civil liberties." Chomsky, *How the World Works*, 61.

56. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 394.

57. *Ibid.*, 39.

58. *Ibid.*, 74, 72. Asked how likely it is that the American ruling class will develop "an openly fascist system here," Chomsky replied: "I think it's very unlikely, frankly. They don't have the force." He added that the ruling class, in the face of struggles by the oppressed majority in England and the U.S., long ago shifted toward persuasion and indoctrination and away from "the cudgel." He then proposed that "it's a lot easier to overcome [propaganda] than torture and the Gestapo. I don't think the circumstances exist any longer for instituting anything like what we call fascism." Chomsky, *Occupy*, 43.

59. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 75.

60. Innis, "The Military Implications of the American Constitution," 38.

61. *Ibid.*, 38.

62. Chomsky, *Chomsky on MisEducation*, 46, 55.

63. *Ibid.*, 55.

64. *Ibid.*, 47.

65. *Ibid.*, 55.

66. *Ibid.*, 25.

67. Noam Chomsky, *Propaganda and the Public Mind: Conversations with Noam Chomsky*. Interviews by David Barsamian (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001), 166. According to Canada's late federal Minister of Finance, James Flaherty, for instance, "there is no such thing as a bad job. The only bad job is not having a job. I drove a taxi, I refereed hockey. You do what you have to do to make a living." Canadian Press. "There Are No Bad Jobs, Flaherty Says." *CBC News*. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/there-are-no-bad-jobs-flaherty-says-1.1246444> (accessed January 11, 2014).

68. Chomsky, *How the World Works*, 150.

69. During his presidential campaign, ("*politics*"), his website declared: "Often the best source of information about waste, fraud, and abuse in government is an existing government employee committed to public integrity and willing to speak out. Such acts of courage and patriotism, which can sometimes save lives and often save taxpayer-

er dollars, should be encouraged rather than stifled. We need to empower federal employees as watchdogs of wrongdoing and partners in performance. Barack Obama will strengthen whistleblower laws to protect federal workers who expose waste, fraud, and abuse of authority in government. Obama will ensure that federal agencies expedite the process for reviewing whistleblower claims and whistleblowers have full access to courts and due process." Luke Johnson, "Obama Promises, Including Whistleblower Protections, Disappear From Website." *Huffington Post*, July 26 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/26/obama-whistleblower-website_n_3658815.html (accessed August 5, 2013).

70. Chomsky, *How the World Works*, 57.

71. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 117.

72. Michael Crozier, Samuel Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York University Press, 1975).

73. Chomsky, *How the World Works*, 150.

74. *Fallacy of misplaced concreteness*: to mistake abstractions for reality; to mistake images or signs for what they represent or point to. Famously, Magritte painted a pipe and entitled the painting, *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*.

75. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 81–82.

76. Innis, "The Newspaper in Economic Development," 31.

77. *Ibid.*, 27.

78. *Ibid.*, 31; emphasis in original.

79. Joanna Walters, "James Risen Calls Obama 'Greatest Enemy of Press Freedom in a Generation.'" *The Guardian* 17 August 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/17/james-risen-obama-greatest-enemy-press-freedom-generation>.

80. Mark Gollom, "James Foley Killing: Why ISIS Beheaded the U.S. Journalist." *CBC News*, August 21, 2014 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/james-foley-killing-why-isis-beheaded-the-u-s-journalist-1.2741939> (accessed November 14, 2014).

81. Chomsky, "Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia" (1978; reprint, *The Essential Noam Chomsky*, edited by Anthony Arnone, New York: the New Press, 2008), 164. Chomsky distinguishes two categories of secular priests: those who are "outright propagandists," and "technocratic/policy-oriented intellectuals." The latter, in Chomsky's view, are far the more dangerous, as they conduct their analyses under the guise of being value-free, or "positivistic." (A prime example is Milton Friedman, "The Methodology of Positive Economics.")

82. Chomsky, "Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia," 160–61.

83. Chomsky, "The Remaking of History." (2003; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*), 145.

84. Chomsky, "Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia," 161, 173, 174.

85. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAhHPIuTQ5k> (accessed June 12, 2014). Also: Cassandra Szklarski, "O'Leary's 'Nutbar' Remark Breach of Policy, CBC Ombudsman Says," *Globe and Mail*, October 14 2011. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/olearys-nutbar-remark-breach-of-policy-cbc-ombudsman-says/article1355380/> (accessed June 12, 2014).

86. Chomsky, "Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia," 165.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*

89. Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy* (New York: Holt, 2006), 18.

90. Chomsky, "Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia," 161.

91. *Ibid.*, 165.

92. Chomsky, "Intentional Ignorance and Its Uses" (2000; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*), 310.

93. Chomsky, "The Divine License to Kill" (1987; reprint, *Masters of Mankind: Essays and Lectures, 1969–2013* Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 69.

94. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 163. Citing Rousseau, Chomsky writes: "Governments inevitably tend toward arbitrary power, as 'their corruption and extreme limit.' This power is 'by its nature illegitimate,' and new revolutions must 'dissolve the government altogether or bring it closer to its legitimate institution.'" Chomsky, "Language and Freedom," 77–78.

95. Chomsky, "Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia," 165.

96. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 62.

97. Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," 53.

98. Chomsky, "Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia," 174.

99. *Ibid.*

100. *Ibid.*

101. *Ibid.*, 176.

102. *Ibid.*, 177.

103. Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," 40. In a pro-Hitler speech of 1933 Heidegger maintained that "truth is the revelation of that which makes a people certain, clear, and strong in its action and knowledge."

104. Chomsky, "Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia," 175.

105. Innis, "A Critical Review," 192.

106. Innis, "The 'Common Man' and Internationalism: Myths in the Social Sciences" (1936; reprint, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change*), 444.

107. *Ibid.*

108. Innis, "A Critical Review," 192–93.

109. Innis, "The Passing of Political Economy" (1938; reprint, *Staples, Markets and Cultural Change*), 441.

110. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 88.

111. Innis, "An Economic Approach to English Literature in the Nineteenth Century," 55.

112. Innis, "Preface," *Political Economy in the Modern State*, xiii.

113. *Ibid.*, viii.

114. *Ibid.*, ix.

115. *Ibid.*, x.

116. *Ibid.*

117. *Ibid.*, xiv.

118. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 126.

119. Chomsky, *Chomsky on MisEducation*, 35.

120. Chomsky, *Class Warfare*, 61.

121. Chomsky, *Chomsky on MisEducation*, 35.

122. Chomsky, *Class Warfare*, 61.

123. Chomsky, *Occupy*, 54.

124. Innis, "An Economic Approach to English Literature," 55.

125. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 103.

126. Innis, "An Economic Approach to English Literature in the Nineteenth Century," 54.

127. Chomsky, "Containing the Threat of Democracy," 167.

128. *Ibid.*, 179. Also Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions*, 16.

129. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 13.

130. Chomsky noted that "in 1973, Israel downed a civilian plane lost in a sandstorm over the Suez Canal with 110 people killed; there was no protest, only editorial comments about—I'm quoting from the *Times*—how 'no useful purpose is served by an acrimonious debate over the assignment of 'blame.'" Chomsky then compared the scant coverage of this and other similar atrocities to "the fanatical level of coverage" of the Korean airlines flight. He revealed that the *index* of articles of the *New York Times* contained seven densely printed pages for the month of September 1983 alone: "The liberal *Boston Globe* on the first day of coverage," he added, "had I think its first ten full pages devoted to that story and nothing else." Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 29, 30.

131. Chomsky, *Letters From Lexington: Reflections on Propaganda* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1993), 12.

132. Chomsky, *Letters From Lexington*, 13.

133. Chomsky and Herman, *Counterrevolutionary Violence: Bloodbaths in Fact and Propaganda*. Preface William A. Falk. Andover, MA: Warner Modular, 1973. http://hass.unsw.adfa.edu.au/timor_companion/documents/CounterRevolutionary-Violence-Bloodbaths-in-Fact-and-Propaganda.pdf (accessed March 14, 2014).

134. Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 6th edition. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 27–30.

135. Chomsky, “Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia,” 179.

136. Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions*, 14.

137. Press analysis methodology as presented in most Media Research Methods text books invariably describes procedures for determining differences in how two newspapers or two press systems cover *the same* event; inevitably, by the very methodology, the “marketplace of ideas” will be affirmed as normally be *some* differences will be detected, howsoever inconsequential. In contrast, the Chomsky-Herman methodology investigates coverage *by the same press system* of different (albeit paired) events—one by America or its friends, the other by countries antagonistic to American hegemony. See David Deacon et al. *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2007), which sets out step by step the first methodology in excruciating detail, but which fails to even mention the paired examples procedures.

138. Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 28. Also important to media in serving as agents of propaganda, according to Chomsky, is *Orwellian Double-Speak*. He declared that all important terms used in news and scholarly analyses of international affairs have two meanings: the literal or *dictionary* meaning and a *doctrinal* or propagandistic meaning. Purposeful misuse of words is a powerful weapon in the arsenal of the secular priesthood. Here are some examples:

- *Terrorism* “is only what other people do.” Even “Shock and Awe” was not “terrorism,” due to the fact that the U.S. military did it.
- *Terrorist atrocities*, including targeted killings of suspects, describes actions only if and when “carried out by the wrong hands.”
- *Special interests* “means labor, women, blacks, the poor, the elderly, the young—in other words, the general population; there’s only one sector of the population that doesn’t ever get mentioned as a special interest and that’s the corporations and business in general—because they’re the national interest.”
- *National interest* means elite interest.
- *Defense* often means offense. Chomsky writes, “I have never heard of a state that admits it’s carrying out an aggressive act, they’re always engaged in ‘defense,’ no matter what they’re doing.”
- *Stability* means obedience.
- *Democracies* are countries where “the right people are running them.” “‘Democracy’ abroad must reflect the model sought at home: ‘top-down’ forms of control, with the public kept to a ‘spectator’ role, not participating in the arena of decision making.”
- *The peace process*: “whatever the United States happens to be doing at the moment—and again, this is without exception.” During the 1980s, for example, “the United States was the main factor blocking two major international peace processes, one in Central America and one in the Middle East. But just try to find that simple, obvious fact stated anywhere in the mainstream media. You can’t.”
- *Moderate*: means “follows U.S. orders—as opposed to what’s called ‘radical,’ which means ‘doesn’t follow U.S. orders.’ ‘Radical’ has nothing to do with left or right; you can be an ultra-right winger, but you’re ‘radical’ if you don’t follow U.S. orders.” For example Indonesian dictator Suharto was always referred to as a moderate, even though through his military coup of 1965 he was

responsible for the slaughter of 500,000 Indonesians over a period of four months. Chomsky describes the press reaction in the U.S. to that bloodbath: “James Reston, the *New York Times*’s liberal columnist, had a column I remember called, ‘A Gleam of Light in Asia’—things are really looking up. *U.S. News and World Report* had a story called, ‘Hope Where There Once Was None.’ These were the kinds of headlines that were running throughout the U.S. press—and the reason was, Suharto had wiped out the only mass-based political party in Indonesia, The Communist Party.”

See Chomsky, *Understanding Power*, 37, 42, 43, 44; “Imperial Grand Strategy” (2003; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*), 383; “Planning for Global Hegemony” (1985; reprint, *The Essential Chomsky*), 226; and *Chomsky on MisEducation*, 143.

139. Chomsky, “Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia,” 166.

140. Innis, “The Press, a Neglected Factor in Economic History,” *Changing Concepts of Time*, 79.

141. Innis, “The Problems of Rehabilitation,” 61.

142. Innis, “The Military Implications of the American Constitution,” 38.

143. *Ibid.*, 37.

144. *Ibid.*, 56.

145. *Ibid.*, 57.

146. Innis, “The Problems of Rehabilitation,” 61.

147. Innis, “Political Economy in the Modern State,” 138.

148. Noam Chomsky, “The End of History?” *In These Times*, March 4, 2014.

http://inthesetimes.com/article/17137/the_end_of_history (accessed September 6, 2014).

Many thanks to my former student, Jordan Coop, for drawing my attention to this article.

IV

Conclusion

THIRTEEN

Innis and the Network Society

The introduction posed three major questions: Did Innis's scholarship merit wider recognition? Can insights be gained by juxtaposing Innis's scholarship with that of Schramm and Chomsky? Is Innis's scholarship relevant to our digital age? This concluding chapter focuses primarily on the third of these questions, the preceding chapters having addressed the first two in some detail. Still, in any conclusion, a brief recapitulation is never out of place

DID INNIS MERIT WIDER ATTENTION?

Recall first some of the major themes and constructs running through Innis's work, and the synergy that results when they are considered together: present-mindedness, hedonistic/possessive individualism, problems of understanding, reflexivity, political economy of knowledge/scholarship, monopolies of knowledge, critique of standard economics, penetrative powers of the price system, medium theory, desire vs. intelligence, dialectic of Enlightenment, sham of freedom, balance and proportion, fascism/communism/our way of life, certainty and fanaticism, skepticism, search for truth, inscrutability of truth, testing for bias, organized force and scholarship, kept scholars, countervailing power, democracy, tyranny of opinion, tyranny of learning, lower levels of literacy, print and the stifling of creative thought, academic freedom, mechanization of education, military-industrial-media complex, empire and communication, history as economic theory, space-biased knowledge and empire, rise and fall of civilizations, force and opinion, time-space bias, price vs. value, media and value/prices, PR and advertising, the illusion of press freedom, democratic illusions, propaganda/persuasion/elite control, the evil of power, orality, center-margin, staples trap, spread effects, Minerva's

owl, plea for time, the problem of space, hierarchy, integrity and the role of the authentic scholar, the common good, nihilism, technological progress/war/the press, decline of universities, constant beyond time, a new dark ages, natural law.

Understandably, Innis's *staples thesis* received much greater attention in Canada than elsewhere; after all, most directly, it concerns *Canadian* economic history. Arguably, however, there is a second reason. The staples thesis may have applicability to many contemporary relations between resource-rich poorer nations and resource-consuming richer ones, in which case its neglect in wealthy countries and by elites in poorer ones becomes even more understandable. Even in Canada, Innis's staples thesis today receives scant attention, possibly because it opens up too many inconvenient questions respecting the Canadian government's "free trade" agenda.

Innis's *medium theory*, too, over the years, received little favorable attention outside of Canada. Through *medium theory*, Innis cast doubt on some of the proudest achievements of contemporary Western civilization—particularly advances in science and in media/communication technologies—all of which, he proposed, contribute to our civilization's malaise and decline. Moreover, he attributed what he saw as the anti-democratic and totalitarian thrust of 1940s and 1950s in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere, in part, to media innovations and uses made of these new media by elite power. In his media analyses, moreover, Innis questioned the intellectual integrity of some, if not most, of the scholarly community. Likely most objectionably to elite power, Innis claimed that power is evil no matter who holds it, and he attempted to lift the veil of misunderstandings foisted on a benighted public by the power elite and its minions in the media and educational professions.

Innis paid a price, of course, for all this. In Canadian media studies circles, McLuhan (not Innis) is now usually acclaimed the star of the "Toronto School." Abroad (apart from James Carey and possibly a few others¹) Innis was never considered a major presence in media/communication studies. Even to this day, Innis is only half-interpreted—a deficiency this book is intended to help rectify.

Through materials presented in the preceding chapters, I have attempted to indicate that Innis was one of the twentieth century's most original, courageous, and prescient thinkers. From the standpoints of intellectual history and the political economy of scholarship, at the very least, Innis merits wider and more thorough, critical attention than he has thus far received.

JUXTAPOSING INNIS WITH SCHRAMM AND CHOMSKY

Although Innis and Schramm have each been celebrated in their respective countries as founders of media/communication studies, the foundations they laid were remarkably different. Innis set out to discover factors underlying what he saw as increased misunderstanding, heightened propensity to all-out war, and the totalitarian malaise and thrust (as he saw it) of contemporary Western society. He wished to probe and unfold these issues truthfully. He chose truth over expediency, and authentic scholarship over persuasion. Schramm, a Cold Warrior, appears in contrast to have set as his first priority victory in his various political arenas. Schramm's scholarship was most concerned with discovering (yet often downplaying!) media "effects." He was interested in effective persuasion, and seldom focused directly on the deeper political-economic consequences of persuasion.

Juxtaposing Innis and Schramm demonstrates dramatically, moreover, the impact political-economic considerations may have on the acceptance or rejection of scholarly work. Schramm was generally revered in the United States as the pioneering, foundational scholar; his texts were widely adopted as part of university curricula; he set his mark on the development of a whole discipline. Innis, in contrast, has been either ignored or denigrated in the U.S.—arguably on account of his penchant for challenging what he saw as illusions (including particularly the democratic illusion), questioning scholarly integrity, and challenging visions of technological utopia.

Chomsky, too, helps illuminate both Innis and the political economy of scholarship. In this case, the illumination stems from similarity as well as difference/antithesis. First and foremost there is Chomsky's own high integrity as a scholar and the malodorous reaction *that* stirred up among elites and their minions. Innis and Chomsky both were/are truth-seekers. Both have disdained illusions, PR, advertising, propaganda, the manufacture of consent, lack of accountability and malfeasances by elite power. Both have critiqued elites' use of communication media to obscure truth, manipulate the broader public, and augment authoritarian rule. Both have expressed trust in truth, evidence, logic, and other Enlightenment values (even while questioning narrow specializations, unduly quantitative analyses, and analyses by experts). Both maintained that scholars bear the immense responsibility of seeking and speaking truth to the best of their ability.

Juxtaposing Innis, Chomsky, and Schramm, and the receptions they received, lends support to one of Innis's principal constructs, namely *bias*. According to Innis, history is fraught with conflicts between groups aspiring to direct society through appeals to time (duration, continuity, and principle) vs. those endeavoring to exercise control over space (through force, administrative acumen, pragmatism, adaptability, mechanization,

expediency, rhetoric, algorithm). Innis and Chomsky are/were truth seekers questing after and invoking enduring principles, and in that sense their *bias* is with time; Schramm, in contrast, was aligned with institutions exercising military control over space, and the contradictions within his scholarship may reflect his devotion to pragmatism/expediency. As noted by Chomsky, “the intellectual has, traditionally, been caught between the conflicting demands of truth and power”;² evidently, Innis and Schramm made different selections in that regard.

Many questions arise and linger from close readings of Chomsky alongside Innis. Here are a few. The list is not exhaustive. In the spirit of Innis—to avoid closure—in what follows the questions remain unanswered, although in some instances I have hazarded responses in previous chapters.

First, does power invariably corrupt? Can power be used for good? If so, under what conditions? If not, how in the world do we ever get from our current place of concentrated power to somewhere else?³ Do Innis’s proposals—for a reinvigorated orality, innovation of new media at the margins, disinterested scholarship—suffice? Or should we accept Chomsky’s position that although the state (power) is “illegitimate,” it may prove useful and should be supported, at least in the short run?

Second, can a sense of and dedication to the common good withstand the corrosive impact of concentrated wealth and power and the incessant bombardment of propaganda inculcating audiences with possessive individualism, space bias, present-mindedness, American exceptionalism, and so much else? *Could* contemporary media be used for good, or at least more so than is currently the case? *Could* they support authentic, participatory democracy—as opposed to constructing and supporting necessary illusions, amusing, and distracting? Or do contemporary media intrinsically and ineluctably promote present-mindedness, the contemporary “monopoly of knowledge”?

Third, does humanity possess an instinct for freedom and an innate moral code? What if it does not? If it does not, must we nonetheless *presume* it does (a “necessary fiction”), to avoid untold cruelty and oppression? Will belief in (or an axiom concerning) natural law (i.e., a state of permanence beyond time), do just as well? What happens to truth in scholarship if *that* axiom is presumed but is disbelieved by the analyst? Are there different implications regarding instinct for freedom/innate moral code vs. a state of permanence beyond time?

Fourth, is pessimism warranted—to alert people, in no uncertain terms, to future possible extremities and thereby (hopefully!) provoke compensating activity? Or is pessimism self-defeating, self-fulfilling, deactivating, and stultifying? Is there an appropriate or necessary balance between realism/pessimism and optimism/hope? Innis himself remarked that without vision a people perish; what *was* Innis’s vision?

Fifth, are “justice” and “truth” merely concoctions of the powerful to beguile the masses and to manufacture their consent (Foucault)? Or is there objective meaning to these terms? Additionally, is there objective or intrinsic value, or is all value merely social construction, including the “values” and concepts of truth and justice? Or is value assimilated entirely into price, as contemporary economists maintain? And what *are* the factors affecting prices/values?

Sixth, does propaganda indeed end where simple dialogue begins (Eliul)? If so, what do we make of “horizontal propaganda” (the tendency to spread propaganda, often unwittingly, through normal interactions)? What about the propensity to conform? What distinguishes *propaganda* from opinion and from subjective knowledge? What distinguishes *bias* from opinion and subjective knowledge? Does the notion of bias necessarily presume objective truth? What is the fate of democracy, of human rights, of justice, and of accountability, if the precept of objective truth is displaced by belief in radical subjectivity and/or social construction? Or by *realpolitik*’s axiom that might *makes* or *is* “truth”?

Seventh, what can we make of the notion of the “tyranny of the majority”? Is that an aberration, as Chomsky seems to think? Or is it the rule, which would be closer to Innis’s position? And what are the alternatives, given the deep distrust expressed by both Chomsky and Innis of experts and elites? How does “tyranny of the majority” relate to presuppositions regarding human nature?

Eighth, could redressing structures controlling media (laws and regulations concerning media concentration and Internet neutrality, for example) go some distance in increasing human freedom by facilitating the “self-righting principle” (namely, that truth inevitably defeats falsehood in free and open encounters, as proposed by John Milton)? Or are contemporary media intrinsically space-binding, irrespective of ownership configurations and legal structures/regulations? Are there valid middle positions on this issue?

Ninth, are universities, many academics, and other intellectuals as compromised to autocratic political-economic power as Innis/Chomsky maintain?⁴ If so, does it not make sense for people to tune out most intellectuals and pundits? How can the general public discern whom to pay attention to?

Tenth, if segments of media and educators successfully convince students and other members of the general public that truth is impossible or nonexistent (poststructuralism), what becomes of those scholars who still insist that intellectuals bear the heavy responsibility of “speaking the truth and to exposing lies”?⁵ Will they not seem anachronous, out of touch, foolish, and irrelevant—the butt of jokes, even? Is perhaps the doctrine of the supremacy of interpretation and opinion, of “truth” as subjectivity, and of the multiplicity of “truths,” not perhaps the most potent of all conceivable *noble lies* these days? How can politicians/power

elites ever be held accountable in the absence of a belief in objective truth?

Eleventh, are working people infused with common sense and an inherent capacity to discern truth when provided with sufficient information, as Chomsky insists? Or are they (we) innately seekers of illusion and distraction? Are they (we) blank slates? Are they (we) beset by an instinct of subservience?

Twelfth, what becomes of Innis's dialectic of time vs. space when there is a unity between church and state? (Westminster Abbey is nestled beside the British Houses of Parliament; at Versailles, there is a cathedral within the palace.) Is there not a strong tendency of space monopolists to try to capture time in Innis's sense of continuity and duration, as when they approve and publicize "acceptable" histories, for instance?⁶ Is there not often also a tendency of time monopolists to try to gain control over space, for example by exercising force with missionary zeal? Innis's response, undoubtedly would be that space-binding media transform hitherto time-binding institutions. Citing Morley, for instance, he declared, "The substitution of the Book for the Church was the essence of Protestant revolt."⁷ On the other hand, one senses, missionary zeal is often intrinsic to religions, and in that sense they conform to Innis's notion of space-biased monopolies of knowledge. Should the default position, then, incorporate Chomsky's anarcho-syndicalism as opposed to balance between time-binding and space-binding media?

INNIS'S RELEVANCE FOR A DIGITAL AGE

Full treatment of this topic, too, would require much greater space than is available here. Therefore, I address but four contemporary issues, and those only briefly. In all these cases, Innis has proved to be prescient and/or his analytical framework enhances understanding. The issues are:

- decline of universities and the fragility of academic freedom
- fascism, communism, and our way of life
- the military-industrial-communication complex and the use of advanced communication technologies to extend empire
- medium theory, bias, present-mindedness, and Web 2.0

Decline of Universities and the Fragility of Academic Freedom

Innis maintained that universities were in decline, which for him signaled "the collapse of Western society."⁸ Several trends in higher education were particularly troubling for him, including:

Mechanization

An influx of students in the post-war period,⁹ Innis adduced, meant that universities were becoming unduly mechanized in order simply to cope. Among other things, mechanization (he claimed) separates fact from value: whereas an authentic education, in his view, helps develop character, teaches critical strategies/enhances critical capabilities, and encourages students to strive for balance, mechanized education basically drums facts into students' heads. In particular, Innis singled out the textbook, which he judged to be "a powerful instrument for the closing of men's minds with its emphasis on memory and its systematic checking of new ideas."¹⁰ He also drew attention to a decline in the humanities: "The whole trend today," he assessed, is to "exalt the rationalist scientific approach and to discard the philosophical. . . . Specialization runs mad, and when it does so, it *never* leads to understanding."¹¹

Since Innis's time, universities have become, if anything, increasingly mechanized. David Noble, for example, has reflected on the "corporatized"¹² university and the automation of its knowledge services. Vocational *training* increasingly supplants *education*, according to Noble.¹³ Training correlates well with Innis's notion of mechanized knowledge, and when universities move in that direction, freedom of thought is discouraged for students and faculty alike.

Contributing to, and part of, training's ascendance in the academy, Noble suggested, are the replacement of classrooms by auditoriums, of auditoriums by on-line distance-education, and of essays and essay exams by multiple choice exams. Also increasingly problematic are standardized curricula and viewing students as "clients" or "consumers."¹⁴

Innis's position, of course, was that the medium is always a factor. Heavy capital investments in plant and facilities (what he called "overhead costs") encourage standardization to attain economies of scale. Economies of scale, in turn, can be achieved not only by standardizing curricula but also through spatial outreach (distance education). In the current era, mechanization *means* digitalization, which in Innis's terms adds to present-mindedness through ephemerality of messages; more on this below.¹⁵

For an alternative view on contemporary trends in education, however, let us turn to futurologist, Don Tapscott, who maintains that digital media *encourage* dialogue, debate, cooperation and community, that they *erode* hierarchy and monopolies of knowledge¹⁶—consequences that, if true, would certainly meet with Innis's approval! Tapscott speculates that even his book, *Wikinomics*, may "transcend its physical form to become a living, real-time, collaborative document, co-created by leading thinkers"¹⁷—a development that might negate much of the criticisms Innis directed at textbooks.¹⁸

Tapscott, it would appear, is in fact a *medium theorist* in the style of Innis insofar as he attributes monumental political, economic, cultural, and social changes to changes in media. Indeed, he out-does Innis, as his technological determinism is more strict and his view of the future more precise. Tapscott, in other words, lacks Innis's dialectical, nondeterministic (probabilistic) mode of analysis. And of course Tapscott's optimism is at odds with Innis's skeptical, often pessimistic outlook.

If Tapscott is right, we are fast entering or have now entered a new era bearing little resemblance to what went before, in which case Innis's forebodings might now be deemed anachronous.¹⁹ In assessing Innis's relevance for the twenty-first century, however, a pertinent question is whether trends, such as those identified by Tapscott, reduce/eliminate Innis's concerns, or whether they actually magnify or fulfill them. Is there today a "monopoly of knowledge" that is increasingly mechanized, present-minded, space-biased, that separates fact from value, desire from intellect, emphasizes training over education? If so, do corporatized, mechanized, commercialized universities contribute to this? Do digital media enhance/emphasize training? Is (authentic) education in decline? Is there increased or decreased understanding in the world—among various peoples and among international decisionmakers? Are scholars (and more generally influential opinion makers), often complicit to machinations of a military-industrial-infotainment complex?²⁰

Bureaucratization and the Fragility of Academic Freedom

A second concern Innis expressed regarding universities was *bureaucratization* generally and the *fragility of academic freedom* resulting from that. Innis charged that the focus of administrators is usually on "playing the field for the highest bid"²¹—not scholarship! Administrators' attention is normally riveted on "buildings, courses, research in applied science and money."²² Moreover, the "administrative machinery" of universities, according to Innis, "has failed to check the inroads of politics and to protect the scholar."²³ "University presidents, with one or two exceptions," he complained, "have shown little interest in scholarship. . . . In the main they are not themselves appointed because they are scholars, and it is possible that they never will be and possibly never should be."²⁴ University boards of governors, moreover, make it impossible for scholars to govern themselves;²⁵ on several occasions they "harried" individual members of the faculty on account of views and public utterances of which the governors disapproved.²⁶

Benjamin Ginsberg has provided contemporary data pertinent to Innis's concerns. Between 1975 and 2005, Ginsberg notes, full-time faculty in U.S. colleges and universities increased by 51 percent, but administrators and administrative staff increased, respectively, by 85 and 240 percent.²⁷ In 2005, Ginsberg writes, "administrators and staffers actually out-

numbered full-time faculty members at America's colleges and universities."²⁸ Moreover, whereas in Innis's day until the 1970s top and middle level administrators "were generally drawn from the faculty,"²⁹ that practice is much less common today, meaning that the teaching staff has less influence over how the university is run and over what its priorities are. This is part and parcel of the transformation of the university from what Ginsberg calls "a subversive institution in the best sense of that word," into a mere "knowledge factory."³⁰

To further bring Innis's concerns into the present, consider the shocking case of Dean Robert Buckingham at the University of Saskatchewan (May 2014). Dean Buckingham, a tenured professor merely five weeks from retirement, was abruptly fired, escorted off campus by security, and banned for life from ever again setting foot on campus. His seemingly unforgivable sin was that twenty-four hours earlier had made public a letter, "The Silence of the Deans," in which he noted that the university administration had told the deans that their tenure would be revoked if they publicly criticized the administration's TransformUS project—a plan that included job cuts and merging faculty to save twenty-five million dollars per year. University Provost, Brett Fairbairn, claimed in his letter of termination that the dean had "demonstrated egregious conduct and insubordination" and that his relationship with the university was "irreparably damaged."

According to the *Globe and Mail*, the firing stimulated widespread criticism.³¹ Twenty-four hours later, consequently, the university buckled, sort of: it offered to reinstate Buckingham as a tenured professor, but not as dean. Over the course of the next few days, the provost/vice-president academic resigned and the president was fired by the Board of Governors.³² Those developments can rightfully be viewed as re-endorsing academic freedom in the face of administrative injunction. Although the backlash against the firing, in this case, was sufficient to induce a remedy, the instance remains relevant as a case study of university administrators' opposing academic freedom, using the threat of withdrawing tenure to attain silence, and then withdrawing tenure when their demand was rejected.

Innis was himself, of course, an administrator. But he retained his teaching and research responsibilities while occupying administrative posts and even threatened to resign when academic freedom seemed threatened by the administration.

Ginsberg documents recent interferences in hiring and firing by administrators at the University of Toronto,³³ where decisions were apparently based on pleasing pharmaceutical manufacturers to ensure their continued funding of university research, as opposed to the scholarly achievements of applicants. David Noble, mentioned earlier, on several occasions was a victim of administrative fiat.

Innis wrote several decades prior to the steep decline in the system of tenure. Ginsberg notes that today, “only about 30 percent of the current [American] professoriate is tenured or even on the tenure track [down from 67 percent in the 1970s], the remaining 70 percent, employed on a course-by-course basis, “can be dismissed at any time.”³⁴ (Between 1976 and 2005, part-time faculty increased from 31 percent to 48 percent of total faculty, whereas over the same period, part-time administrators *declined* from 4 percent to 3 percent³⁵.) One reason for these trends, of course, is that adjunct and part-time professors are much cheaper to employ than full-time faculty. Ominously, though, another factor may be that part-time and adjunct faculty are more docile and controllable due to job insecurity.³⁶ Ginsberg emphasizes repeatedly that “tenure is the chief guarantor of the intellectual freedom. . . . Without tenure there is no academic freedom.”³⁷ Given current trends, Ginsberg speculates, within a few decades “a very small percentage of faculty members, mainly at elite schools, will hold tenured or tenure-track appointments,”³⁸ in which case academic freedom could verge on extinction.

Present-mindedness

Innis agonized, too, over increasing *present-mindedness* of curricula and the lapse of values in education. He had in mind particularly an undue shift toward quantitative methods and over-specialization in the social sciences,³⁹ issues that remain pertinent today. Little could Innis have foreseen, however, the rise of postmodernism/poststructuralism within universities, or inauguration of programs like Cultural Studies which often *celebrate* present-mindedness. Let us look more closely at postmodernism in the academy, in the context of Innis’s thoughts on what authentic scholarship entails.

Since the early 1980s, Frank Webster writes, “postmodernism . . . crops up in just about every university discipline from art history to accountancy.”⁴⁰ He adds that postmodernism is the antithesis of the Enlightenment tradition: it denies that behavior is rational; instead of questing after general or universal truth, it denigrates “totalizations” (or “grand narratives”); it proposes that scholarship is little more than a construction by the theorist; it claims that truth “does not exist outside the imaginings of those who yearn for it.”⁴¹ And, perhaps most significantly, it rejects *authenticity*: “Postmodern *celebrates* the inauthentic, the superficial, the ephemeral, the trivial and the flagrantly artificial.”⁴²

Here again, Innis’s medium theory is germane: arguably, digital media make more problematic distinctions between the real (authentic) and the simulated (inauthentic). This, certainly, has been a central theme for postmodernists like Jean Baudrillard and Mark Poster.⁴³

It has been claimed that Innis foreshadowed postmodernism—by denying that truth is attainable.⁴⁴ That claim, however, is deceptive. Innis

anguished over, certainly did not celebrate, the elusiveness of truth. To the extent digital media make truth more elusive, Innis would have agonized over digital media, too. It is worthwhile to recall his admonishments (quoted previously) concerning the sacred responsibility of scholars:

As recent graduates, we dedicate ourselves afresh to the maintenance of a tradition without which western culture disappears. . . . These ceremonies peculiar to an institution which has played the leading role in the flowering of western culture remind us of the obligation of maintaining traditions concerned with the search for truth for which men have laid down and have been asked to lay down their lives.⁴⁵

Innis, therefore, would have been aghast at the postmodern turn in universities. He would have regarded the descent of the university through its embrace of the inauthentic as fulfilling if not indeed far exceeding his direst forebodings. To emphasize “postmodern themes in Innis’s work,” then, without even hinting at how contradictory postmodernism is to Innis’s scholarly project, is (to put it delicately) intellectual incompleteness bordering on dishonesty. But then, as just seen, postmodernists do revel in the inauthentic!

Consider more closely, however, the contention of many postmodernists that nothing is any longer real or true. That claim obscures the fact that behind the propagation of digitized images and simulacra are the material means of encoding and diffusing, and behind all *that* are the encoders and their bosses—equivalents of the Wizard of Oz lurking behind the curtain. As Ronald Deibert reminds us,

Behind every tweet, chat message, or Facebook update, there is also a complex labyrinth of machinery, cables, and thousands of orbiting satellites, some the size of school buses. . . . This physical infrastructure contains a growing number of filters and checkpoints. Pulling back its layers is like pulling back curtains into dark hallways and hidden recesses, which, it turns out, are also objects of intense political contests.⁴⁶

Innis always insisted we pay attention to the materiality of the medium, and to those who control the medium—directives that remain relevant today.

Fascism, Communism, and Our Way of Life

When Innis grouped “our way of life” with fascism and communism, he had in mind several things: space-binding/present-minded secular religions; political duplicity; authoritarianism; domestic rein of terror; militarization of the economy. In all these respects, the situation in contemporary North America is, if anything, more grim than in the 1940s and early 1950s, indicating again Innis’s prescience. Enough has been said in previous chapters regarding the secular religions of consumerism, celebrity,

“democracy,” and American exceptionalism. Political duplicity and rein of terror, however, warrant brief updatings.

Recall first two well-known and monumentally important instances of political duplicity, both substantiating Innis’s warnings regarding the political “shell and pea game.” First, the incubator babies story. Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein—previously a valued ally of the U.S. government on account of his enmity with Iran—enraged the United States government by invading oil-rich Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Immediately, the George H. W. Bush administration began trying to enlist popular support for waging war on Iraq.⁴⁷ The PR story with the greatest traction concerned Iraqi soldiers purportedly yanking 312 babies from hospital incubators and throwing them onto the cold, hard floor. George H. W. Bush seized on the allegation, referring to the purported atrocity on at least six occasions over the next several weeks as he attempted to drum up public support for war: “It turns your stomach,” Bush pronounced, “when you listen to the tales of those that have escaped the brutality of Saddam the invader. Mass hangings. Babies pulled from incubators and scattered like firewood across the floor.”⁴⁸ In fact, an avalanche of propaganda emanated from the White House equating Saddam Hussein to Hitler. Months later, however, long after America’s bombing ceased and its invasion carried out, it came to light that PR firm, Hill and Knowlton (employed by the Kuwaiti government in exile), had concocted the incubator story and coached a fifteen-year-old girl known only as “Nayirah” into falsely testifying before the Human Rights’ Caucus of Congress that she had witnessed the horrors as a hospital volunteer. Nayirah, however, was neither a hospital volunteer nor had she had witnessed any such thing; in fact, she was the daughter of Kuwait’s ambassador to the United States, living in Washington at the time. Nonetheless, the lie did its job, moving public opinion overwhelmingly to the side of bombing and invading Iraq.

Recall next the U.S. government’s propaganda campaign supporting its second war on Iraq. Front and center this time, of course, was Saddam Hussein’s purported stockpile of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In the fall of 2002, the White House, now occupied by George W. Bush (as advised by Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and others of a similar political, ideological bent), “rolled out its new product”⁴⁹—*the war on terror*. Unlike sponsored ad campaigns that typify the marketing of most new “products,” the WMD campaign relied mostly on the news media, on public addresses, and on media appearances⁵⁰—marking thereby, according to Paul Rutherford, “the return of the propaganda state.”⁵¹ (Innis and Chomsky, of course, would question whether the propaganda state had ever been away.) The much sought-after WMD never being found, in retrospect it is clear that illusion, propaganda, and *noble lies* triumphed yet again.

A “war on terror” abroad, however, needs a reign of terror at home. As remarked by Naomi Klein, the White House “used the omnipresent sense of peril in the aftermath of 9/11 to dramatically increase the policing, surveillance, detention and war-waging powers of the executive branch,”⁵² including surveillance and detention powers regarding its own citizens—for example, the *USA Patriot Act* of 2001.⁵³

In June 2013, also well-known, Edward Snowden leaked documents to *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* exposing U.S. government surveillance “on hundreds of millions of people’s emails, social networking posts, online chat histories, browsing histories, telephone records, telephone calls and texts—‘nearly everything a typical user does on the internet,’ in the words of one leaked document.”⁵⁴

Arguably, new digital media facilitated broader exposure of the government’s clandestine misconduct than either *The Guardian* or *The Post* could have achieved by themselves through their print editions alone. A case could be made, therefore, that digital media help make elite power more accountable. Undoubtedly, Innis would have applauded how digital media, in this case, helped bring government’s secretive activities to light. On the other hand, of course, celebrating the Internet for helping to bring classified documents to light obscures the bigger issue: the same digital technologies that increased awareness of government malfeasances had made possible the governmental malfeasances in the first place.

By 2014, according to Snowden, entire populations, not just selected, suspicious individuals, are subject to constant surveillance: “It’s no longer based on the traditional practice of targeted taps based on some individual suspicion of wrongdoing. It covers phone calls, emails, texts, search history, what you buy, who your friends are, where you go, who you love.”⁵⁵ One can anticipate a time when this “hidden underworld of extrajudicial cyberspace policing”⁵⁶ will couple with an expanded governmental policy on targeted assassinations: U.S. drones are currently being deployed to assassinate American citizens living abroad—no charges being laid, no trials being held.⁵⁷ Would Innis not view this as “*Fascism in the Modern State*”?

Ominously, the Internet lends itself not only to surveillance, but also to censorship. A major culprit, of course, is the take-down notice through the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. But there are others. According to Deibert, Netsweeper, for example, is a Canadian company that “sells censorship products and services to ISPs across the Middle East and North Africa, helping regimes there block access to human rights information, basic news, information about alternative lifestyles, and opinion critical of the regimes.”⁵⁸ In 2005, the Canadian ISP, Telus, blocked subscribers from accessing a website set up by Telus’s labor union.⁵⁹ On a much grander scale, consider also net censorship through denial of service against WikiLeaks after it published thousands of U.S. State Depart-

ment cables in December 2009; amazingly, although no judicial orders supported such actions, major credit card companies, including Bank of America, Visa, Western Union, MasterCard, PayPal, and Amazon, refused to process donations to WikiLeaks.⁶⁰ In the UK, as a further example of across-the-board censorship, “five leading ISPs—Sky, Virgin Media, TalkTalk, O2 and Everything Everywhere—were ordered to block access to The Pirate Bay in April 2012 by the high court, after a case was brought by the music industry; other sites blocked in the UK following similar rulings include Newzbin2, Kickass Torrents, H33T, Fenopy and EZTV.”⁶¹ Meanwhile in Canada, in late October 2014 federal justice minister, Peter MacKay, announced that “measures” to reduce threats of terrorism could be introduced to Parliament that would provide for the removal of websites or Internet posts that support the “proliferation of terrorism” in Canada. According to MacKay:

There’s no question that the whole issue around radicalization and the type of material that is often used that we think is inappropriate, and we think quite frankly contribute to—again this is my word—the poisoning of young minds, that this is something that needs to be examined.⁶²

Facebook has been known to take matters such as these into its own hands, deleting politically sensitive postings.⁶³ But in 2012, Facebook did more than that; it manipulated news feeds of 689,003 people to ascertain the impact the manipulations might have on the emotions of its subscribers as later expressed on the same platform through their posts.⁶⁴ On the Twitter front, meanwhile, the U.S. government (through the façade of the U.S. Agency for International Development) attempted over a two year period (2010–2012) to ferment dissent in Cuba by clandestinely controlling messaging on a Cuban Twitter network, as well as gathering information that could be useful in the future for other subversive political purposes. “USAID and its contractors,” the Associated Press revealed, “went to extensive lengths to conceal Washington’s ties to the project, according to interviews and documents obtained by the AP. They set up front companies in Spain and the Cayman Islands to hide the money trail, and recruited CEOs without telling them they would be working on a U.S. taxpayer-funded project.”⁶⁵

At its military base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, the U.S. routinely tortures prisoners, in defiance of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a covenant that the United States ratified in 1992. According to Amnesty International,

In his 2010 memoirs, former President Bush defended the decision to locate the detention facility at the Guantánamo naval base. Holding “captured terrorists on American soil,” he said, “could [have] activate[d] constitutional protections they would not otherwise receive, such as the right to remain silent.” The consequence of this policy deci-

sion was predictable, indeed deliberate. For example, Mohamed al-Qahtani—held in US military custody in a location, Guantánamo, that was “outside the sovereign territory of the United States”—was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment when he “remained silent” in the face of standard interrogation methods. . . . No one has been brought to justice for these and other acts of torture by the USA that have been publicly admitted and documented. So long as that is still the case, the problem of torture remains a festering injustice, with Guantánamo at the centre.⁶⁶

According to former President Bush, all the U.S. needs to do to suspend civil liberties is transport prisoners to foreign military bases where they need not even be charged with offences, let alone be tried fairly by a court. Meanwhile, the entertainment industry—the TV series *Homeland*, for instance—inures the public to issues of assassination and torture.⁶⁷

In December 2014, the U.S. Senate released its 525 page report on CIA torture practices. According to the Foreword, “CIA personnel, aided by two outside contractors, decided to initiate [in late 2001] a program of indefinite secret detention and the use of brutal interrogation techniques in violation of U.S. law, treaty obligations, and our values.”⁶⁸ According to the report’s “Findings and Conclusions,”

The interrogations of CIA detainees were brutal and far worse than the CIA represented to policymakers and others. . . . Interrogation techniques such as slaps and “wallings” (slamming detainees against a wall) were used in combination, frequently concurrent with sleep deprivation and nudity. . . . The waterboarding⁶⁹ technique was physically harmful, inducing convulsions and vomiting. . . . Sleep deprivations involved keeping detainees awake for up to 180 hours, usually standing or in stress positions, at times with their hands shackled above their heads. . . . At least five CIA detainees were subjected to “rectal rehydration” or rectal feeding without documented medical necessity. The CIA placed detainees in ice water “baths.” The CIA led several detainees to believe they would never be allowed to leave CIA custody alive, suggesting to one detainee that he would only leave in a coffin-shaped box. One interrogator told another detainee that he would never go to court, because “we can never let the world know what I have done to you.” CIA officers also threatened at least three detainees with harm to their families—to include threats to harm the children of a detainee, threats to sexually abuse the mother of a detainee, and a threat to “cut [a detainee’s] mother’s throat.” . . . CIA detainees at the COBALT detention facility were kept in complete darkness and constantly shackled in isolated cells with loud noise or music and only a bucket to use for human waste.⁷⁰

According to *The Guardian*, nine countries (Afghanistan, Bosnia, Cuba, Iraq, Lithuania, Morocco, Poland, Romania, and Thailand) hosted secret CIA prisons, while forty-seven countries (including Canada and the Unit-

ed Kingdom) “facilitated CIA torture.” In brief, there is a “global network for CIA torture.”⁷¹

Today, then, Innis’s forebodings likening “our way of life” to the fascism and communism of the 1940s and 1950s must seem much less extreme or outrageous than when he wrote.

Empire and Communications

Innis’s book, *Empire and Communications*, surveyed how, throughout human history, advances in media contributed to spatial control. In *The Bias of Communication*, moreover, he reviewed how newer media propagate present-minded messages over increasingly larger territories, undermining democracy and inculcating possessive individualism. Innis’s emphasis, understandably, was on the spread of messages from central points to increasingly larger territories for purposes of indoctrination, surely a continuing concern in an era of satellite communication and digital transmissions.⁷² Largely missing from his analyses, however, was the deployment of media to gather data from far-flung locations, again for the purpose of imperial control. According to *Der Spiegel*, commenting on Edward Snowden’s revelations, “The surveillance [by NSA] is intensive and well-organized—and it has little or nothing to do with counter-terrorism.”⁷³ German Interior minister Thomas De Maizière, commented, “If even two-thirds of what Edward Snowden has presented or what has been presented with his name cited as the source is true, then I would conclude that the USA is operating without any kind of boundaries.”⁷⁴

Also related to the contemporary conjuncture of empire and communications is the global reach of military capabilities enabled by modern communication systems. Innis could not have foreseen spy satellites, advanced guided missiles, or drones. Drones today couple military prowess with globalized, instantaneous information control and surveillance capabilities. Drones *terrorize* civil populations—in Yemen and northern Pakistan, particularly.⁷⁵

Piloted via satellite uplink from within the United States, drones are able to operate globally. Their operators are in contact with globally dispersed support teams consisting of ground crews, maintenance personnel, intelligence analysts, command elements, and combat forces. Drones use a “Global Information Grid,” which includes “information acquisition tools, sensors, radar, radio frequency, infrared receptors, low light and optical devices, acoustics and human apparatus, communications satellites, data transmissions, microwave relays and computers and command centers.”⁷⁶

Through drones, geography and distance are reduced as impediments to military and surveillance systems. Drones permit a militarized surveillance where everyday life is deemed a threat because of its potential to conceal adversaries. Enemies are perceived to gain power from their abil-

ity to hide in the anonymity of civilian populations. Pointing to trailers located on a military base in Nevada, within which drones around the world are piloted, a military officer exclaimed, "Inside that trailer is Iraq, inside the other is Afghanistan."⁷⁷ As human life passes under the drone's gaze, it is parsed, analyzed, and categorized according to its threat potential. Mediated through militarized surveillance, civilians often become casualties.

And the drone is just one component in global militarized surveillance regime. Other components include a worldwide system of military bases, aircraft carriers, missile silos, spy agencies, and allied states. Underlying and enabling all this is modern communications technology. Simply put, modern communications technology coupled with advances in military hardware have vastly increased the capability of states to control space, apply force, and terrorize.

Medium Theory, Bias, Present-mindedness, and Web 2.0

The internet and internet-enabled devices (laptops, PCs, smart phones, tablets) constitute a new and evolving mode of communication. And, as Robert McChesney remarks, "The Internet has long since stopped being optional."⁷⁸

The Internet, therefore, in Innis's terms is, at least potentially, a transformative medium. Certainly it has given rise (or has helped give rise) to "colossal firms" for the most part not even existing a few decades ago:⁷⁹ Google, Microsoft, Yahoo!, Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Twitter. In addition, with Web 2.0, there has been a proliferation of "virtual" institutions, which is to say institutions not tied to place or time⁸⁰ (universities like Athabasca and Phoenix; retailers like Amazon; on-line banking). For Innis, of course, new modes of communication bring with them not only new business institutions, but also new ways of interacting, thinking, and perceiving—ways that may challenge older structures of power. Compared to audiences for mass media, for instance, Web 2.0 Internet users typically engage in "prosumption"⁸¹ by creating/posting content, not just passively "consuming" it, and that has led to much speculation concerning a new "democratization"⁸² of social and political life.⁸³ Furthermore, the Internet facilitates the "user-defined nature of the information flow" known as *hypertext*—i.e., "pre-identified links within a given text or image format that enable users to follow any one of a range of connections to different but related information." According to Catherine Frost, "this multi-associative form of thinking may represent [also] a further conceptual abstraction, along the lines of that fostered by the arrival of writing . . . break[ing] down the linear communications experience necessitated by the written word, and in doing so may bring back into the process a level of unpredictability and 'fuzziness' that better reflects real-world complexity."⁸⁴ Web 2.0, moreover, is justly acclaimed for helping sustain

preexisting social networks of family and friends geographically dispersed, and helping strangers with common interests or political views to connect and form virtual communities.⁸⁵

Other commentators, though, are far less sanguine: Ronald Deibert, for example, cautions: "Fear is becoming the dominant factor to shape, control, and possibly subvert cyberspace. . . . Years ago . . . the trade-show themes were all about the 'magic of connecting': connecting people in social networks; connecting computers to each other, and to the Internet. [Today] the theme is all about doing just the opposite: building borders, fences, and firewalls to keep unwanted intruders and hackers out."⁸⁶

These final paragraphs attempt to apply briefly Innis's medium theory and some of his analytical categories to the Internet age. We will consider again, briefly:

- mechanization
- monopolies of knowledge
- present-mindedness
- illusions

Mechanization

Innis wrote of the dehumanizing consequences and superficiality of mechanized communication: whereas "the oral dialectic is overwhelmingly significant where the subject matter is human action and feeling," he declared, and "is important in the discovery of new truth," there is a "cruelty [to] mechanized communication."⁸⁷ Instead of seeking truth, Innis claimed, mechanized communication usually emphasizes the ephemeral and the superficial, and facilitates authoritarian control by discouraging dissent and critical thinking.⁸⁸ Arguably, what Innis would see as "cruelty," or at least as depersonalization, intensifies with the Internet generally and with Web 2.0 in particular. With regard to texting, for example, the Internet does not require "that there be anyone present on the receiving end at the time a message or other content is sent." Catherine Frost continues, "Although it can support instantaneous exchange, this is not the Internet's primary use or advantage; by reinforcing the written word in a physically and temporally isolated environment, the Internet displays some of the same alienating tendencies as written media. . . . Something that Innis would clearly be concerned about."⁸⁹

Moreover, as Myles Ruggles notes, increasingly "it is our data shadows that speak to our transaction partners for us," with the topics spoken about often being "selected by others and without our knowledge or volition."⁹⁰ Or, as Vincent Manzerolle remarks, in Internet interactions there is a "disappearing body":

Interacting in digital networks are “bodies” of personally identifiable information—relaying one’s identity to any number of entities—acting as proxies for the real embodied individual. The *automation of interaction* by these increasingly algorithmic data proxies instrumentalizes communication by minimizing informal or tacit knowledge; that is, leading to what Innis might term “the mechanization of knowledge.”⁹¹

Web 2.0 generates data that are bought, sold, and “creeped”⁹² by commercial interests and by intelligence/security agencies.⁹³ Indeed, the pecuniary motivation behind popular social networks like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, is precisely the generation, collection, and sale of “data shadows” for purposes of targeted marketing and/or political surveillance/control.⁹⁴ Facebook, for instance, “stores dozens of categories of data about its users so that it can accurately commodify its customers’ digital persona for targeted advertisements. Some examples: the exact latitude, longitude, and altitude of every check-in to Facebook . . . every Facebook event to which a user has been invited, including all invitations ignored or rejected. . . . This relentless drive for personal information,” according to Deibert, “leads to extraordinary encroachments on privacy by social networking companies and ISPs.”⁹⁵

Also relevant to the issue is recent research claiming that Facebook use undermines the sense of well-being: according to lead researcher, Dr. Ethan Kross, a psychologist at the University of Michigan, participants who had direct interactions with other people felt better over time; in contrast, the more individuals used Facebook, the greater the reduction in their life satisfaction levels. “Rather than enhance well-being,” the lead researcher concluded, “we found that Facebook use predicts the opposite result—it undermines it.” There may be issues of correlation vs. causation in the study, but the data are interesting nonetheless. A previous study carried out at the University of Chester found that people are happier and laugh 50 percent more when talking face-to-face with friends or via webcam than they do with social media.⁹⁶ Undoubtedly, this research is not the final word on the topic. Nonetheless, the results are consistent with Innis’s position regarding the “cruelty of mechanized communication.”

Monopolies of Knowledge

Innis expressed two concerns regarding monopolies of knowledge. One was with regard to control over a medium of communication by a narrow group (Innis addressed the Associated Press’s domination of American newspaper publishing, and control over book publishing and education by ecclesiastical authorities, among other instances). His second concern was that the properties of the medium bias communication in terms of time or space, supporting a mindset so widely shared as to

warrant being termed a *monopoly of knowledge*. Here I apply both these notions of monopoly of knowledge to the digital age.

(a) *Concentrated Ownership and Control (Search Engines)*

In the Internet age, concentrated ownership of search engines could be particularly pernicious. In January 2013, Google accounted for 67.0 percent of 19.5 billion core searches in the U.S. Its closest rivals were Microsoft (16.5 percent), Yahoo! (12.1 percent), Ask Network (2.8 percent), and AOL (1.7 percent).⁹⁷ In fact, in February 2014, Google was the most frequently visited website worldwide.⁹⁸ Conclusion: there is a high degree of ownership concentration in the search engine industry.

Empirical researchers have found clear differences among search engines' responses to queries. In Germany, for example, studies comparing the results for four search engines (Google, Yahoo!, MSN, and Ask), found that 85 percent of the top ten results were unique to one search engine and that 12 percent were unique to two search engines. Only 2.6 percent of the top ten results were provided by three of the search engines, and merely 1.1 percent were provided by all four.⁹⁹ Microsoft reports, however, that "typically, users cannot fully assess the quality of search results," and that they "use search engines without deep understanding of how its search algorithm works. . . . Instead, they mainly trust a search engine's choice and believe in its quality."¹⁰⁰ Again, still according to Microsoft, "more than two third of the users in the US (68 percent) state that search engines are a fair and unbiased source of information while only 19 percent claim not to trust search engines."¹⁰¹ It is also known that most users do not go beyond the top ten suggestions provided by the search engine; nor do users very often compare search results among/between search engines. James Curran notes that websites reported on the first page of web searches are much more likely to be sampled than those appearing on subsequent pages.¹⁰²

Microsoft (self-interestedly, of course, as it is a distant second in the search engine industry) identified potential abuses that could arise from market dominance: "Clearly, a dominant search engine could misuse this [position of dominance] and distort search results without having users realize that they are provided with suboptimal search results."¹⁰³ One factor possibly distorting or "biasing" search engines' results, according to Microsoft, is the quest for higher advertising revenues. Search engines earn money every time a user clicks on an ad accompanying a search result, meaning that a search engine could be tempted to lower the quality of search results in order to induce users to click on more ads. Second, still according to Microsoft, "search engines generally have an incentive to advertise their own products more prominently." Microsoft's research report adds tactfully that "there is thus far no empirical evidence suggest-

ing that the manipulation of ad placement is common practice among web search engines."¹⁰⁴

Ominously, the dangers of search engine bias far exceed those specified by Microsoft. One possibility is that websites pay search engines to attain priority listings; ranking within listings is just part of the issue of *net neutrality* which also encompasses issues of speed (bandwidth) allocated to competing websites. Even more disturbingly, one of the important revelations from Edward Snowden's leaked documents was the close cooperation between NSA and the major Internet companies, including Google, Apple, Yahoo, Microsoft, and Internet Service Providers. In this context, one should be cognizant and leery of the possibility that search engines could be induced to bias search results in accordance with political motivations—in effect, engaging in surreptitious censorship and propaganda by prioritizing certain types of knowledge and marginalizing other types. Mention has already been made of the NSA's interest in surveilling and recording citizens' net searches; these records will be of particular interest to future fascist-like regimes intent on rounding up dissidents.

Such concerns are not merely hypothetical: governments have in fact shown a good deal of interest in restricting and shaping information on the Internet. Consider the Chinese government's efforts to censor information about Tiananmen Square. Results to queries such as "Tiananmen Square," and for proxy terms such as "tomorrow," "that year," "six-four incident" (alluding to June 4, 1989) have been censored on the popular Chinese website Weibo. Efforts to stop discussion inside China have led to blocking results for searches for "big yellow duck" (alluding to a Photoshopped picture, wherein the iconic picture of a man standing in front of four tanks was altered into a picture of a man standing in front of four large yellow rubber ducks). The Chinese government is intent on blocking even basic information regarding the incident. For a time, the results for searches regarding the "Tiananmen incident" were manipulated to display other events that took place in Tiananmen Square—such as an event in 1976 commemorating the death of a former premier.¹⁰⁵ LinkedIn has cooperated with the Chinese government by engaging in "self-censorship"—blocking sensitive posts outside China from being seen inside China.¹⁰⁶ Access to Google Inc.'s services, including both its search engine and Gmail, have been blocked.¹⁰⁷

Given market dominance in the search engine industry, Innis's general apprehensions regarding monopoly of knowledge due to concentrated ownership and control should be viewed as being more serious today than when he wrote. The possibility/probability now exists for even greater censorship and propaganda in the midst of a seeming information abundance.¹⁰⁸

(b) Present-mindedness

Innis's greater concern, however, was the ever-increasing space bias and the concomitant present-mindedness of contemporary culture, as impacted upon by mechanized media. Arguably, no medium of communication has rivaled the Internet in terms of space-bias/present-mindedness. Deibert remarks: "Cyberspace is now an unavoidable reality that wraps our planet in a complex information and communication skin. . . . A shared global space [that] has connected two-thirds of the world—has joined, that is, more than 4 billion people in a single communications environment—in less than twenty years."¹⁰⁹ Moreover, as noted by Frost, in Innisian terms the Internet lacks durability: "The Net's greatest weakness is its lack of durability. The system itself may be robust, but the messages it carries consist of highly perishable electronic signals, so the content can be wiped out with the push of a key or by even minimal damage to the delicate materials on which digital data is stored. . . . Because it provides a way to constantly update information, [moreover] the Internet is constantly making the information we already have obsolete."¹¹⁰

With all this in mind, consider briefly ubiquitous commerce and social media in the era of Web 2.0 as indicators of contemporary space bias/present-mindedness. Regarding ubiquitous commerce, McGuigan and Manzerolle state that digital media are now supplanting "material contingencies, such as geography or regional cultures and policies. . . . At its logical conclusion, u-commerce is nothing less than the embedding of microprocessors in everyday objects to connect them in an all-encompassing digital marketplace."¹¹¹ In other words, "we are evolving into a species of ubiquitous computing, with tiny digital devices embedded in just about everything around us, much of it operating without any direct human intervention at all."¹¹²

Harold Innis, of course, wrote of the penetrative powers of the price system, indicating that increasing portions of our lives are being commodified and mediated by money. For Innis, money is a present-minded communication medium nonpareil; money and prices "penetrate" indigenous cultures, for instance, annexing them to increasingly larger trading units, vaporizing relations based on kinship, tradition, love, empathy, religious sensibilities, and intrinsic value, and reconfiguring "value" into money price. However, Innis could not possibly have foreseen an era when commercial services and smartphones converge, smartphones themselves being entirely beyond his ken. According to McGuigan and Manzarolle,

PayPal Beacon, for example, uses Bluetooth low-energy (BLE) technology—small units that transmit to Bluetooth-enabled devices—to automatically "check-in" customers [entering a store], offer personalized deals, and allow "hands-free" payments. Characterizing the future of

retailing as “knowing exactly when you arrive [in a store] and exactly when you leave,” a PayPal executive evokes the “frictionless” rhetoric of u-commerce: “No taps, no swipes, no signatures. The payment completely gets out of your way.”¹¹³

Finally, consider social media: Twitter limits messages to 140 characters, yet it spans the globe. In Innis’s terms, a communication vehicle could hardly be more present-minded than that. According to Alexa Internet, Twitter is one of the top fifteen Internet sites. Second and third place (just after Google), are also occupied by social media sites: Facebook and YouTube.¹¹⁴

Reportedly, an average U.S. user spends 2 hours and 42 minutes per day on mobile devices. Of this, social media apps account for 28 percent of the time, with Facebook and Instagram (acquired by Facebook) accounting for 17 percent.¹¹⁵ According to another report—from Ipsos Open Thinking Exchange—Americans aged eighteen to sixty-four using social networks spend 3.2 hours per day on average with social media, whether via computer, tablet, or mobile phone.¹¹⁶ In 2010, Natalie Fenton notes, “Facebook had over 500 million users—one in 13 people on earth—with over 250 million people logging on every day.”¹¹⁷

Social media are sometimes credited with facilitating protest movements by easing the formation of collective identity, actual mobilization, and linking organizations.¹¹⁸ This is particularly the case when repressive regimes are being opposed, as it is difficult and dangerous to express politically charged opinions or to publish politically sensitive information. According to Fenton, “the use of social media [in such countries] has undoubtedly enabled otherwise repressed voices to be heard.”¹¹⁹ She provides several examples.

In the politically liberal West, however, matters are quite different. Typically, the use of social media in Western democracies is for “mass self-communication”—sending messages about the self to a wide audience.¹²⁰ If public issues are addressed at all, the issues tend to be personalized and depoliticized, reinforcing and deepening the “neoliberal production of the self. . . . People rarely have democratic enhancement at the top of their agendas and use the internet far more for entertainment purposes than for informational gain.”¹²¹

Even the celebratory analyses of the democratic potential of social media are usually quite “present-minded.” James Curran writes, “Typically, this analysis foregrounds the drama of the uprisings and the enabling role of communication technology, while paying little attention to the past or to the wider context of society.”¹²² Also omitted from the celebratory accounts is the utilization of Twitter and Facebook by police to summon messaging records that identify protesters and then use these crept records as evidence in prosecutions.¹²³

In a recent interview, Noam Chomsky suggested that social media erode “normal human relations, [making] them more superficial, shallow, evanescent.” Chomsky continued, “One other effect is there’s much less reading. I can see it even with my students, but also with my children and grandchildren, they just don’t read much.”¹²⁴

The mode of reading, when done over the Internet instead of with books, likely changes. Comments Nicholas Carr: “[Before the Internet] I was a scuba diver in the sea of words; now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski.”¹²⁵

The presentation format of periodicals in recent years, too, has shifted dramatically to adjust to the Internet: “Many papers, including industry stalwarts like the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Los Angeles Times*, have . . . moved to trim the length of their articles and introduce more summaries and navigational aids to make the scanning of their contents easier.”¹²⁶ These observations virtually echo Innis’s comments of sixty years ago regarding the impact of radio on print journalism.

Illusions

In *Empire of Illusion*, journalist Chris Hedges proposes that “we have traded the printed word for the gleaming image.”¹²⁷ For that claim, surely, there is little dispute. Hedges goes on to suggest, however, that we had a better grasp of reality in an age of literacy than we can possibly achieve in an age of digitized imagery. One would be hard pressed to find in the corpus of Innis’s writings an equating of literacy and print with accurate understanding of reality. Innis certainly agreed, however, that film, radio, and television had taken the art and practice of deception to even higher (or rather lower) levels.¹²⁸ Hedges’s insights therefore make Innis more suggestive, more relevant; Innis’s critical historical understanding adds additional depth and context to the issues under consideration.

Furthermore, Innis always insisted that researchers and truth-seekers bear in mind the question: who benefits from fabricating illusions/delusions—the consideration, I believe, that can restrain some of us, at least, from sliding blithely into the postmodernist miasma.

A FINAL WORD

Writing in the early 1950s, Harold Innis was quite pessimistic. Having lived through two world wars and the atomic bombing of Japan, and experiencing the onset of the Cold War and the Korean War, Innis espied a gathering gloom comprised of delusion, deception, violence, terror, and repression. He perceived hedonism, illusion, conformity, and present-mindedness as increasing and, in combination, supplanting awareness of and devotion to the common good, rational debate, a sense of time, a

sense of proportion, and to truth. He saw commercialized mass media deceiving and distracting the public, who were being played as instruments by autocratic power. Innis considered the proudest achievements of Western civilization—advances in media and communication technologies—as contributing to the contemporary malaise. He reluctantly envisaged a new dark age of fascist repression.

Today, so-called liberal democracies face a continuing triple threat that has redoubled with the innovation of digital media—censorship, propaganda, surveillance—a trifecta that even prior to the introduction of digital media threatened to undermine democratic freedoms and enhance autocratic/plutocratic control. Digital technologies certainly facilitate despotism. But Innis would remind us that all is not lost, nothing is inevitable: resist and be vigilant! Although Innis certainly was pessimistic and dour in his outlook, according to him nothing is foreordained. The future has not yet arrived.¹²⁹ We always live, and must live, in the dialectic of opposing forces.

Although his vantage point was six and seven decades ago, Innis remains relevant in warning us always to remain cognizant and to be critical of trends, pressures, and trajectories. According to Innis, only through critical awareness and by rejecting all nostrums and notions of inevitability, can steps be taken to resist, offset, or at least delay stultifying and totalitarian futures—or, expressed in opposite terms, to retain or attain a balanced, holistic common ground.

Innis set the bar: of nonconformity, of informed critical thought, of honest scholarship, and of courage. He remains worthy of our consideration.

NOTES

1. Neil Postman, for instance, although in this case there was no sustained treatment of Innis.

2. Chomsky, "Knowledge and Power," 22.

3. Chomsky's assessments of the Occupy Movement are of relevance here. See Chomsky, *Occupy*.

4. Recall Innis's claims: "In the main [the social scientist] has become a part of government bureaucracies. He has been quick to work in collusion with them, to pretend an omniscience equal to all occasions, and to become the kept class of autocracies." Innis, "The Newspaper in Economic Development," 31

5. Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," 40; emphasis added.

6. Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present* 1980 (New York: HarperCollins, 2005). Innis, too, understood that histories can be "written as political weapons." Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 84.

7. "Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 105.

8. Philip Massolin, "Academic Modernization and the Decline of Higher Learning." Innis wrote: "As recent graduates, we dedicate ourselves afresh to the maintenance of a tradition without which western culture disappears." Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 71.

9. Innis, "A Critical Review," 194. Also, according to Innis, "In our concern with the problems of modern scholarship we are faced with the prospect of a new Dark Ages." Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 138.

10. Innis, "On the Economic Significance of Cultural Factors," 100. Also: "The increase in numbers of books and the growth of a book civilization contribute to the difficulties of the universities. . . . Freshness and vitality are lost." Innis, "Adult Education and the Universities,"

11. Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 143–44; emphasis in original.

12. David Noble, *Digital Diploma Mills: The Automation of Higher Education* (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2002), x.

13. See also, for example, James Côté and Anton Allahar, *Lowering Higher Education: The Rise of Corporate Universities and the Fall of Liberal Education* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011): 14 ff.

14. *Ibid.*, 3.

15. A primary goal of some university administrators today is to make their universities seem to be increasingly independent of location (i.e., increase their space-bias). At my own university, upon attaining office, the new president began overseeing a "rebranding," which included a name change for the venerable (130 year old) institution—from The University of Western Ontario to merely Western University—an attempt to de-emphasize locality and to connote a global reach. As one might expect, a second component of the President's rebranding was heightened support for "professional training" and relative if not absolute diminution of the humanities. For Innis, this would be sheer lunacy.

16. Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* (New York: Portfolio, 2002), 1.

17. Tapscott and Williams, *Wikinomics*, 4; emphasis added.

18. *Wikipedia* is likely the model Tapscott had in mind.

19. James Curran disputes several contentions of contemporary utopians concerning the purported irrelevance of the past. See "Reinterpreting the Internet," in James Curran, Natalie Fenton, and Des Freedman, *Misunderstanding the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3–33.

20. Although beyond the scope of the present book, brief mention at least should be made of the complicity between video games manufacturers and Hollywood studios on the one hand, and the U.S. military on the other. See, for example, Robertson Allen, "The Unreal Enemy of America's Army," *Games and Culture* 6, no. 1 (2011): 38–60; and David L. Robb, *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies* (New York: Prometheus, 2004).

21. Innis, "The University in the Modern Crisis," 75.

22. *Ibid.*, 76.

23. Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 70.

24. *Ibid.*, 68–69.

25. Innis, "Adult Education and Universities," 210.

26. *Ibid.*, 211.

27. Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the Administrative University and Why It Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 25.

28. *Ibid.*, 24.

29. *Ibid.*, 1.

30. *Ibid.*, 3.

31. Allan Maki, "University of Saskatchewan Tries to Repair Some of Dean's 'Irreparably Damaged' Ties to School," *Globe and Mail*, May 15, 2014.

32. CBC News, "Brett Fairbairn, U of S Provost, Resigns in Wake of Tenure Scandal." May 21, 2014. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/brett-fairbairn-u-of-s-provost-resigns-in-wake-of-tenure-scandal-1.2647804> (accessed May 21 2014). "University of Saskatchewan Board Sacks President." May 21 2014. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/university-of-saskatchewan-board-sacks-president-ilene-busch-vishniac-1.2650301> (accessed May 22, 2014).

33. *Ibid.*, 158.
34. *Ibid.*, 131, 136.
35. *Ibid.*, 19.
36. *Ibid.*, 136.
37. *Ibid.*, 158, 165.
38. Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty*, 136.
39. As expressed, for example, in the following extract: "The advances in political economy have been concentrated on mathematical analysis and a narrowing of the subject to a small number of experts and a consequent decline in the philosophical and political background. . . . Since 1914 the modern state has drawn more heavily on the social sciences and thought has been paralysed." Innis, "Political Economy in the Modern State," 129.
40. Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society* (London: Routledge, 1995), 163.
41. *Ibid.*, 170; emphasis in original.
42. *Ibid.* Emphasis added. Webster adds, although "there is no authenticity, there are . . . (inauthentic) constructions of the authentic" – what Jean Baudrillard referred to as *simulacra* and as *hyper-realities*" Note the following from Baudrillard: "Simulation . . . is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal." Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*. Translated by Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 1983), 2.
43. Babe, *Cultural Studies and Political Economy*. Poster writes, for example: "Truth is not a transcendent unity. . . . The tendency in poststructuralism is therefore to regard truth as a multiplicity, to exult in the play of diverse meanings, in the continual process of reinterpretation, in the contention of opposing claims." Poster, *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In Search of a Context* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 15. And again: "For the subject in electronically mediated communication, the object tends to become not the material world as represented by language but the flow of signifiers itself. In the mode of information it becomes increasingly difficult, or even pointless, for the subject to distinguish a 'real' existing 'behind' the flow of signifiers, and as a consequence social life in part becomes a practice of positioning subjects to receive and interpret messages." Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 14–15.
44. Ray Charron, "Postmodern Themes in Innis's Work," in *Harold Innis in the New Century*, 310.
45. Innis, "A Plea for the University Tradition," 71.
46. Deibert, *Black Code*, 48.
47. John R. MacArthur, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the 1991 Gulf War* (1992; reprint, with Foreword by Ben. H. Bagdikian, updated with a new Preface, University of California Press, 2004), 42.
48. George H. W. Bush, quoted in MacArthur, *Second Front*, 65–66.
49. Paul Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Marketing the War Against Iraq* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 32.
50. *Ibid.*, 32.
51. *Ibid.*, 184.
52. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 358.
53. Arguably, the war on terror is an interesting play on Hobbes's social contract. Hobbes maintained citizens surrender freedom to the state in exchange for greater security; in the age of the war on terror, the state increases citizens' fear and insecurity in order that they willingly, indeed eagerly, accept being deprived of their liberties.
54. Associated Press, "Everyone Is Under Surveillance Now, Says Whistleblower Edward Snowden." *The Guardian*, May 3, 2014.
55. Associated Press, "Everyone Is Under Surveillance Now."
56. Deibert, *Black Code*, 117.
57. Dan Roberts, "White House Says Drone Strikes Have Killed Four US Citizens." *The Guardian*, 23 May 2013. See also Human Rights Watch, *Between a Drone and Al-Qaeda: The Civilian Cost of US Targeted Killings in Yemen* (2013). <http://www.hrw.org/>

reports/2013/10/22/between-drone-and-al-qaeda-0 (accessed June 2, 2014). Also, Amnesty International, *Will I Be Next? US Drones in Pakistan* (London, UK: Amnesty International, 2013). <http://www.amnesty.ca/research/reports/will-i-be-next-us-drone-strikes-in-pakistan> (accessed June 2, 2014).

58. Deibert, *Black Code*, 19.

59. *Ibid.*, 40.

60. *Ibid.*, 120.

61. Stuart Dredge, "Pirate Bay to Launch Own PirateBrowser to Evade ISP Filesharing Blocks." *The Guardian*, 12 August, 2013 <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/aug/12/pirate-bay-piratebrowser-web-browser> (accessed October 21, 2014).

62. Steven Chase and Josh Wingrove, "Terror Fight Turns to Internet, Sparking New Free-Speech Debate." *Globe and Mail*, October 30, 2014. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/debate-emerges-over-internet-terror-threats-and-canadian-civil-liberties/article21377070/> (accessed October 30, 2014).

63. *Ibid.*, 121–22.

64. Robinson Meyer, "Everything We Know About Facebook's Secret Mood Manipulation Experiment." *The Atlantic* June 28, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/06/everything-we-know-about-facebooks-secret-mood-manipulation-experiment/373648/> (accessed 26 September 2014).

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66. Amnesty International, *USA Guantánamo: A Decade of Damage to Human Rights* (London: Amnesty International, 2011), 10. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/guantanamo-decade-damage-human-rights-2012-01-11> (accessed October 11, 2014).

67. See, also, Ross Douthat. "The Politics of 'The Dark Knight Rises.'" *New York Times*, July 23, 2012. http://douthat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/23/the-politics-of-the-dark-knight-rises/?_r=0 (accessed November 9, 2014).

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69. Waterboarding is a torture technique whereby drowning is simulated by pouring water over a cloth covering the face of incapacitated prisoners.

70. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Findings and Conclusions," 4.

71. Dominic Rushe, Ewen MacAskill, Ian Cobain, Alan Yuhas, and Oliver Laughland, "Rectal Rehydration and Waterboarding: the CIA Torture Report's Grisliest Findings." *The Guardian*, 10 December 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/dec/09/cia-torture-report-worst-findings-waterboard-rectal> (accessed December 13, 2014)

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78. Robert McChesney, *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy* (New York: The Free Press, 2013), 2.

79. *Ibid.*, 2–3.

80. Vincent Manzerolle, *Brave New Wireless World: Mapping the Rise of Ubiquitous Connectivity From Myth to Market*. PhD Dissertation, The University of Western Ontario, 2013, 222.

81. Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* (New York: Portfolio, 2005), 124–50.

82. See Matthew Hindman, *The Myth of Digital Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

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86. Deibert, *Black Code*, 190.

87. Innis, "A Critical Review," 191.

88. Innis, "A Plea for Time," 82.

89. Frost, *How Prometheus Is Bound*."

90. Myles Ruggles, *Automating Interaction: Formal and Informal Knowledge in the Digital Network Economy* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2005), 11.

91. Manzerolle, *Brave New Wireless World*, 59.

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101. *Ibid.*, 22, 28.
102. Curran, "Reinterpreting the Internet," 19.
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About the Author

Robert E. Babe, PhD in economics, is author or editor of eleven books on media and communication, including the seminal *Telecommunications in Canada* (1990) and *Canadian Communication Thought* (2000). In 2011, *Media, Structures, and Power: The Robert E. Babe Collection* was published. Robert Babe is professor of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada.