

MEDIA ECOLOGY, GLOBALIZATION, AND EMANCIPATION: BEYOND THE CARNIVALESQUE

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INTRODUCTION

We wanted to examine a simple question for which there may be no answer. We viewed almost every psychological or social system as “chaotic” in the more formal sense of systems theory, due to the result of a mixture of forces of convergence toward totalizing ideologies and forces of divergence and cultural diversity somewhat akin to Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogic, heteroglossia, polyphony, and unfinalizability. So the question we posed was, to what extent does electronic communication (the mode of information) tend to favor forces toward totalization versus the liberating forces of the dialogic?”¹

Excursus

Maranhao, a prominent commentator of Mikhail Bakhtin’s works argues that the “Russian philosopher and semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of ‘dialogue’ emphasized the power of discourse to increase understanding of multiple perspectives and create myriad possibilities. Bakhtin held that relationships and connections exist among all living beings, and that dialogue creates a new understanding of a situation that demands change. In his influential works, Bakhtin provided a linguistic methodology to define the dialogue, its nature and meaning.”² He remarks:

Dialogic relations have a specific nature: They can be reduced neither to the purely logical (even if dialectical) nor to the purely linguistic (compositional-syntactic). They are possible only between complete utterances of various speaking subjects... Where there is no word and no language, there can be no dialogic relations; they cannot exist among objects or logical quantities (concepts, judgments, and so forth). Dialogic relations presuppose a language, but they do not reside within the system of language. They are impossible among elements of a language.³

“Carnavalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law.”⁴

These quotes establish a meaning for carnivalesque as providing a perspective on the nature and absurdity of the loci of power and control. Carnavalesque assists in developing perspectives on social problems and social reform, but cannot be relied on to establish programs

of reform. They certainly can have great utility in energizing protest. When combined with the dialogical, programs of reform would be more likely to emerge.

We have seen these in the form of theatrical performance at meetings of globalization, such as those directed at Nike at the G-8 and WTOC street protests.

Carnavalesque is the use of theatrics to face off with power via satire and parody, and invite spectators to a new reading of the spectacle of global capitalism. We see it all around us in the street theater, teach ins, and NikeTown blockades that poke fun and use critical satire and parody to say something important about global capitalism, and its impact upon both workers and consumers. The carnivalesque can be grotesque, violent or quite peaceful. Sorting out the message, in the midst of media dominated by spectacle advertising, infotainment, and purchased by transnational power, is the most important thing we can be teaching.

For Mikhail Bakhtin, then Julia Kristeva, the carnival is the theatrics of rant and madness seeing to repair the separation of worker from consumer. This is the separation that Karl Marx wrote about in *Das Kapital*, the alienation of consumer from producer. We do not know where our clothing, toys, and other consumables are made. The location of sweatshop factories is a carefully guarded corporate secret. We do not know who makes our clothing. The stories of working women (mostly teenagers) is kept secret, and instead the spectacle of transnational corporate advertising and public relations regales and seduces us. For this, Boje opines:

Carnival is the sweatshop theater, the blockade of a NikeTown in Melbourne on a Friday evening (In Sydney it happens on Thursdays), or a protest against Wal-Mart on a Saturday. Around the world consumers (students and faculty too) are spectators (or in Augusto Boal's terms Spect-actors), actors in a form of carnival resistance that premodern peasants used to satirize the weird power of the Crown and Clergy over their community life.⁵

“According to Bakhtin, all speech utterances are heteroglot and polyphonic in that they partake of different-languages” and resonate with ‘many-voices.’ Heteroglossia (other-languagedness) and polyphony (many-voicedness) are ‘the base conditions governing the operation of meaning in any utterance.’⁶ By ‘other-languagedness,’ Bakhtin does not mean only national languages (though a national language determines, in part, the meaning of any utterance). More generally, heteroglossia refers to the ideologies inherent in the various languages to which we all lay claim as social beings and by which we are constituted as individuals: the language and the inherent ideologies of our profession, the language and inherent ideologies of our age group, of the decade, of our social class, geographical region, family, circle of friends, etc.”⁷

The unfinalizability of the self is a product of the constant navigation between the internal world and the external world, and the human thinker occupies this marginal space. “The pure unification of which is an unrealizable goal because of the brevity of human life and the conversation between internal consistency and external dynamism.” The utterance guarantees what Peirce calls infinite semiosis, the infinitely long chain of signs “of which the human, in his or her brief lifetime, only has the privilege of sampling a very small part.”⁸

Note, Peirce, the famous semiotician and polymath, has a similar concept to Bakhtin’s, that of ‘infinite semiosis.’

I believe that Bakhtin's theoretical suggestions concerning polyphony, carnival, and other cultural phenomena, should not be seen only as social, institutional, artistic, or language related devices, but as concrete suggestions about cultural space and the life taking place within it.

"Bakhtin insists throughout all of his philosophy that time and space are not physical but that time is historical and space is social. On this point he is indeed comparable with the later Nishida for whom the basho is a place in which things do not simply "exist" but in which they are "local," i.e., in which they "are" in a concrete way. Bakhtin's and Nishida's outspokenly "organicist" definitions of "place" or "locality" put both of them into the group of those people who attempt to think place as more than as a Newtonian extension of space."⁹

Carnival is but one of several dialogic platforms that can have a liberating influence.

Excursus on Mark Poster

Mark Poster wishes to merge Critical Theory and Poststructuralism because he feels they had been separated by the "vapors of the Rhine", and that Critical Theory stagnated and needed updating. He suggests that Poststructuralism can help reconstruct Critical Theory.

"Critical theory, as defined long ago by Max Horkheimer, attempts to promote the project of emancipation by furthering what it understands as the theoretical effort of the critique of domination begun by the Enlightenment and continued by Karl Marx. I am in agreement with that restricted definition. Often, however, the term critical theory also implies the use of specific Marxist concepts, such as the dialectic, or includes an insistence on framing critical discourse in relation to some state of capitalism. I find this meaning of critical theory less useful because I think that in the present conjuncture the critique of capitalism serves to obscure the understanding of new forms of domination which have emerged during this century."¹⁰

He suggests several factors motivating the evolution of Critical Theory, including not only (1) bureaucratic socialism in East Europe, (2) Fascism in Central Europe, and (3) the 'culture industry' in Europe and the United States, but also (4) decolonization which outdated Western critiques, (5) feminist literature which revealed patriarchy, and (6) modern modes of information (electronic communications, science, cybernetic devices).

". . . 'theory' is important to the work of critical theory in that it provides a contextual framework in the following sense. [One of the labors of theory] . . . is to relate conceptual advances to their context not to reduce them to it, quite the opposite, to demonstrate that the link between discourse and society gives discourse its generalizing force while providing what Frederic Jameson has called a 'cognitive mapping' of society. Precisely because discourse has some meaningful link to its context, it serves to illuminate the context and even to provide an understanding of the mechanisms of domination of that context. [Poststructuralist theory has the] ability to clarify a social order increasingly characterized by electronically mediated language constellations."¹¹

"Social control systems are dependent on vast amounts of stored information and on organizations that can manipulate that information. Knowledge about the social world is indirectly transmitted from one person to another through the mediation of electronic

devices. Science once represented itself as standing outside the world of opinion, as the rational critique of ignorance and the domination that ensued from it. Now science and reason are part of the machinery of society and participate in the systems of social control and domination. To avoid obsolescence critical theory must account for the line of new languages that stretches from body signals, grunts, spoken language, and writing to print, the telegraph, radio, film, television, computers, and other new linguistic technologies. The new phenomena constitute a rupture with traditional linguistic experience, and they make possible new forms of communicative relationships. It is reasonable to hypothesize that the network of social relations is being fundamentally altered at the present time by the new linguistic experiences.”¹²

So what am I trying to establish here is to get from theory, to context, to praxis. This necessitates an examination of Bakhtin’s dialogic in contemporary society, and of Poster’s suggestion not to examine so much language which is an obsession and passion of all social theorists, but to see how modern modes of information act as an ecological medium as it affects a new emerging world order, and how they create the centering effects of global capitalism versus the liberating potential of enclaves of public opinions. This is an area of study sometimes called Medium Theory, Medium Ecology, modes of communication, modes of information, transnational finance, and, for Zakaria, *The Post-American World*. This examination is necessary to understand the problems posed by this emerging world order so that a dialogic or program can be launched as a counterforce to the subtle and not so subtle oppressions of the prevailing influence of economic globalization.

Medium Theory: The Deibert Thesis

“Case sat in the loft with the dermatodes strapped across his forehead, watching motes dance in the diluted sunlight that filtered through the grid overhead. A countdown was in progress. Cowboys didn’t get into simstim, he thought, because it was basically a meat toy. He knew that the trodes he used and the little plastic tiara dangling from a simstim deck were basically the same, and that the cyberspace matrix was actually a drastic simplification of the human sensorium, at least in terms of presentation, but simstim itself struck him as a gratuitous multiplication of flesh input.”¹³

Gibson’s novel thus expresses a view introduced by Innes¹⁴ and his disciple McLuhan¹⁵ not only of the extension of the human psyche by media, but also its influence on culture, which Gibson’s also uses. I won’t elaborate on the concept of ‘flesh’ expressed by Gibson (which is picked up in much of the contemporary comic-book pop culture,¹⁶ which for us can represent the idea of seduction by the ‘culture industry’ of Horkheimer and Adorno,¹⁷ Huxley’s *Brave New World*,¹⁸ and Postman,¹⁹ which is a feature, as we shall see, of domination that is amplified by hypermedia. However, I get ahead of myself, so let us examine the basic thesis, which Deibert clearly establishes.²⁰ Deibert starts with the history of the emergence of electronic communications.

Historical Gloss

The *Modern World Order* of nation states was formally recognized or given its modern birth in the European world by the “Peace of Westphalia” (1648), and reached its zenith in the nationalism of the 19th century. It was based on the concepts of territoriality and autonomous

authority free of external domination, and now being undermined by the (1) European Union, NAFTA and other alliances, (2) the rise of Asian challenges to Western dominance by Communist (China) and Democratic (India) Capitalism, and by (3) changes in the modern modes of communication. Deibert addresses these changes as a transformation from the modern to a *Postmodern World Order*.

“The onslaught of two world wars altered the urgency and trajectory of R&D into electronic communications, and formed the basis for a complex of government-science-military-capital interests centered mostly in the United States. . . [which] gradually was replaced by a more consumer- and business-oriented push behind the R&D of electronic communications.” . . [which was greatly accelerated by the end of the cold war] “centered on the burgeoning entertainment , home-consumer, and business applications market.”²¹

He uses the codependent evolution of communications and culture for a perspective on changes in the ‘world order’. These have implications for liberation. We could call these implications ‘global capitalism’ vs. ‘media mediated emancipation’ or perhaps ‘liberation diologics’. Fill in your own terms here. _____

“Power is shifting away from nation-states, up, down, and sideways. In such an atmosphere, the traditional applications of national power, both economic and military, have become less effective. . . . Since 1991, we have lived under an American imperium, a unique unipolar world in which the open global economy expanded and accelerated dramatically. This expansion is now driving the next change in the nature of the international order.”²²

Zakaria is more comfortable with globalization than Deibert seems to be.

The Hypermedia Bifurcation²³

“There has been a remarkable growth in transnational microeconomic links over the past thirty years or so, comprising markets and production facilities that are designated by the awkward term ‘offshore’-as though they existed in some ethereal space waiting to be reconceived by an economic equivalent of relativity theory. In this offshore area, sourcing, production, and marketing are reorganized within ‘global factories,’ in some instances ‘global offices,’ and most recently the “global lab”—real-time transnational information flows being the raw material of all three. Financial transactions take place in various “Euro” facilities, which may be housed in Tokyo, New York, and European financial centers but which are considered to exist in an extranational realm. Cross-investment among the leading firms or other means of forging transnationalized intercorporate alliances increasingly are the norm. Trade is made up disproportionately of intrafirm transactions as opposed to the conventional arms-length exchange that is the staple of economic models and policy. And, the financial sector, which historically (and in theory) is assumed to follow and service the “real” sector, now dwarfs it completely.”²⁴

I can add another example of the global office, when I recently discovered that a former student of mine, Maureen, working for J.P. Morgan in Manila, was vetting a mortgage application from my barrio in Vermont!!

Ruggie calls the transnationalization in the European community of the 1990’s the ‘unbundling’ of nation states.

To conclude, material changes may have awakened both a need and a desire for this broad transformation in the prevailing social episteme, which produced fundamentally new spatial forms. And entrepreneurial rulers could and did try to exploit those new images and ideas to advance their interests. Nevertheless, the breadth and depth of these changes argue, at the very least, in favor of a relative autonomy for the realm of social epistemology. Walzer has put it well: ‘If symbolization does not by itself create unity (that is the function of political practice as well as of symbolic activity), it does create units—units of discourse which are fundamental to all thinking and doing, units of feeling around which emotions of loyalty and assurance can cluster.’²⁵ Accordingly, I turn next to the domain of social practice, wherein the new unity was achieved. I highlight two aspects of it in particular: the process of social empowerment, which facilitated the consolidation of territorial rule; and the process of "unbundling" territoriality, which made it possible for the new territorial states, who viewed their individual subjectivity as constituting a self-sufficient moral and political field, to form a society of states.²⁶

[Quick Gloss]: Note the similarity of Walzer’s ‘units of discourse’ to Dawkins’ ‘meme’ which pushes the concept with its analogy as replicator at the social level to the ‘gene’ at the biological-evolutionary level.²⁷

Note Ruggie’s subtlety of pointing to language and ‘social episteme’ as the basis of new transnational reality, which thus resides in the common perception, rather than in formal documentation. Of course, concurrent with his publication, was the formalization of the European Union, but the argument applies globally today, nonetheless.

Deibert takes up transformation from states as memes, to memes of transnationalization in three arenas: (1) the production of goods, (2) the emergence of global finance, and (3) the architecture of modern political authority. (He does not use the term ‘meme’; I just appropriated it.)

TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF THE PRODUCTION OF GOODS

“Although the transnationalization process has deep antecedents, it has been qualitatively transformed in the new communications environment with the complex diffusion of production across national boundaries . . . hypermedia create a conducive environment with strong incentives for those firms that operate transnationally” [which cascades into pressures on other firms to follow suit].²⁸

Multilocal Flexibility

Moreover, most crucially, is how this operates to both oppress workers and affect global economic conditions.

“Corporations value multilocal flexibility²⁹ primarily because it permits the possibility of crossing political boundaries to evade government regulations, or to search for cheap or specially skilled labor, low taxes, and other favorable regulatory climates.”³⁰

As an example of providing a fast moving change of venue of the means of production, witness and example which could be used for dodging constraint or to provide improved conditions for improvised countries, depending on intent and point of view:

“Mini-plants in mobile containers, made especially to be supplied to developing countries. The mini-plant system is designed in such a way that all the production machinery is fixed on the platform of the container, with all wiring, piping, and installation parts; that is to say, they are fully equipped.”³¹

Of course large corporations have their own multilocal production and can put together products instantly from its various loci of production (e.g. Dell, Intel) to either meet unique customer needs (saving on inventory in the process), or again, to avoid changing national constraints on their options. Instant communication also facilitates collaboration among multiple firms, including online real-time R&D team conferencing on new products and projects.

“Just-in-time interaction (also known as ‘zero stock systems’) could not take place without the use of Electronic Data Interchange, or EDI, which maintains a constant electronic link between companies like Wal-Mart and one of its major suppliers, Procter & Gamble. . .”³² just like morning donut-distribution in large cities depending on electronic monitoring of traffic flows.

Meeting and Influencing Local Tastes

Transnational production can, paradoxically, meet the varying consumer preferences. It can also keep up with rapidly as well as geographic and cultural changes in those tastes, and, of course, can influence them.

“As hypermedia provide knowledge-intensive/software-based production lines, rapid shifts in production output or major changes in advertisement campaigns are made more feasible than with the traditional mode of labor-intensive, mass-produced finished goods.. This particular capability contradicts the widespread belief that globalization of production necessitates homogenization.”³³

“Just beyond the horizon of current events lie two possible political futures—both bleak, neither democratic. The first is a retribalization of large swaths of humankind by war and bloodshed: a threatened Lebanonization of national states in which culture is pitted against culture, people against people, tribe against tribe—a Jihad in the name of a hundred narrowly conceived faiths against every kind of interdependence, every kind of artificial social cooperation and civic mutuality. The second is being borne in on us by the onrush of economic and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity and that mesmerize the world with fast music, fast computers, and fast food—with MTV, Macintosh, and McDonald's, pressing nations into one commercially homogenous global network: one McWorld tied together by technology, ecology, communications, and commerce. The planet is falling precipitantly apart AND coming reluctantly together at the very same moment.

It certainly seems possible that the most attractive democratic ideal in the face of the brutal realities of Jihad and the dull realities of McWorld will be a confederal union of semi-autonomous communities smaller than nation-states, tied together into regional economic associations and markets larger than nation-states—participatory and self-determining in local matters at the bottom, representative and accountable at the top. The nation-state would play a diminished role, and sovereignty would lose some of its political potency. The Green movement adage ‘Think globally, act locally’ would actually come to describe the conduct of politics.”³⁴

[Quick Gloss]: I might add that when both forces toward divergence (jihad) and convergence (McWorld), mix, you get what the systems theorists call ‘chaos’, and what Chinese philosophy call ‘qi energy.’³⁵ This chaos is not random noise, but a complex spatio-temporal patterning, and one which tends to continually destabilize and restabilize into a sequenced of cultural and economic bifurcations.

“With computer assisted profiles and other market-surveillance mechanisms, firms can then maintain a constant watch over disparate localities around the globe, enabling diversified responses to local conditions, as well as rapid adjustments in advertising campaigns to influence parochial consumer tastes.”³⁶

We have all seen this at an individual level, in our browsing the Internet, with artificial intelligence methods used to select advertisements related to the material we are reading, and with visual manipulation of the screen space to direct our attention. One friend, David Loye (systems theory and author on Darwin’s emphasis on love and empathy), chided me for sending a message that had ads for politically conservative links and ads. I had to assure him that Google’s Gmail chooses those ads based on its sometimes clever, and like this, sometimes misinterpreted analysis of message content. The ultimate example I have encounter of the commercial opticon was when I was sending a message, and Gmail interrupted after I hit ‘send’ to tell me that I had mentioned ordering a book, but had not in fact, ordered one!! This is rather the ultimate corporate version of the panopticon.³⁷

While this kind of consumer manipulation may seem slightly off-track, it is very relevant, as modern TV, YouTube, Hulu, Huffington Post, Facebook, Twitter and other elements of the blogosphere, are disseminating globalization; witness movies like *Slumdog Millionaire* and TV documentaries like *Afghan Star*—an HBO documentary on an Afghan’s *Pop Idol*, a clone of *American Idol* and *Philippine Idol/Pinoy Idol* (the Philippines was the 35th country to clone *American Idol*; the 6th in Asia). With Afghan’s *Pop Idol* just dancing in public put one contestant in danger for her life.³⁸ Who needs the military to frighten the Taliban?!

The Cyperspace Bazaar: Enabling Small Entrepreneurs

Small businesses and individuals can reach global markets, via personal notices on the web or by services such as CDBaby, eBay, Craig’s List, BetaScript Publishing,

and many other venues, including their own web sites. Therefore, the Internet is not completely dominated by the big corporations.

THE EMERGENCE OF GLOBAL FINANCE

“At the heart of this market transformation are the new information and communication technologies, which have effectively removed the spatial and temporal constraints on twenty-four hour global securities trading and created pressures for ‘deregulation’ in all countries across the world.”³⁹

Transnational Banks

“offered a substantial transaction-cost advantage over nationally based banks in the international wholesale market by being able to handle smoothly large transactions among banks, governments and large firms with cross-border operations.”⁴⁰

Financial Innovations

Financial innovations, such as the Eurodollar and the ‘petro dollar’, created “a gigantic pool of quasi-stateless mobile capital, not subject to political authority or accountability.”⁴¹

“Casino Capitalism”⁴²

‘Nixon Shock’, August 15, 1971, collapsed the Bretton Woods (circa WWII) agreement and led to the beginning of deregulation of financial markets. Speculative capital became more independent of a support role and began to allow more speculation and uncertainty “whipping into a frenzy of speculative flows of capital across borders.”⁴³

. . . global financial services have developed the most advanced hypermedia networks in the world, and are today at the forefront of computing and telecommunications innovations—a place traditionally occupied by military research and development.”

The U.S.-based Bank of America, for example, carries out trades in more than 100 foreign currencies for a volume of \$60 billion per day. [For huge profits accomplished in seconds or less; remember this Deibert report is over 13 years old as of 2010]. . . —a real-time clearance of balances that would be inconceivable without hypermedia.”⁴⁴

“Every day, through the ‘lobe’ of the neural network that is New York, more than \$1.9 trillion electronically changes hands at nearly the speed of light. These dollars—and the cares, hopes, and fears they represent—appear as momentary flashes on a screen. . . Every three days a sum of money passes through the fiber-optic network underneath the pitted streets of New York equal to the total output for one year of all America’s companies and all of its workforce. And every two weeks the annual product of the world passes through the network of New York—trillions and trillions of ones and zeros representing all the toil, sweat, and guile from all of humanity’s good-faith efforts and all of its terrible follies.”⁴⁵

THE ARCHITECTURE OF MODERN POLITICAL AUTHORITY

A New Cognitive Map of the Eco/Politicosphere and its Gradual “Undermining of the Effective Power of State Regulatory Systems”⁴⁶

“The most compelling evidence is the increasing convergence among state economic policies around the world. . . states have increasingly defined themselves and their interests according to the pressures and values of global capitalism. Governments at all levels now engage in competitive deregulatory and regulatory ‘locational tournaments’ designed to attract global investment.”⁴⁷

Moreover, I might add, to seek global markets. The “at all levels” we see in our province (state), Vermont, which at state, regional, community, and commodity levels, send delegations abroad (e.g., China), and invites delegations from abroad to evaluate our products for transnational marketing and importation of their goods, and for forming alliances abroad, often with the assistance of our government officials, and often without them.

The Creation of Multiple Layers of Authority

“The Global Civil Society”: Return of the Carivalesque

Transnational networks organized around a great variety of social issues, political movements, and special interests are able to operate independently of any given state’s control.⁴⁸ The Internet facilitates the rapid establishment of such networks and the deployment of their influence. While it is difficult to estimate the extent to which they can influence policy despite their limitations in confronting nations and global capitalism, it is certain that it can be significant. The whole world is aware the considerable role that the cell phone played in unseating Erap here in the Philippines.

“The process of globalization, the enormous growth in numbers of transnational social movements and non-governmental organizations, and the broad reach of transnational capital and corporations has generated considerable academic and policy interest in the future of global governance and the role of “global civil society” in it. Some scholars and practitioners believe that global civil society is an instrumental force in the construction of global regulation; others see it as a bourgeois fetish that sustains liberalism and helps to spread it around the world. This senior seminar provides a broad view of the theory and debates behind global civil society and case studies of specific transnational networks, movements, and coalitions.”⁴⁹

“The majority of these transnational social movements do not operate through the traditional lobbying procedures and political channels of participation as defined by state structures.⁵⁰ Most of them cannot be characterized as political parties campaigning for government office. Indeed, their very importance as a challenge to the modern world order paradigm lies in boundaries ‘to address international problems, and to reflect a

global sensitivity'.⁵¹ They are 'decentered, local actors, that cross the reified boundaries of space as though they were not there,'⁵² seeking to organize activities and educate and motivate populations directly. The rise in the visibility and the density of these transnational social movements cannot be divorced from the communications technologies that have empowered them."⁵³

[Quick Excursus on Conflict]: The main thrust of this essay is to address how political philosophy and theory can address the oppressive elements of globalization in view of the impact of fast evolving modes of communications have on these issues. Related to these, but local/tribal in their dynamics, are sources of hate and conflict arising from fear of those outside our communities. Thiele addresses these in a course he currently teaches at the University of Florida: ***Conflict, Community & Contemplation***. His introduction to the course reads:

These are precarious times. The 21st century has been ushered in by America's engagement in two wars, the rise of international terrorism, the multiplication of both rogue and failed states, the prospect of peak oil, global resource depletion, species extinction, and climate change. As if these examples of expanding uncertainty, loss, and strife were insufficient to challenge our youth, the recent meltdown of Wall Street and the ensuing financial crises rippling across the global marketplace ensure that today's students confront their world with suspicion, fear, and, all-too-often, despair.

The proposed undergraduate course, Conflict, Community, and Contemplation, approaches the intellectual and practical challenges facing students entering a precarious world through the lens of community and contemplation. While conflict can and often does occur between individuals, its most threatening forms today arise between collectives – nation-states, ethnic groups, religious sects, and ideological organizations. The call to community is a prerequisite for virtually all organized strife and war. But if the cultivation of community is often the cause of – or excuse for – violent struggle, it also presents a crucial avenue for solidarity and peaceful coexistence. Indeed, in the last century, a sense of cosmopolitan community has been central to the growth of peace movements, the pursuit of international human rights, global conflict resolution, and humanitarian aid. The human capacity and need for community presents both an enduring threat and indispensable route to a more peaceful and equitable world. The contemplative community holds special promise.⁵⁴

He uses some exercises within his community to practice some methods of conflict resolution. With respect to the theme of this essay, it would be reasonable to try to perform such exercises on the Internet. Such activities could serve as models that one could deploy for maximal impact by various civil rights, environmental, and conflict reduction movements.

This excursus is not entirely without relevance, but without belaboring the issue, one could ask the question, does globalization attenuate or amplify these tribal conflicts? The answer, of course, is both, but how, why, and how much? ***[End Excursus]***

[Transnational social movements] "by moving around and through political boundaries to influence populations, . . . not only undermine the connection between sovereignty and a territorially defined populace over which the sovereign authority has ultimate jurisdiction, but also challenge the idea central to the modern world order

paradigm that the international states system is the legitimate arena where politics across borders takes place.⁵⁵ This is especially the case with respect to those movements that lobby to enforce the global institutionalization of norms and principles relating to universal human rights—a direct challenge to sovereignty. “Clearly, these movements do not have the same aggregate structural power as do the global market forces . . . [but] they do have [‘interstitial’ power], legitimate influence . . . over specific issue-areas⁵⁶.”⁵⁷

It should be clear by now, that one could consider hypermedia, especially the Internet with its various appendages; computers, cell phones, fax machines, satellites, TV, radio, and people, as a new theatre for Bakhtin’s extension of dialogics; of hyperglossia, polyphony, unfinalizability, and carivalesque to all of culture.

The Two-Way Panopticon

Bentham’s panopticon enabled the surreptitious surveillance of prisoners, but the effectiveness lay not so much in the actual observations, but in the psychological effect on the prisoners who were aware they could be observed, but not know when. This was applicable to many institutions, such as hospitals and schools, and, in fact, Bentham got the idea from his brother who used it in schools.

“Jeremy Bentham intended the nineteenth-century panopticon to instill in the prisoner a sense of omnipresent authority, to internalize the criminal the sense of always being watched. This imposition of the other into the self was the first step in the reform of the offender. From that point on, Bentham hoped, the inmate’s consciousness would be oriented toward society’s moral system as embodied in figures of authority.”⁵⁸

Poster critiques Foucault’s extension of the concept to society⁵⁹ as a whole on several grounds while granting that Foucault

“integrates with critical theory the new sense of the importance of language. . . Especially interesting, however, is the role of discourse of the new science of criminology in the legitimation of the panopticon. Through a discussion of criminology Foucault demonstrates how the human sciences are implicated in systems of domination.”⁶⁰

The ‘implication of human sciences’ in domination is evident in Ryan’s *Blaming the Victim*,⁶¹ Ehrlich and Abraham’s ‘Caution, Mental Health can be Hazardous’,⁶² and Burgess’ *A Clockwork Orange*,⁶³ a novel that could be considered carnivalesque.

To return to Poster’s critique of Foucault, I only mention that he claims that Foucault did not keep up with many social changes, and more importantly for our purposes here that he did not keep up with changes in mass communications.

“What Foucault apparently did not notice is that the same panoptical system has been perfectly and widely extended in the second half of the twentieth century by dint of the computer’s ability to gather and store information. It is now possible to monitor large populations without the material apparatus of the nineteenth-century prison. Electronic monitoring of the population occurs silently, continuously, and automatically along with the transactions of everyday life. Under the domain of the

superpanopticon the population need not be gathered in institutions to be observed. In the mundane affairs of private life as well as in public life the population is under the gaze of the corporate and state bureaucracies. Market behavior, personal preferences, credit status, vacation decisions, health profiles—every conceivable aspect of ordinary activity leaves a trace in the memory banks of machines, and these traces are available instantaneously should the occasion arise. The celebrated distinction, so dear to liberals, between private life and public life is being effectively abolished not by a communist revolution but by the extension of the panopticon as a technology of power.”⁶⁴

“The evidence gathered in support of these arguments is considerable, detailing the way the manipulation of information through computer data-bases and the use of electronic monitoring devices facilitate greater state control in such areas as policing, internal revenue, and other far-reaching facets of bureaucratic administration. . . the United States is approaching a ‘maximum security society’ . . .”⁶⁵

Deibert goes on to point at that the surveillance, while in the employ of the state, can also be used for dialogics, civilian surveillance of the state, or as he puts it, “countervailing pressures and trends that suggest real-states are actually disadvantaged in the hypermedia environment.”⁶⁶

Loss of State Control of the Flow of Information

More mobile communication devices, including portable satellite dishes, have made TV widely accessible in states that have tried to ban TV, such as Iran and China, and have forced states to allow more broadcasters that are independent. The need to attract foreign investment means having plenty of communications infrastructures. For example,

“The turning point came during the August 1991 coup attempt [in Russia], when central authorities found they could no longer contain the spread of information both within and beyond their borders. Shane comments that by the time of the coup, ‘Fax machines and photocopiers, video recorders and personal computers outside the government were no longer exotica but a sprawling, living nervous system that linked the Russian political opposition, the republican independence movement, and the burgeoning private sector.’⁶⁷

Messages for Boris Yeltsin and others circulated through Compuserve, the ‘GlasNet’ system, and through discussion groups on the Internet.⁶⁸ Soviet reporters filed their stories over local lines to a cultural institute in Estonia, which had a computer link with PeaceNet in Sweden; that link forwarded the messages to six other computer networks around the world (White). Within the Soviet Union, airwaves were saturated with opposition viewpoints, and thousands of Muscovites were able to receive CNN television images intended for the microwave relay that served the Kremlin, the Foreign Ministry, and some hotels. When Yeltsin climbed on the tank to defy the coup, ‘His image went to

thousands of Muscovites via CNN, his words to more thousands via photocopied leaflets and the White House radio station, prompting thousands more to join the protest.^{69,70}

Today it would be Facebook, Twitter, Huffington Post, YouTube, and many other widely distributed and consulted Internet sites.

States Come Under Surveillance

Amateurs and professionals catch Police and military blunders deploy their videos in the media. The same is true of political leaders, religious leaders, and celebrities in the midst of their illegal and immoral activities, from local police. Government misdeeds are exposed, and deployed immediately on the Internet, but numerous watchdog bloggers and organizations. From the Rodney King beating by the Los Angeles Police in 1991, to the failures of the Catholic Church in dealing with pedophilic abuse, right up to the Pope.

CONCLUSION

We opened with the question of how do modern modes of communication serve forces that totalize and oppress, versus how they can serve the forces of diversity and liberation. We then took up Mikhail Bakhtin, philosopher and semiotician, who discusses such forces in literature, as expressed in his dialogics, heteroglossia, polyphony, and unfinalizability, and how they generalized to culture in general, especially in the service of change for the improvement of liberty. We then invoked Mark Poster, and his discussion of merging Critical Theory and Post-Structuralism to show how discourse and its role exploring and highlighting context to give a metaperspective on the forces of domination and liberations in society, and to introduce the idea of how modern modes of information accelerate these processes.

Then we presented Ronald Deibert's analysis of how new forms of hypermedia served as fitness landscapes for these social forces. His thesis is that essentially, hypermedia served both the tendencies toward centering and diversity, though overall, the former more adequately. Globalized capitalism, while distributed, is ideologically more totalizing despite its neo-liberalism. It affects the distribution of power in decentering the important of individual nation-states, by allowing capitalism to take advantage of seeking the least regulated and cheapest venues for production and finances. This makes for a deregulated economies and polities that allow the excesses of capitalism to oppress people. He also discusses how the need for security in a diminished nation-state Post-Modern World Order has created security issues along with the issues of oppression and poverty. The potential for changing such a system is formidable. He does point out that social movements have similarly become trans-national, and while they are unlikely to change the system as a whole, they can effect an influence on specific issues, such as education and civil rights.

It is our duty as social philosophers to bridge the gap between theory and praxis, to offer metaperspectives that helps to organize protest and change.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Abraham, Mitina, & Houston, 2000
- ² Maranhão, 1990, 51.
- ³ Bakhtin, 1986, 117.
- ⁴ Kristeva, 1980, 65.
- ⁵ Boje, 2008.
- ⁶ Holquist & Emerson, 1981, 428.
- ⁷ Park-Fuller, 1986.
- ⁸ Fox, 2005.
- ⁹ Botz-Bornstein, 2004.
- ¹⁰ Poster, 1980, 1.
- ¹¹ Poster. 7.
- ¹² Poster, 109-110.
- ¹³ Gibson, 1984, 55.
- ¹⁴ Innes, 1952.
- ¹⁵ McLuhan, 1962.
- ¹⁶ again the Carnavalesque; also see Abraham, 2007.
- ¹⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002.
- ¹⁸ Huxley, *Brave New World*, 1958.
- ¹⁹ Postman, 1985.
- ²⁰ Deibert, 1997.
- ²¹ Deibert, 1997, 135.
- ²² Zakaria, 2008, 4.
- ²³ Deibert, 1997.
- ²⁴ Ruggie, 1993, 141.
- ²⁵ Walzer, 1967, 194-195.
- ²⁶ Ruggie, 1993, 160.
- ²⁷ Dawkins, 1976.
- ²⁸ Deibert, p. 140.
- ²⁹ Hepworth, 1989, 94.
- ³⁰ Deibert, 141.
- ³¹ Scinet World Trade System, 2003.
- ³² Deibert, 142-3.
- ³³ Deibert, 144.
- ³⁴ Barber, 1992.
- ³⁵ see Waller, 2008.
- ³⁶ Deibert, 145; see also O. Gandy, 1993.
- ³⁷ Bentham, 1787; Foucault, 1975; Gandy, 1993.
- ³⁸ Straziuso, 2008.
- ³⁹ Hepworth, 132.
- ⁴⁰ Deibert, 149.
- ⁴¹ Gill, 1992, 274.
- ⁴² Strange's term, 1986.
- ⁴³ Deibert, 150.
- ⁴⁴ Deibert, p. 151; Black, 1996; Philipps, 1995.
- ⁴⁵ Kurtzman, 1993.
- ⁴⁶ Deibert, 156.

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- ⁴⁷ Deibert, p. 156; Cerny, 1993; Cox, 1987; Mytelka, 1995.
⁴⁸ Lipschutz, 1992; 2005.
⁴⁹ Lipschutz, 2005.
⁵⁰ Thiele, 1993.
⁵¹ Thiele, 1993.
⁵² Lipschutz, 1992.
⁵³ Deibert, 159.
⁵⁴ Thiele, 2010.
⁵⁵ Lipschutz, *ibid.*, 392.
⁵⁶ Mann, 1986, 16-19.
⁵⁷ Deibert, 163.
⁵⁸ Poster, 122.
⁵⁹ Foucault, 1975.
⁶⁰ Poster, 111.
⁶¹ Ryan's *Blaming the Victim*, 1971.
⁶² Ehrlich and Abraham, 1974.
⁶³ Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*, 1962.
⁶⁴ Poster, 122.
⁶⁵ See Lyon, 1993, 661-662; Marx, 1988; Deibert, 166.
⁶⁶ Deibert, 167.
⁶⁷ Shane, 1994, 262.
⁶⁸ Lyon, 1994, 87.
⁶⁹ Shane, 1994, 266.
⁷⁰ Deibert, 169.

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“He laughed at his earlier idealism, his schoolboy vision of a brave new world in which justice would reign and men would be brothers.”

Emile Zola, *Germinal*, 1885