



Harold Innis

新闻学与传播学经典丛书·英文原版系列
展江 何道宽 主编

Changing Concepts of Time

变化中的时间观念

Harold Innis 著
[加] 哈罗德·伊尼斯

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2013年

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

变化中的时间观念 (英文版) (加) 伊尼斯著.

—北京: 中国传媒大学出版社, 2013. 9

(新闻学与传播学经典丛书·英文原版系列/ 展江,何道宽主编)

ISBN 978-7-5657-0741-4

I. ①变… II. ①伊… III. ①传播学—研究—英文 IV. ①G206

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2013) 第 146667 号

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策划编辑 司马兰 姜颖旻

责任编辑 姜颖旻

责任印制 曹辉

出版人 蔡翔

出版发行 中国传媒大学出版社

社址 北京市朝阳区定福庄东街1号 邮编: 100024

电话 86-10-65450532 或 65450528 传真: 010-65779405

网址 <http://www.cucp.com.cn>

经销 全国新华书店

印刷 北京彩蝶印刷有限公司

开本 880mm×1230mm 1/32

印张 6

版次 2013年9月第1版 2013年9月第1次印刷

ISBN 978-7-5657-0741-4/G·0741

定价 25.00 元

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出版说明

“新闻学与传播学经典丛书·英文原版系列”，选取了在新闻学与传播学历史上具有里程碑意义的大师经典名作，如传播学“四大奠基人”哈罗德·拉斯韦尔、保罗·拉扎斯菲尔德等，及加布里埃尔·塔尔德、罗伯特·帕克、哈罗德·伊尼斯、马歇尔·麦克卢汉、库尔特·卢因、卡尔·霍夫兰等这些学界耳熟能详的名家佳作。这些是传播学与新闻学的奠基之作，也是现代新闻学与传播学发展的基础。许多名作都多次再版，影响深远，历久不衰，成为新闻学与传播学的经典。此套丛书采用英文原版出版，希望读者能读到原汁原味的著作。

随着中国高等教育的教学改革，广大师生已不满足于仅仅阅读国外图书的翻译版，他们迫切希望能读到原版图书，希望能采用国外英文原版图书进行教学，从而保证所讲授的知识体系的完整性、系统性、科学性和文字描绘的准确性。此套丛书的出版便是满足了这种需求，同时可使学生在专业技术方面尽快掌握本学科相应的外语词汇，并了解先进国家的学术发展方向。

本系列在引进英文原版图书的同时，将目录译为中文，作为对原版的一种导读，供读者阅读时参考。

从事经典著作的出版，需要出版人付出不懈的努力，好在有本丛书的主编展江教授和何道宽教授的大力扶持，我们得以在学术出版的道路上走的更远。我们自知本套丛书也许会有很多缺陷，虚心接受读者提出的批评和建议。

中国传媒大学出版社

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Introduction to this Edition

James W. Carey

The “winner” of the Cold War will inevitably face the *imperial* problem of using power in global terms but from one particular context of authority, so preponderant and established and unchallenged that its world rule would almost certainly violate basic standards of justice.

—Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (1952)

In the early summer of 1952 Harold Innis left the hospital where he was being treated for terminal cancer. In the last months of his life, while at home, he edited the page proofs for *Changing Concepts of Time*, the final manuscript he would deliver to the printer. In early fall, the disease broke through his remaining defenses and he died on November 8, 1952.

His illness and death ended four years of intense and productive scholarship undertaken in extreme circumstances. Between 1948 and 1952, in an astonishing burst of creative energy, he wrote virtually all the work for which we today celebrate him as the major theorist and historian of communications in North America. The books that had brought him fame as an economic historian, geographer, and theorist—

The Fur Trade in Canada, *The History of the Canadian Pacific Railroad*, *The Cod Fisheries*—are little read today except by biographers and economic specialists and are largely out of print. However, his works on communications—*Empire and Communications*, *The Bias of Communications*, *The Press: A Neglected Factor in the Economic History of the Twentieth Century*, and now *Changing Concepts*—are still available and widely influential today.

Unlike his earlier books on economics, the volumes on communications were exclusively comprised of essays, loosely mortised together, that had originally been delivered as lectures. In the spring of 1948 alone he delivered the Beit Lectures at All Souls College, Oxford, which became *Empire and Communications*, and, on the same trip to Great Britain, the final two essays of this book were delivered as the Stamp Lecture at the University of London and the Cust Lecture at the University of Nottingham.

The essay form reflected not only the tentativeness of his thinking but also the urgency of his task to, as an even more famous political economist put it, not only analyze the world but change it. He wryly commented that “I once had to choose between going into university work or politics and I decided to go into politics” (Watson, 1977, p. 45). The cryptic nature, intensity, and energy of his communications essays reflect not only his struggle against physical decline but also the extraordinary burdens he had assumed. While head of the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto (a post he had held since 1937), he was also concurrently dean of the Graduate School. While serving a term as president of the Royal Society of Canada, he simultaneously traveled the country and conducted hearings for the Royal Commission on Transportation, of which he was a member.

Innis was one of those thinkers (Marx was another) whose work is regularly divided into early and late phases, separated by a “gap” marking an abrupt change of subject matter and philosophical outlook. The suddenness with which the work on communications appeared, and the contrast between the bold theorizing of the later work and the precise if

sometimes numbing detail of his studies in economics, reinforces the belief in a breach between the “young” Innis and the mature scholar. I do not believe such a separation exists; there is no radical disjunction between the early and the late Innis. His work on communications naturally grows out of and elaborates upon his early studies of the economic and political formation of Canada, as the essays in this volume attest. His subject was always empire, globalization, international trade, “the *longue durée* of events and epoch-making forces that transformed economies, states and civilizations” (Drache, 1995, p. xix). Innis was an economist of trade rather than production, of routes, movements, flows, and circulations rather than of factories and modes of production. The international economy of trade was powered, in his view, by progressively improving means of transportation and communications, parallel interacting systems of economic and social expansion and consolidation. This was as true of the expansion of the European trading system into North America in the seventeenth century, and the growth of imperialism in Africa and Asia in the nineteenth, as it is today in the age of jet aircraft and the Internet. The contradictory and unintended consequences of technology, when linked to the equally contradictory but thoroughly human desires for economic, political, and cultural domination, provided him with a lifelong subject matter.

In the years after World War II, the international system—which had lain dormant in the carnage of two world wars—reawakened in a radically altered technological and political setting. The year bridging 1948 and 1949 was pivotal both in politics and in Innis’s studies, and that is where this particular story begins.

On February 8, 1949, an innocently named “Values Discussion Group” was convened at the University of Toronto. It was chaired by economist Thomas Easterbrook and included as members not only Harold Innis but also an instructor of literature from St. Michael’s College, Marshall McLuhan, who had joined the faculty three years earlier. They met weekly during the semester with each member of the group in turn presenting a paper and leading the discussion.

Such discussion groups, a hardy perennial of the academic garden, flowered across the continent at this moment. However named, they shared a common purpose: to deal with the widely perceived “crisis of civilization” of the postwar period. “Crisis” is one of the most widely and idly used terms of the civic vocabulary, and Innis warned against it: “It will not do to join the great chorus of those who create a crisis by saying there is a crisis.” But the barbarism of the twentieth century, which was fully revealed only when the war ended, and the drift from alliance to cold war that threatened the peace seemed to warrant the word crisis.

All that remains in the archives of the University of Toronto are the minutes of the meetings of the “Values Discussion Group.” Judging from them, most of the gatherings were pretty dreary, focusing on the role of values in scientific research; the so-called fact-value dichotomy.

Marshall McLuhan made the fifth presentation to the group, and that too was pretty tame—a plea for art as against science—particularly considering the intellectual pyrotechnics he set off two decades later. McLuhan was still in his “Mechanical Bride” phase lamenting the decline of literature in an age of mass culture. He was then in the grip of the American cohort of “New Critics,” particularly those like Allan Tate and J. C. Ramson, who recruited him into their rearguard campaign against, in Tate’s phrase, the “all destroying abstraction of [industrial] America.” McLuhan looked to the American South as an outlet for his preindustrial yearnings. The South stood as a living, thriving monument of the Pastoral Ideal—if not earthen cottages, clotted cream, and the God-fearing peasant of English romantic poetry—then at least a brackish sanctuary from capitalism and its individualism. The region nurtured a distinct cluster of values that McLuhan, like others, called the “Southern Quality”: an aristocratic humanism, an agrarian economy, and worship of the cyclical rhythms of the land. The South was heir to an alternative cultural tradition that “took its stand” against the spiritless rationalism of the North. The arts—those McLuhan admired, at least—were a storehouse of values. He lionized a period when the arts were not separated from life as they had become in the modern world. He elevated

Art and the Artist, now capitalized into cultural exemplars, to the role of explorer and innovator, restless seekers of new continents of meaning who could not tolerate the banal, ordinary, standardized, repetitive, and routine—the archetypal features of industrial civilization.

When Harold Innis rose to speak at the eighth and last meeting of the group, the trivial and romantic aura that had dominated earlier sessions evaporated. One cannot help but infer from the notes that he believed a genuine crisis was in tow, and its nature was not to be found in technical philosophy or romantic poetry. The crisis was one of politics, economics, and communications.

As World War II came to an end, two very large problems loomed on the horizon. The first was the fear that both national and international economies would slip back into the economic nightmare of the 1930s and replay the hostilities that had recently ended. Millions of veterans in all the warring powers had to be absorbed into the civilian economy and given productive work. Unemployed veterans wandering the streets were a recipe for civic disaster. What would happen as defense spending slowed and factory jobs disappeared? Would consumer demand be strong enough to offset the drop in military production? Would it be possible to govern such societies? And if the route of creating a consumer society, the one eventually followed, were taken, what would happen to the political culture of the 1930s in which citizens organized to protect both the individual and social interest through boycotts, publicity campaigns to oppose child labor, demands for pure food and drug laws, and support for the rights of workers to join unions? Would passive consumers replace active citizens as the necessary price of economic recovery?

The second problem was the outbreak of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. Innis had traveled through the Soviet Union at the end of the war and had a premonition of the conflict that was to follow as two great empires—Soviet and American—emerged to organize the political world. The phrase “Cold War” was coined in 1948 by Bernard Baruch and in July, as Innis edited *Changing Concepts*, the Berlin airlift,

with all its associated dangers, began. Canada in particular was in a difficult situation. It had long been a colonial outpost dominated by Great Britain from which it had inherited its basic institutions and culture. Now Canada was trapped between two modern empires, one of which was on its doorstep. How was Canada to preserve its political and cultural independence and remain true to its British origins? How could it remain politically erect, part of a third bloc, given the pressure, influence, and proximity of the United States? What constructive role could Canada play in the violent and unstable world that loomed ahead?

Moreover, technological innovation, held back and redirected to the war effort for most of the decade, was reemerging as the engine of economic recovery and military competition. By 1948, television had started its relentless colonization of politics and culture as it spread from domestic capitals in both the United States and Canada into the hinterland. In the same year, Norbert Wiener's (1948) landmark book *Cybernetics: Or, Control and Communication in Animals and Machines*, which summarized decades of research on self-organizing systems, argued that electronic servomechanisms were the technological twins of television and the instrument for the automation of work and knowledge. Wiener suggested that the purpose of communication was to control the environment, but in order to communicate effectively it was essential to consider feedback as the mechanism governing the sending of messages. To govern, whatever the object—animal, human, or natural processes—requires one to consider the audience (or the receiver or destination in cybernetic terms) in order to alter the message relative to the feedback. But was cybernetic governance, understood as a form of control rather than a mode of participation, in opposition to democratic politics? What were the social consequences of conceiving communication as a control mechanism within a feedback loop? Wiener's question, posed later, was one Innis posed in a different vocabulary: What, in the age of communication and control, are the "human uses of human, beings"?

Innis began by arguing that increased savagery followed developments in communications and transportation. New techniques upset old

values before standards could be developed to control the technology. The development of printing, with its emphasis on nationalism and the vernacular, had set loose wars of national liberation that overthrew the Holy Roman Empire and gave rise to the modern international system. Similarly, the emergence of the telegraph and telephone, wedded to high-speed oceangoing navigation, initiated the imperial competition among the European states, climaxing in World War I. Modern warfare illustrated that the truism held for electronics, radio, and aviation as well.

Innis is among the earliest and most trenchant theorists of globalization in both its economic and communications dimensions. His globe was a more limited one than ours, confined in his major work to the European Atlantic corridors to the New World, but it was the global system of communication and culture, always in relation to Canada, that was his central concern. His early work in economics concerned the creation of North America—the actual shaping of the land and the plantation of foreign cultures—as an outpost of European empires: New France, New England, New Amsterdam, and *Nuevo Espanola*. While Europeans came to North America for many reasons—in search of religious freedom, to found new communities—the overwhelming impulse was the exploitation of the commodities of the region: cotton, tobacco, cod, fur, and gold. To affect this exploitation Europe needed both a reliable commercial communications system and an actual cultural plantation. Both were made possible by the variable capacities of oceangoing navigation and literacy: the ability to move through the “cultureless” void of the ocean without the contaminating effects of human contact and to connect and coordinate imperial outposts via news, newsletters, and the printing press. For the first time in history, the Atlantic shipping lanes carried the furniture of entire cultures in one direction, and, in the other, the natural products of North America transformed into commodities by the demand of nascent capitalist markets.

This first phase of globalization ended in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when Europe outran its lines of communica-

tions and was unable to maintain, in his phrase, a monopoly of knowledge and force. Europe's capacity to dominate space through communication, markets, law, and force was eroded at its most distant margins where alternative cultures, cultures of Creole nationalism, grew up. In the Americas, Europeans were transformed; they found a new identity and, in the practical tasks of adapting to a new environment, created forms of knowledge and self-understanding—a new culture—radically different from the one carried on the voyages of exploration and settlement. Creole nationalism grew in North America along the geographic fault lines implanted by the imperial powers; at the margins of such powers (along the St. Lawrence River, for example) or along lines carved for the administrative convenience of Europe such as in Spanish America.

Innis did not have the contempt for empire typical of today, when even imperial peoples protest their innocence. Empires could be good or bad, republican or authoritarian, benign or destructive, progressive or reactionary. To inveigh against empire was to tilt against a windmill, for empire is a persistent form of social organization, one practically as old as our knowledge of human history. The intellectual problem was one of understanding the conditions under which empires were created and dissolved and the standards by which to judge their effectiveness and civilizing potential.

After the first phase of globalization, European empires were redirected toward other continents via newer and more rapid forms of travel and communication—steam and electricity. At the same time, new empires grew in the Americas as nations pursued their own manifest destiny, seeking to expand over neighboring landmasses, in some cases stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Prior to World War I there were two kinds of empires: landed empires, products of centuries long expansion over contiguous territories that the United States and Canada imitated in quite different ways; and overseas colonial realms. “Among the first group—Russia, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman domain, China—the states *were* empires and were vulnerable to new forces of national self-determination. Members of the second group—the British,

French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese...—*had* empires. When the internal crises of the first group combined with the interlocking rivalries of the second, the result was the First World War” (Maier, 2002, p. 29). The history of the twentieth century can be viewed as one interlinked history of imperialism—“from the domination and then the destructive rivalries of the Europeans, to the Soviet and American spheres of influence that emerged from the Second World War and finally to the ascendancy of the United States as the only remaining superpower” (Maier, 2002, p. 29). Empire building, whether by landed expansion or in overseas colonial realms, was the dubious achievement of the nineteenth century. But that phase of globalization ended when the guns of August sounded in 1914. The years from 1914 to 1948 marked an interregnum in the international system—marked by a severe and nearly universal economic depression and two great wars that ended in a Cold War and nuclear standoff. States were absorbed in warfare at home, and sometimes in the colonies (the first shot of World War I actually came off the coast of Australia), and with it all the other hallmarks of international movement—immigration, capital flows, and trade—declined. International trade and capital flows would remain below 1913 levels until the mid-1970s. Immigration measured as a proportion of world population has never fully recovered.

Innis’s complex histories of trade, commodities, technology, and communications largely examined the first two phases of globalization: (1) the colonial settlement and expansion of North America and (2) the nineteenth-century imperial competition to control distant territories. In 1948, the long parenthesis that had enclosed the period from the opening of World War I to the closing of World War II was about to be breached. How was it to be breached? Two possibilities existed: a global conflict and struggle for power between the East and West, the Soviet Union and the United States, or the replacement of rivalries, old and new, by institutions of collective security and cooperation. To appraise these questions he needed, in addition to the bag of concepts acquired in economics—concepts such as monopoly, equilibrium, unused capacity,