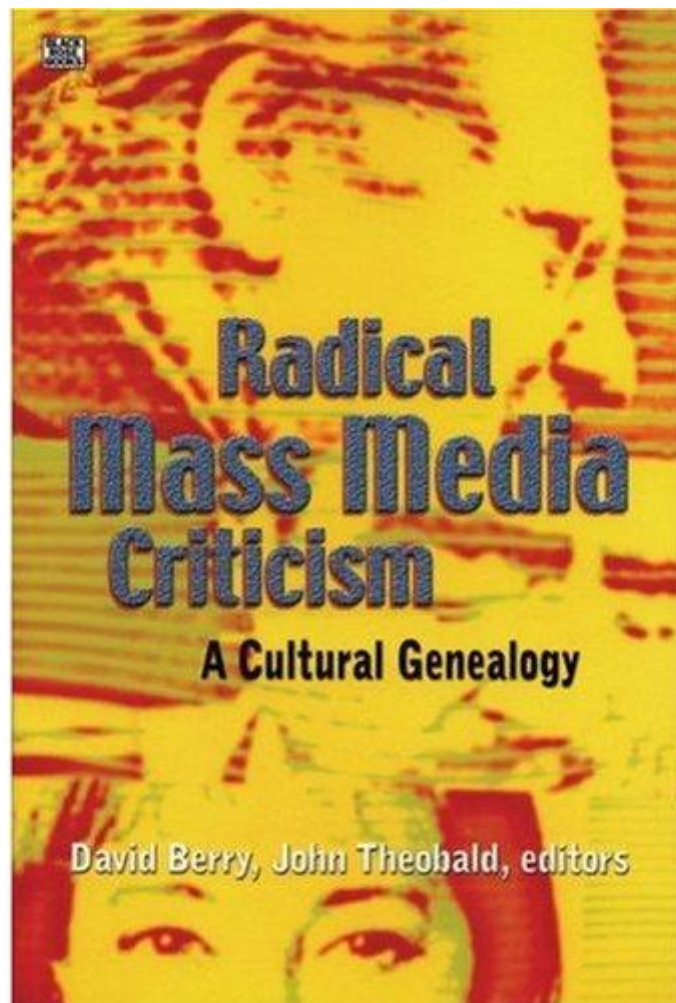


Radical Mass Media Criticism: An Introduction

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with the key issues relating to Radical Mass Media Criticism. It begins with a discussion on the meaning of 'radical' and presents an analysis of the many diverse viewpoints concerned with this complex concept. It then discusses radical in the context of a tradition of media criticism and argues that there exists a 'genealogy' of ideas that amount to a tradition of radical media thought. This is further highlighted by a discussion on the 'lines of descent' that connect radical media thinkers in a common approach to media power.

Keywords: Radical, radicalism, Radical Mass Media Criticism, Genealogy.

Note: This paper is taken from Chapter One of *Radical Mass Media Criticism: A Cultural Genealogy* (2006). There are minor modifications to adjust it to style of this journal.

To be Radical is to grasp something at its roots. But for man the root is man himself. - Karl Marx

Those who hold a dissenting view are held to be a real threat and their influence has to be limited. - Tony Benn

Introduction

The title of the book *Radical Mass Media Criticism* presupposes a fundamental theoretical difference from *Mass Media Criticism*, for why add the word radical? What is the difference between the two approaches, if any? Some people are just plain different, whilst others are radically different: what's the theoretical distinction? What are the degrees of difference between the two? It's very similar trying to identify distinctions between philosophy and radical philosophy, politics and radical politics or feminism and radical feminism - the list is truly endless and one of the problems associated with the use of the word radical in context is that it either refers to something specific or it is so broad as a term of reference that it quite literally becomes meaningless. It's a well-known fact that the word radical is notoriously difficult to define both empirically and in abstract form, and this chapter sets out to discuss the many complexities inherent in it, and whilst it is the intention of this author to make the reader aware of the diverse meaning of the word radical it is also my intention to resolve its meaning in relation to *Radical Mass Media Criticism (RMMC)*. This chapter is broadly divided into two main sections with the first section discussing the meaning of radical according to several philosophical and political perspectives. The second section then attempts to place radical in context of RMMC and argues that despite political and philosophical differences amongst writers associated with the RMMC tradition, they nevertheless form what we term a genealogy of ideas.

On The Meaning Of Radical

Raymond Williams once claimed that the word 'culture' was the second most difficult word in the English language. More recently, Terry Eagleton argued that 'culture' was either the second or third most difficult with 'nature' being the first. Perhaps the third or fourth most difficult is 'radical'; perhaps not for this is not a competition. Suffice to say that 'radical' is indeed a complex word to define and this is despite its stereotypical image, which is more often than not to associate 'radical' or its cognate 'radicalism' as a form of extreme; 'not of the norm,' even perhaps 'sub-cultural' or 'counter-cultural' in that it 'challenges' the way in which we live, but challenges not so much in the ordinary, dare I say it acceptable, sense, but rather through use of extraordinary methods. This is the popular perception of radicalism.

Accordingly, to invoke a radical perspective is to invoke heresy against the values that both dominate and constitute large sections of society, for it seeks to threaten, disrupt and turnover what currently exists. Whilst there is a large degree of truth in the latter points and perhaps nothing untoward if perceived as a normal activity, it is nevertheless equally true that those who threaten are perceived as subversive and dangerous to the established order, seen more as the enemy rather than as an acceptable functioning element of any given democratic tradition, seen as abnormal even when radical ideas are tolerated; in other words it's always pejorative and categorised in very simplistic terms. However, the word radical is far more complex than this simplistic and stereotypical view, and, similar to the status of 'ideology' the meaning of 'radical' is what others are - it implies the opposite to rational-reasoned thought and judgement; it is seen not only in pejorative terms but more importantly to be radical is to

be pernicious. When individuals are asked if they are an ideologue the response normally is not positively responsive and so it is for the radical; for to be a radical is to imply that the origins of thought are those of an ideologue and this becomes a negative to the power of two, the mother of all extremes!

The term 'radical' is associated with dissent and opposition to established norms that are perceived as natural and legitimate within multiple contexts and these contexts can cover a wide variety, ranging from politics to fashion, from ethnic to gender, from sexual to religious contexts. There are also two theoretical perspectives in the way we approach the word 'radical'; firstly there is the abstract-universal application of the meaning of radical and then there is the culturally relative or specific empirical context such as 'American radicalism,' 'English radicalism,' 'Argentinian radicalism,' and so on. Whatever the differences in inflection they all of course have their roots (no pun intended) in the universalised form, but they become a particular within universal meaning. That's to argue that the contexts are truly variable mainly because the point of critique and opposition through resistance differs. For instance, Thatcher and Reagan were both accredited with radical credentials in some of the former Stalinist states such as Romania and Poland; their political stance was utilised as a weapon of radicalisation against the authorities and the establishment, whereas in the West they were the establishment! In the latter context radicalism emanates from other oppositional sources, so what we have are differences at the point of critique based on the relationship with that which is being critiqued. The issue of difference, of course, raises some interesting questions in terms of degrees of radicalism; is, for instance, one culturally specific form more or less radical than another? Is one more or less moderate than the other, and if watered down in its moderation, does this mean that it's not radical at all? Add to this that we also have a new radicalism as opposed to old radicalism and you suddenly realise the mire we find ourselves in.

The term radical is not simply confined to one political and philosophical tradition, although it is fair and reasonable to argue, however, that critical interventions through a radical discourse would presuppose certain outcomes or alternatives to the prevailing, dominant forms that exist in any given society. As we shall see there are various perspectives at play here, and one amongst many is embedded within the socialist tradition, which can be articulated or placed in context with Marx's comments that are so central to the Radical Philosophy tradition: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point however is to change it.' From a Marxist perspective, or to put it more precisely, according to perceptions of the Marxist perspective, change normally implies fundamental change in relation to a capitalist society usually enforced by revolution. But this is far too simplistic, for Marx argued that there was no universal key that would always permit the opening of the door to revolution - sometimes he claimed that objectives could be achieved through reformist methods and this depended on the size of the state. So in France, for instance, where state bureaucracy was and is large, Marx claimed that revolution, conditions permitting, was perhaps the only way to break the back of the ruling class, whereas in England, where the state structure was less oppressive, it was perhaps possible to subvert from within, that is in parliamentary terms, and this was an element of strategy. As we shall see below this is important to understand, for radicals are associated with destruction by revolutionary means, sometimes violent, of which the consequences are unknown; in other words radicals naturally invoke a degree of risk into the equation, for who, on the basis of their initial ideas and aims, could have foretold the terror of the French Revolution or the gradual decline from Marxist principles towards the dictatorial Stalinist dictatorships?

For the moment it's reasonable to suggest that change is an important element of the meaning of radical, but what sort of change are we talking about? It is not true that radical change is the property of one particular ideology or philosophy, for instance, followers of the liberal thinker Jeremy Bentham were referred to as Philosophical Radicals, which included in the nineteenth century writers such as John Stuart Mill. In a similar vein the Fabian Society in the early twentieth century were regarded as radicals and so too were Marxists. The term radical, it seems, very much depends on both philosophical perspectives and the context in which critical intervention takes place to achieve objectives and outcomes. It is the issue of change that features so prominently in Leopold Kohr's paper entitled *The New Radicalism* published in 1967, where he begins by highlighting the problems in defining radicalism but unfortunately produces some of the old stereotypes associated with it. For instance Kohr argues that radicalism is 'an ideology urging change' (ibid:1); no real problems there, but it is a definition that is marked by a particular psychology: 'A radical is impatient' and demanding rather than reflective, and is no doubt endowed with a large sprinkling of irrationality that deafens to reasoned argument! Furthermore, to separate the radical from other impatient beings, a radical is defined by 'purpose.'

Of course lots of people have purpose in their lives and wouldn't necessarily be defined as radicals, for example religious believers, but for Kohr the purpose element is coupled with quick time, and therefore people who have purpose, but are defined as reformists, are clearly not radical. Kohr goes on to state that 'the purpose of radicalism is not just to bring about change fast, but to do so in order to improve the human lot' (ibid). But reformists surely want also to improve the human condition so what distinguishes reformists from radicals? Kohr attempts to resolve this dilemma by arguing that: 'The non-radical reformer is continuously hampered by institutions...customs and law which resist change' (ibid), in essence the traditions and norms of life are accepted as the legitimate basis of society, whereas: 'The radical...does not accept it... he (sic) feels he must step outside the established order. He becomes a revolutionary.'

Kohr's view of the radical is based on a thin and often disguised theory of human nature, which is not without its problems. He states: 'A true radical is...a liberator. His purpose is to bring freedom to the individual...A radical can be anti-social. He can never be anti-human.' This is what Kohr means by improving the 'human lot.' He sees it as an individual project, which he prioritises as the vehicle towards the improvement of society; liberation of the individual, by individual action comes before the collective interest and social action. Perhaps there is nothing morally wrong with this perspective, but theoretical and scientific questions emerge over the meaning of human nature. The starting point of this type of debate is a definition of what human nature means, and whether it is a product of social conditioning or biological innateness or even a combination of both. A supplementary issue that reflects this discussion is identifying the underlying causes of why radicals seek change, and in the light of this, we must consider the issue of strategy within the broad and often complex discussion concerning human nature.

With regard to Kohr's statements concerning radicals as revolutionaries, radicals may very well not accept the established social order of things, but they don't necessarily have to step outside, or be anti-social, to achieve their objectives; there is after all the alternative route of subversion. Equally, I wouldn't agree that radicals by their nature, or to use Kohr's terminology 'temperament,' are innately impatient, but certainly a defining feature of the radical is one who seeks to move beyond the boundaries of mere critique, not necessarily by stepping outside, but rather by stepping beyond.

Kohr was, however, aware of the different forms of struggle against oppressive forces and understood that each struggle and resolution produced its own contradiction to be fought once more. If there is an end game here it's never clearly stated; for Kohr radical resistance to oppressive authority appears to be ongoing and can take different forms according to the character of the source of oppression. It's this aspect of his thought, which I find interesting because it allows that a radical isn't necessarily of any one political or philosophical persuasion, but rather that radicals react according to values they subscribe to and against what is perceived to be the antithesis of those views, but act in such a way that is driven by the motivation to create new empirical forms. The means to this end is not necessarily via revolution only; radical perspectives, those ideas out of the established norm, can inspire others to settle accounts in a variety of ways. As Giddens (1994) has rightly argued revolutionary methods are, an element of 'progressivism,' a point echoed by Biagini (1996). In other words there are multiple radical strategies informed by multiple philosophical and political perspectives-the revolutionary means to an end is but one part of the entire complex radical ethos.

Sometimes, of course, the reference to an individual becoming radicalised is associated with a reaction against something, innocent Muslims held in Guantanamo Prison, perhaps once moderate, may become radicalised, which may result in taking action. But equally, individuals become radicalised less overtly simply because they feel or sense an injustice - empathising with others. Whatever the processes and specific reasons are for becoming radicalised in the empirical form, there is nevertheless the universal truth that radicalism is premised on an assertion that the point of critique is an obstacle to goals, and to be removed.

Radical implies a heightening of consciousness, moving cognitively from one perspective towards another with the intention of invoking change. Becoming radicalised is a process of realisation that former ideological positions are no longer viable as a means to an end and other methods must therefore be adopted to achieve any ends deemed necessary. Radical ideas are seen as outside of the norm, the accepted, taken-for-granted conventions and rules of social life and, to borrow a phrase from Jason Barker (2000), radical ideas can shock people out of their complacency. In this sense radical ideas are threatening to the established order because they seek to subvert the existing-dominant system. Radical ideas, therefore, are intrinsically counter-hegemonic and to a certain extent form a crucial part of the dialectic of change and development, if not in real-physical terms, then at levels of perception and consciousness.

Button (1995:xiii) reminds us appositely that the word 'radical' derives from the Latin word *radix*, which translates as 'root,' and goes on to offer a working definition of what being a radical implies, which is 'going to the roots of an issue, examining it thoroughly, questioning everything, and leaving no stone unturned in the quest for respect and justice.' Giddens (1994:1) also states that radicalism means 'taking things by the roots.' Described in this way, radical activity is positively interpreted as a perfectly normal engagement and not taken in the habitual pejorative sense of the word at all; what's more, this definition places radicalism as merely a product of the Enlightenment in which humans could justify their opposition and dissent to authority.

Giddens, like Kohr, has rightly argued that the meaning of radicalism doesn't necessarily belong to any particular political or philosophical perspective, hence the title of his book *Beyond Left and Right*, but this does not negate the many differences one may have with him concerning philosophy and what means to apply in order to achieve a given end. For Giddens

radicalism means 'being prepared to contemplate bold solutions to social and political problems' (ibid:49). It should be noted that this statement is indeed both abstract and open to interpretation according to whatever radical philosophical tradition/perspective one adheres to; in itself radicalism as a point of critique against the existing order, according to this view, is not the sole property of any one group, rather it can be borrowed and applied in particular social contexts. For Giddens himself, radicalism can only be effective, vis-à-vis late modernity, if one is to invoke and not negate tradition; in other words radicalism in empirical context can only be effective if there is continuity with tradition, hence Giddens's adherence to Philosophic Conservatism as a radical project set against the onslaught of rampant neo-liberal capitalism and all it destroys. Philosophic Conservatism is out to conserve elements of the past (to be decided upon) and to recognise that late modernity offers positive as against destructive moments too, which ironically are to be preserved also. In essence Philosophic Conservatism seeks to protect individualism, but one that recognises a responsibility to community and not one that subscribes to pure libertarian values (as often prescribed by Robert Nozick).

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) also offer a radical perspective, which is not, in theoretical terms, greatly removed from Philosophic Conservatism, although the actualities or policy details may differ. Giddens has claimed that the difference between conservatives as opposed to socialists and liberals, is that the former are highly protective of tradition, whereas the latter are not because both in various ways look to the future and one way to achieve that is to destroy certain institutions that form tradition. I, however, feel that this is misleading. Laclau and Mouffe's theory of Radical Democracy is one that predominantly embraces elements of socialism and progressive elements of liberalism such as the principles of freedom, individuality and democracy. It may well be a pick and mix affair, but one can argue that what both philosophies do have in common is that they are both based on their own tradition- and both seek to destroy other elements of tradition.

Laclau and Mouffe have effectively claimed that the issue of agency, that is which group can advance the aims of radical objectives, cannot, unlike orthodox Marxism, be advanced by one particular group, namely the working class or, in Leninist terms, the Party as the vanguard of the social-revolutionary movement. Rather, Laclau and Mouffe advance what they term 'Radical Democratic Pluralism,' which is not so much an organised popular front in the Gramscian sense, but rather a collective of disparate multiple social movements that perhaps have different grievances and aims, but have one thing in common, a criticism of and opposition to the existing order of things. Actually, there is more in common here with Philosophic Conservatism than first meets the eye, for instance Giddens (1994:21) too has claimed that: 'There is no single agent, group or movement...that can carry the hopes of humanity; but there are many points of political engagement which offer good cause for optimism.'

In a sense, despite the differences in philosophies and political theory, Laclau, Mouffe and Giddens would, I imagine, embrace the broad church known as the anti-capitalist or indeed the anti-globalisation movements with their multiple-pluralistic discourses of resistance à la Foucault vis-à-vis power and resistance where the latter manifests itself in various forms. For Laclau and Mouffe the aim is to radicalise liberal principles by uniting them with socialist principles, and the purpose of Radical Democratic Pluralism is to produce a hegemonic bloc of different radical movements that embraces the unity-independence dialectic, that is, respect of diverse positions and difference. Accordingly it is this very plurality of interests that becomes the central point of radicalism; pluralism is both radical and deeply democratic.

Homogeneity by contrast, particularly by forced assimilation or the imposition of truth by one group over another, is not.

In a similar fashion to Laclau and Mouffe, the British pressure group Compass, describes itself as providing 'Direction for the Democratic Left' and provides a platform for the pursuit of radical objectives that is subsumed within a socialist tradition, but also accommodates liberal elements: 'today's society requires both pluralism and egalitarianism to be embraced and combined in radical, distinctive ways by democratic left politics.' Note the reference to 'distinctive ways' - the desire to embrace difference and diversity within what is normally perceived as a monolithic tradition. The overall aim, however, is not the total destruction of the capitalist system, but rather to 'align it with human need' instead of letting it move as an, 'unstoppable force.' This is not solely about managing, but more importantly about transformation through a radical policy that both promotes a redistribution of wealth to create the 'good society' and calls for tighter regulation to 'manage capitalism for the benefit of the many and the future of the planet.' This is a policy that offers resistance to rampant individualism, and consumerism based on fetishism of the product, in which there is no logical way out of a condition that values vanity, power and greed.

There are strong echoes of this type of radicalism in Jonathan Sacks book *Radical Then, Radical Now: On Being Jewish*. Under the chapter headlined 'Covenantal Society' Sacks (Sacks 2000:117) explains that in Judaism there are unusually two political theories, one of the state and one concerning society. Both express 'simplicity and humanity' but the theory of the state is merely a secondary concern: 'Far more fundamental is its theory of society and its insistence that the state exists to serve society and not vice versa' (ibid:119). The logic underpinning the just society, which is the rationale that both creates and holds society together, is the social covenant, rather than the social contract that creates the state. One defining feature of the covenant is the notion of tzedek or tzedakah that is based on radical principles such as 'social or distributive justice' (ibid:120). The similarities between the objectives of Compass and Sacks's Judaic vision are indeed striking as the following clearly illustrates: 'Unlike socialism it [Judaism] believes in the free market...Unlike capitalism it believes that the free market, without periodic redistributions, creates inequalities' (ibid:121), and like Philosophic Conservatism, Judaism is out to preserve tradition within modern contexts. Ultimately, these philosophical perspectives are interventionist in that they seek to avoid depriving humans of achieving their full capabilities, or as Marx said in the Critique of the Gotha Programme (1875): 'From each according to ability: to each according to need.' Of course Marx also wrote in the first section of the Critique: 'Labour is the source of wealth and all culture, and since useful labour is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society.'

This final quote from Marx is but one perspective of radicalism within the mass media critical tradition and is one, which the editors of this book would subscribe to in relation to access to the means of communication. However there are others, and, like the differences and similarities of the discussion thus far of the meaning of radical, so too within RMMC, we find both different perspectives of radicalism and similarities, but importantly, despite the different political and philosophical perspectives, there exists a commonality of thought, which we refer to as a genealogy, through the process of critique and the object of critique.

Radical Mass Media Criticism: A Genealogy Of Ideas

What are our reasons and justification for including the intellectuals in this volume at what may seem to be the expense and exclusion of others that are relevant to this discussion? The first is that we think the intellectuals that feature represent the broad radical tradition irrespective of left, centre or right in the context of the point of critique over a historical period. The second is quite simply 'space' or the lack of it. Selectivity is not necessarily a reflection of hierarchy and prominence; exclusion is not a reflection of lacking radical credentials. Perhaps then in this context we can treat this volume as both a reflection and starting point of debate concerning a genealogy of ideas.

In a response to the Marxist writer Darko Savin regarding the need to build utopias in order to prevent 'Hell on Earth,' Kagarlitsky (2000:159) claims that 'radical utopias make sense only when they cease to be utopian and when social criticism becomes part of the struggle to reconstruct society.' As discussed above the attempt to reconstruct can indeed take many forms and in part it is the natural tensions between forms of resistance that co-ordinate debate. Ultimately the end-result and the objectives to achieve it will invariably differ; for instance, Buddhist radical perspectives differ significantly from Marxist perspectives. The former as outlined in David Edwards book *The Compassionate Revolution: Radical Politics and Buddhism*, places emphasis on compassion towards living things and our limited-equal place amongst others in nature, rather than anger towards the exploitative character of capitalism and its domination and destruction of nature. Marxists would scoff at such 'naivety' that compassion could be the underlying logic of radical dissent.

However, to return to Kagarlitsky's point, which is without doubt taken from Marx's writings in relation to interpreting and changing the world, the central component of RMMC is to form in various contexts an alliance of knowledge that epitomises resistance and change. Criticising for criticism's sake is not a feature of radical critique per se. Some supporters of systems that permit critique argue that it is not only desirable in society, but justification of society's moral authority, that citizens are able and free to criticise; in other words freedom to criticise is clear evidence of the society's democratic credentials, so why invoke change? Change is not necessarily the endgame of mere critique, passive opposition and benign resistance. The right to protest, it is argued, is evidence of the supremacy of the liberal idea - Fukuyama told us so! But surely there is a point of critique over and above its own internal logic; that is critique must surely live outside of itself and move beyond pure rhetoric and self-gratification; in essence it's not self-referential and its purpose is to not only challenge, to exist as a purely functional ideal, but rather to invoke our understanding concerning the limitations of late modernity and thus to open the realms of possibilities beyond our limited philosophical horizons that have been conditioned by the prevailing system. Hegel and Marx called this dialectics.

Radical mass media criticism is a variant of the term critique for it attempts to go beyond the point of mere critique in that it seeks change. The objective here is not reduced to the democratic rights of people to offer critique, although that is an essential premise, but rather, to remove that, which is being, critiqued. Critique in itself or, more precisely, a particular view of the value that critique has, is sometimes justified as an acceptable element of the capitalist system. Here, capitalism is seen to be partly democratic in that it permits critique of its structures. Some critics therefore are content with this state of affairs that change does not necessarily become the end. In fact the point of critique itself is seen to be both means and end united in a perfect dialectical process. We argue that this is folly, and that the point of

RMMC is to invoke change at many levels of the media industry. Two such changes are to bring about more democratic access to the means of communication and to end monopoly-privatised ownership, thus removing factors, which in our eyes seriously limit diversity and debate. RMMC is itself a means to invoke the end, which is change, whether as an explicit expression or inferred from the point of critique.

An explicit form of this is expressed in McChesney's (McChesney 1996:17-18) work concerning the role of unionism and activism to fight against the onslaught of media 'privatisation and deregulation.' What McChesney calls 'progressive social unionism' is a force that seeks to broaden out the process of communication whereby workers take an active role in the production of information - not necessarily guided by the helping hand of an elite ownership. In part this reflects Kagarlitsky's (2000:10) thoughts concerning the crisis of the capitalist system, particularly the degradation of the communication networks, which are 'overloaded with pseudo-information.' This is a condition that needs to be rectified, and is reflected in the works of Douglas Kellner (1995:338) where it is stated that 'instruments of information and communication [should] be open to all.'

Downing (2001:23) has written extensively on the essential need to establish radical media systems or information networks outside the control of the establishment that can offer an, 'alternative vision to hegemonic policies'-systems which are 'small scale' in terms of their organisational structures. Interestingly, the need to be outside the sphere of influence (echoes of Kohr here) is crucial to the formation of radical media systems. In a sense this is a jibe at the union movement that operates within the comfort zone of established politics, but it's not a total rejection of unionism taking a role in change, rather an indication of its inherent limitations. For Downing civil society requires the voluntary mobilisation of groups opposed to the present structure of media organisation: 'social movements represent one of the most dynamic expressions of resistance' (ibid) and resistance surely is based on common interests rather than artificial divides.

Genealogy

It's at this point that I briefly introduce the work of both Nietzsche and Foucault concerning genealogy. These provide RMMC with a theoretical framework that calls on a network of ideas in relation to each; particularly Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* and Foucault's paper 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' will be drawn on. In reference to Judith Butler's work concerning Foucault's concept of genealogy, Colwell (1997) acknowledges that genealogy requires outlining points that are common to each other-those bloodlines that are intrinsically and systematically connected in a bounded commonality and states that, at one theoretical level, genealogy traces the 'lines of descent that run between identity categories' (ibid:1). John Theobald (2004) has observed that RMMC has a history that is temporally near identical to that of the mass media themselves. In this context genealogy in its everyday usage - tracing lines of descent - is applicable in both exposing what may be termed as the connective tissues of what is a tradition, and assessing the descendants of this tradition, that is, in presenting RMMC as a cogent form. Foucault even referred to this process as 'genealogical analysis' - the method in which we assess, evaluate and detail points of origin-tracing discourses and social practices that unite in a common heritage. This unifying process, one may add, exists despite the multiple differences in terms of outcomes and various means, which challenge and resist power structures, for underpinning these differences is a common ground that connects radical critique in relation to the mass media. With reference to Nietzsche's work Foucault (1977:145) states that the word:

Herkunft is the equivalent of stock or descent; it is the ancient affiliation to a group, sustained by the bonds of blood, tradition, or social class. The analysis of Herkunft often involves a consideration of race or social type. But the traits it attempts to identify are not the exclusive generic characteristics of an individual...or an idea...rather, it seeks the subtle, singular, and sub-individual marks that might possibly intersect in them to form a network that is difficult to unravel.

It is this network of ideas that RMMC is attempting to unravel, to reveal the synthesis of thought whilst simultaneously acknowledging different points of interaction that form the origin of thought. That is to say that, even if there is a coherent structure of thought that we can conceptualise as RMMC, it is only united in the acknowledgement of the various inflections that constitute its totality. As Foucault remarked 'the genealogist sets out to study the beginning-numberless beginnings whose faint traces and hints of colour are readily seen by an historical eye' (ibid).

What is interesting here is Foucault's use of the concepts concerning 'singularity' and 'events'; in the context of tracing descent they reflect Foucault's concern with difference within a common context and the way that singularities of thought cross over, making origins multifaceted rather than a fixed totality that can be traced to only one line of descent. Difference here does not have the meaning of opposite to, but rather as Lash (1999:4) articulates, it is 'a third term that is neither same nor other' but rather is, a 'middle term that bridges...constitutes a margin between...same and other.' It's these series of singular narratives that finally constitute an event; or, if you prefer, it is a serialisation of narratives that form a totality of thought that is linked through a common network of ideas.

This is tied in with the other uses that 'singularity' and 'events' imply, and in this context both Nietzsche's and Foucault's use of genealogy add other philosophical dimensions beyond the realms of tracing lines of descent that form common bonds - for it disputes the inviolability of accepted or dominant origins of truth. As Foucault states, genealogical analysis is there to 'record the singularity of events' (ibid:139), particularly those that have gone unnoticed, as well as understanding how other practices outside the domination of structures emerge. This is what Deleuze referred to as 'sense-event' or even what Kant called 'reflective judgement' and this, as Lash (1999) defines it, is the 'space of difference.' It is in this space that a different rationality is found - one not over-determined by the structures of domination, but one that is not detached either - a space of reflexivity.

As we will see the origins of RMMC are a product of ideas that are not one of consent but rather confrontational, and is equally a product of a, rationality conditioned by a realm or sphere free from over-determination. Furthermore, RMMC cannot be specifically located at any certain point but rather it is the intersecting of ideas and different inflections that plays upon difference in that they are a series of singular moments, but nevertheless are intrinsically linked by a tradition - a tradition of radical critique, a true Archaeology of Knowledge; a genealogy!

Whereas historical analysis will provide variations within the intellectual process of interpretation concerning events, these are seen as inflections of the same and acceptable linear progression on which history proceeds. In other words historical analysis is seen to operate within conventional boundaries and specific rules of engagement. So even though there are different inflections and modes of historical interpretation, they are limited, confined and only reproduce what Colwell (1997:8) refers to as the 'repetitions of the Same.'

Genealogy, on the other hand, offers a 'differential repetition' or a 'repetition of difference' (ibid:5). Yet Genealogy is not out to construct an alternative theory of origins; on the contrary it only seeks to expose the limitations of assessments that normalise systems-to offer counter memories, which always mutate the official line of historical understanding. In this context genealogical analysis seeks to highlight and intensify the focus on the origin of things; in essence it seeks to revisit points of origin, highlight the problems concerning what is accepted and offer no solutions other than to convince that other counter-discourses and narratives exist in the series of events.

So how does this translate for our purposes, or how does genealogy apply to RMMC? Well, just to recapitulate, there are two issues here. The first is that RMMC contains lines of descent and the second is that the critique held within the RMMC tradition helps to mutate the accepted course of historical analysis; in essence it transmogrifies events - pulling them out of their habitual shape. In that RMMC offers different modalities of thinking in terms of aims, objectives and political strategies to be employed, there is here a system of thought located at the point of critique, which forms a commonality of expressive ideas. These, in their totality, both counteract historical events by providing modes of thought that are normally excluded from the formal tract of historical accounts, and simultaneously undermine official accounts of history. With reference to Colwell (1997) RMMC 'counter-actualises events' and, perceived as such, the substance or subject of genealogical analysis for RMMC becomes an alternative counter-theoretical form that assaults the origins of thought and understanding by including other accounts of existing events.

We are dealing here in what can be effectively defined under the broad rubric of a history of ideas that exists outside of the formal tract of history (but is ironically a part of history) and has the connective tissues of radical thought in that the object of the assault remains a constant despite some theoretical differences and implications of critique. This links to what Deleuze referred to as 'series,' 'event' or singularity to coherent form. In this sense we can see the broad outline of genealogy. RMMC is made up of a disparate, sometimes dispersed, series of interconnecting discourses and its practice provides the raw material for the production of an event that is an additional factor in historical and contemporary context. It runs counter to the official way in which the media manufacture events and produce history. It subverts all that is accepted as natural or legitimate; in other words it's counter-ideological. As Vadim Volkov argued genealogy itself is a 'critical approach' and one that in itself is inherently radical because it questions the taken-for-granted concepts or categories of existence that condition consciousness: 'Nietzschean genealogical analysis of morality, for example, refuses to rely upon traditional terms and concepts (morality, truth, good) upon which the human world seems to be based.'

The history of ideas, or more specifically RMMC in context, attempts to disrupt or uproot the origin of taken-for-granted conceptual frameworks that permeate our lives. It does this by arguing that history is partly a creation of media, including media discourse and media practitioners, which dominate the manufacturing of historical understanding. In essence the media are pivotal, a powerful and influential contender in the production of hegemonic meaning; a social meaning that RMMC attempts to subvert. The genealogical analysis concerning RMMC is not one that only focuses upon the historical text, but one that posits that a historical-contemporary dialectic is manufactured on limitations of understanding. To put it another way, that which has become naturalised is a product not of truth but of selected category, an element of human expression.

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