Proceedings of the Media Ecology Association

Editor's Note:

It has been a pleasure reviewing the work of fine scholars in Media Ecology. Two articles are missing because they are both being publishing in print academic journals:

       Top Student Paper Award: Phil Rose: "Where Girard Meets McLuhan"

       Arthur Hunt: "Media Ecology, Sacred Earth, and the Agrarian Mind"

Top Paper

The City's Curse, The Church's Plight:
Technology, Communication, and the Sacred

An Ellulian Perspective

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If Ellul's "mythic" meaning of the city is an accurate depiction of the frailty and fallenness of humanity and the enduring inability to untangle oneself from the structural evil therein, is it any wonder that the church follows its lead? With the programs, methods, committees, agendas, distractions, and pace that are entrenched in city life setting the pace for the contemporary church, is it surprising to see the lack of vitality and purposeful community among the people of faith? Is it an anomaly that the church resembles a distracted, disengaged city rather than the hopeful, connected, and enlivened community of faith? To be more explicit, form and structure have increasingly begun to set the pace for spiritual formation in the church. Focus on methods, efficiency, numbers, and expansion in the church have somehow eclipsed the greater goals of servanthood and service to the needy. Rather than a focus on traditional goals such as spiritual formation, a transformed life, and wholeness, the means and methods of evangelism have take the lead position in the church—not just in appearance, but in practice. Viewed from the perspective of Jacques Ellul's *la technique*, this essay explores the relationship between the traditional form and structure of the church and its ability to function organically.

"THE CITY is cursed," wrote French theologian and social theorist Jacques Ellul (1912–1994). This is a strange statement, no doubt, but one that stands center stage in Ellulian thought. For Ellul, the city is symbolic of all that is amiss in the world, from the looming evils of war, organized crime, prostitution, economic injustice, and violence of every ilk, to the mundaneness of traffic snarls, interpersonal disputes, greed, and just plain old human boredom. According to Ellul (1970), there is really no chance to change the problems associated with the city because it is not evil in its particular location or extremities. No—the city, as an entity, is cursed (pp. 47–49). Ellul's apparent gloom, however, has "to do with something more basic than the city (itself, *sic*) or its merely terrestrial smog, muggings and police strikes" (Cox, 1971, p. 353). In his paradigm, the corruption begins with man's distinctive step outside of fellowship with God in the Garden; thus, we see the city's connection to "the Church."[2] In the pages that follow, we will take a deeper look at Ellul's thesis concerning "the city" and attempt to uncover the ways in which its alleged curse can lead to something more than hopelessness for

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[2] Throughout this essay, "the Church" will be used when referring to the abstract, and "the church" will be used to refer to Christians meeting in specific locales.

human beings. With a desire to advance dialogue concerning its application to the intersection of the sacred and the nearly ubiquitous technological lifestyle of 21st-century Western society, let us then explore Ellul's meaning of "the city."

The Meaning of the City

THE MYTHIC meaning of the city is found as an undercurrent in several of Ellul's main works and is most prominent in *The Meaning of the City* (1970). In this work, Ellul posits the city as a symbol of humanity's determination to build security outside of the divine order. It is the symbolic locus of "man's work" and desire to find meaning in life that is separate, or divorced, from God (p. 62). Some (viz., Cox, 1971) have suggested that this book is more of a radical Bible study than a work of theology, while others (viz., Christians, 2006) maintain its important place as a counterpoint to Ellul's social theory. Still others consider Ellul's use of biblical narrative and mythic meaning of the city as a means by which the French scholar provides analysis and insight into the human predicament in general.[3] Throughout this volume, and his entire corpus, for Ellul "the city" represents the "most vivid and compelling symbol of man's stubborn pride and rebellious disorder" (1970, p. 353).

Much akin to his concept of *la technique* (which, in short, may be understood as the innate human fascination with, and capitulation to, methods and programs, particularly in the unrelenting drive to apprehend the most efficient means), Ellul lodges a complaint with the machinations of the city, pointing to the reality (or force) that is deeper than the human will to overcome. "Like technology, the city is for Ellul a metaphysical reality, caught in the grip of a self-propelling autonomy. It is not subject to human direction" (Cox, 1971, p. 353). To many, this way of thought represents a hard technological determinism; however, Ellul does not insist that individuals lose volition in the grip of technology, but invariably find themselves in submission to the city's built-in constraints.

The First City and the Tower of Babel

ELLUL (1970) cites the inception of the first city mentioned in the Bible, the city of Enoch. This city was built by a murderer—Cain—who took his brother's life out of anger and jealousy. Rather than repenting for his vile act, Cain launched out to make his way in the world, searching for redemption outside the purview of his Maker. In using this event as a starting point, Ellul does not take issue with particular aspects of urban life or use the "sins" of specific cities as a text. Rather, he insists that "what is wrong with the city is universal and essential" (Cox, 1971, p. 351). It is the underlying powers to blame—man, foisting himself out to conquer nature with Promethean hubris—that corrode the landscape of the city.

After Enoch, Ellul cites the Tower of Babel and continues to note the ensuing drive to build "a city with human hands," in the further construction of Nimrod, Nineveh, and Jerusalem. Using this biblical narrative as a metaphor, he postulates the enslavement of humanity to method, program, and human technique—something similar to a wave of tidal force, one beyond the human ability to control. This he refers to as "the powers" (pp. 45–62).

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[3] Here, *myth* is understood as a "value-laden story that communicates fundamental aspects of the society producing the myth" (Clark, 1981, p. 276).

La Technique and Sin in the City

ONE of Ellul's primary theses regarding the loss of human freedom in the city involves his concept of *la technique.* This loss of freedom does not so much represent the individual acts of violence that are magnified with increasing population in urban areas, as it represents the strong and persuasive discourse that co-opts human decision-making. This impingement of volition occurs slowly, over time, and stems from the "structured evil that disfigures all of human life" (Christians, p. 121). *La technique* manifests itself through the various machinations of man endeavoring to find solutions for the human condition outside of Divine order. It is a fascination and focus on the methods, means, and techniques used by human beings to survive without drawing from the wisdom and help offered by the Creator. What this absence of Divine order and influence produces is the loss of purpose and a life of vacuous existence that resembles mere survival instead of the flourishing that was intended in the Garden. Yet, to look to an unseen Maker for help without capitulating to human authority is a challenge. It involves waiting for direction and the collective wisdom of a gathered assembly.

The conundrum this tension produces sets the pace for a downward slope toward greater human control and the resulting domination of others. Without a concept of God and the direct reliance on his involvement, human beings rely on human solutions; in this age, these are manifest not only in techniques, methods, and means, but in all things technological. One might quite accurately call it the technological panacea. What may be most disconcerting about this dilemma is that, according to Ellul, once the forces of the city take root they become entrenched and are beyond changing by human beings with good will. Christians posits Ellul's thesis as "inescapable," contending that to the "degree that the technicized dominates, healthy livelihood disappears" (2006; p. 127). When viewed in relation to human freedom, both within the church and outside its walls, a clear position becomes evident in Ellulian thought. That is, what may appear to be more freeing to the human soul because of factors such as convenience, comfort, efficiency and routine, may actually be in opposition to freedom.

Without God's involvement in the human situation or in the Church, the goals of life disappear "in the busyness of perfecting methods." They are lost in a self-propelling force that Ellul terms, *la technique* (1951, 1989; p 64). *La technique's* force is nurtured because the "magnitude of the very means [is, *sic*] at our disposal", abusing the tremendous symbolic power we are given, allowing us to "live in a civilization without ends" (Christians, 2006 p. 127). This loss of *telos* manifests itself slowly as the city expands and human beings rely increasingly on the means by which social reality is constructed. Whether it is buildings and streets, websites or church programs, "the city" seeps into the foundation of all that is constructed by human ingenuity, creating a foundation that is riddled with cracks. It is important to note that Ellul does not condemn the city, but reports on its condition from a symbolic perspective, using the biblical narrative as ground for analysis (pp. 67–68). Efficiency, in itself, is not the problem. Rather, it is the dominating, self-propelling effect that insinuates itself throughout all aspects of life, exchanging greater, teleological goals for the means used to attain them.

Communication Breakdown

ONE present example of this usurpation of *telos* may be found in the current use of the cell phone. Use of this device is becoming ubiquitous.[4] While the cell phone does much to connect people at great distances and is both convenient and quite efficient, as a solution to the problem of separation it carries with it an unforeseen consequence that may actually work against the goal of effective communication. Sound bytes and dropped calls take the place of an actual discussion; quick, rapid-fire words and text are substituted for face-to-face dialogue. One must question whether the use of these mobile devices advances the goals of interpersonal communication, or is actually wearing away at the importance of meaningful conversation? The world may be becoming smaller but is it succumbing to an increasing sparseness in relationship and communication?

Additionally, the stress, heightened pace, and added responsibilities associated with carrying a cell phone have led some to refer to the device as an "electronic leash".[5] The sense of enslavement to the device experienced by many avid users may be seen one small example of *la technique* at work in manifesting the city's curse.

In explicating Ellul's paradigm, Ellulian scholar Clifford Christians (2006) explains that not only is *la technique* at work in modern society and may be most clearly seen in the symbolism of the city, but that the force of technological innovation may be part of the reason for the seemingly downward slope of communication competence. While blogs, discussion lists, websites, media outlets on the web and online forums have created numerous new ways for information to be disseminated and the voice of the people to be heard, the underlying goals are not necessarily being reached. Although these more sophisticated means of communication are being used to connect people at greater distances and outside the limits of space and time, use and dependence

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[4] In the United States, with 81% of cell phone users reporting that their cell phone is always on, and cell phone sales topping $207 million, thus introducing a great deal more into the public square. This intense proliferation has already begun to nurture an "always on" mentality, one that advances something one might call a "24/7 social environment." The blinking, buzzing, multi-tasking cacophony that ensues also serves to situate the average mobile media user in a position as to always be ready to receive information (often from multiple sources simultaneously). Always connected, yet are people conversing less? Is communication behavior more effective or less?

[5] Recent statistics generated from workplace surveys and studies funded by the Pew Internet Research Group's Center for Media Research are similar to other studies reported from the past 10 years. Although no direct causal relation can be drawn, the numbers seem to point to a growing pressure to participate in the mobile communication technology revolution and may suggest there is a growing need for detachment from the device, particularly so that quiet, rest, rejuvenating silence and interpersonal richness may flourish. The following statistics are taken from the Center for Media Research on April 25, 2006 http://www.centerformediaresearch.com/cfmr_brief.cfm?fnl=060425. The numbers reflect studies of Americans' use of the cell phone:

1) 81% of cell-only users say the device is always on.
2) 82% of Americans say they are irritated at least occasionally by loud and annoying cell users who conduct their calls in public places.
3) 22% of cell owners say they are not always truthful about exactly where they are when they are on the phone.
4) 39% of cell users ages 18-29 are not always honest about where they say they are.
5) 24% of cell-using adults report they often feel like they have to answer their cell phones even when it interrupts a meeting or a meal.
6) 22% believe that "too many" people try to get in touch with them because others know they have a cell phone.

on these media seem to have propagated more efficient and creative ways to be barbaric.[6] Rather than becoming a more civil society, the opportunities for communication breakdown have increased and there are now more ways to insult one's neighbor than ever before.[7]

Drawing a comparison between the externalities of city life as opposed to the more communal—relational—life of smaller communities, Christians describes the action of *la technique* in society as entirely in accord Ellul's conceptualization of the city. If this is so, several questions beg to be asked: What exactly is the correlate of Ellul's "curse of the city" in terms of interpersonal communication, new media, and the church as community of faith? And, what sort of response might be called for in light of the world's growing population and ensuing need to live in the city? To begin an answer to these questions it is important to understand the ways in which disparity between the organic, natural human functioning and a mechanistic existence is treated in Ellul's thought.

Loss of Personhood

T HE foundational problematic for Ellul is that the city is the place where individuals lose their uniqueness and the particularity of a lived life. The city is symbolic of the way in which the spark of creativity becomes diminished and people are dehumanized rather than most fully able to walk in their potential. Perhaps this may be interpreted as the way people learn to tolerate the warp and woe of a hectic, mediated, fast-paced life instead of rising to explore and experience all that life can be if attended to in freedom. Christians describes the curse of the city as a condensation of human evil where "Ellul is talking neither about individual sin nor simple collective responsibility. [Rather, *sic*] he explicitly disavows both possibilities" (2006, p. 121). Instead, individuals are "engulfed by the sin of the city (Ellul, 1970, p. 67) which "draws men into a sin which is hardly personal to them" (Christians, 2006, p. 121). From the neglect of a neighbor because one does not know they are suffering to the outright evil of stealing a neighbor's goods—whether by omission or deliberate, the sins associated with city life easily become abstractions rather than individual insults or injuries.

Essentially, then, the abstraction and denouement of the individual in the city environment becomes a building block for the usurpation of the person as subject. In the city, people become objects. Is this determined, a fact that defies the will of the individual? Certainly not; however, the environment and its morality serve as structuring features of city life, influencing the way people function within the city's walls and relate to one another, either ethically or otherwise. The underlying philosophy of life lived in the city takes on a cast that reflects the city's necessity. That is, as the hand of man increases in power, people are increasingly viewed and treated as the roles, functions, and labels they carry rather than unique individuals they are. The curse upon the city makes it a place where "flesh-and-blood people become consumer, worker, market, taxpayer—a person in the abstract" (p. 128). As David Gill explains, "Many have thought of technology as a "value free" phenomenon. A means. Ellul showed that it has become a sacred "end" the *telos* of our society, embedded with values" (2007, p. 4).

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[6] Do blogs actually create a more expansive public square? Is the public sphere more lively and interactive because of the proliferation of online venues? Does television really serve to connect the masses and provide an underlying ethos for public discourse or are the corporate and entertainment biases therein corrupting the social landscape?

[7] Note the myriad studies on flaming, cyberpunk, cyber bullying, identity theft, and the hate cites that have proliferated on the World Wide Web.

The Principle of Utility

WHAT both Ellul and Christians dub as the "city's curse" is subsumed in a worldview that places a high premium on instrumentality and empirical knowledge. It is this self-same drive toward efficiency—not technology itself—that catalogs and organizes all social functions in terms of how useful they are in the structuring and controlling of organic life processes. In fact, it is this utilitarian view of life that is the ground upon which *la technique* thrives.

Linked to this notion is an idea that has become a commonplace of the West—that external or material objects create the "good life." This is a philosophical problematic that the city promises (at least in theory) but rarely delivers. Yet, for the masses, the unspoken hope remains—life in the city promises better homes, leisure, escape from solitude and boredom, better work, schools, and access to medicine and doctors, among other necessities of modern life (Ellul, 1970, p. 60). These comforts are not to be despised, and Ellul is not demeaning them by recognizing the propensity for people to place their hope in the city. Rather, it is again a matter of misplaced hope in the solutions that human beings can provide rather than living by divine order and trusting God for sustenance in all things.

Certainly, the majority of the people living in cities are not aware of the curse upon "the city," at least not formally. If they are, it is present in the foggy boredom and sense of hopelessness that entraps the average person in the work-a-day world of maneuvering through traffic and monotonous repetition. In fact, if confronted with this disparaging and depressing picture, many might recoil from the very idea city's inherent curse, viewing it with shrugging obsequiousness or merely as "the way things are." To think otherwise may only lead to despair or the inability to function within it. In fact, many will balk at the prospect of the "city's curse." The entire concept of a location being flawed and outside the scope of human remediation seems implausible. Common sense would say to utilize the conveniences and technologies of the city so that the pressures of life might ease. And why not? What is the purpose of refraining? Why walk the five blocks to meet someone when a telephone seems to accomplish the goal just as well, even more efficiently? To do otherwise often seems pointless. The answers to these questions are part of the built-in sway of the city. This, according to Ellul (1970), conflates with the fact that city dwellers have an innate understanding that the city does not cure social ills but often contributes to them. The tension is essentially dialectical.

The Mindset of Efficiency

ALONG with the generally impersonal nature of life in the city, there is the matter of the principle of utility at work in deeper levels, affecting and changing the collective mindset of a society. In an article analyzing the parallel of Ellul's theological and sociological paradigms, Christians (1998) describes the city as the place of desacrilization—a place that fosters the loss of "the sacredness of life" (pp. 3–7). Rather than lauding life as sacred, human freedoms are exploited in the city, and the fresh water of freedom often ends up clogged in the pipes of bureaucracy and washed away in the gutters of busy streets. In the city, the principle of utility and efficiency becomes sacrosanct, overtaking the more important ends of well-being, strength of community, and human flourishing in general. Ellul puts it aptly: "In this terrible dance of means which has been unleashed no one knows where we are going and the aim of life

has been forgotten [. . .] Man has set out at tremendous speed—to go nowhere."[8] This desacrilization may be most apparent in "the city," but, contends Ellul, it permeates the state and human existence at large. It is an outgrowth of *la technique* at work in the midst of the city. Overpowered by the sway of *la technique,* human beings are "correctly tailored to enter into an artificial paradise" (Christians, 2006, p. 128). This artificiality is played out to the extreme, not just in the failings and foibles of life in the city but in its entrenched violence, traffic, and false expectations of intimacy.[9]

To explicate this acquiescence to *la technique* one must look more deeply into the way an environment helps to structure thought and behavior. It is not as though the city (as an entity) orders the steps of man, usurping human will, *per se.* Rather, it is as if the very way the city (in all its bureaucratic necessity) structures and shapes behavior that complies with its underlying principle of utility. In its reliance on technology and methods, whatever its latest instantiation, this shaping (or *influence)* propagates more of the same until all human action is eclipsed in technical necessity. Ellul's notion of the influence of technology recognizes that certain benefits may be derived by individuals and cultures that promote use and adaptation to them, but his perspective primarily suggests that the costs of this rapid adaptation may far outweigh the benefits. These undulating adaptations and uses come together to saturate the city in a sea of technique.

In attempting to show the spiritual dearth of an existence on earth void of God, Ellul elucidates an intuitive knowledge recognized by city-dwellers, one and all. This includes a sense or *intuitive knowing* that the city is not especially the best place to raise one's children or the ideal place to find rest and relaxation. For, in spite of "the engineer's bright eye, the urbanist's broad sweep of knowledge, the hygienist's idealism...look at the results," wrote Ellul (p. 62). There is "even more slavery—which recreation can only make more tolerable" (p. 161). Again, for inhabitants of the city, there may be little cognizance of this slavery, for the illusion of liberty is strong, particularly as the pace set by the drive for efficiency demands complete attention.[10] Living in a city where one is raised within the context of the limitations and bondages that the city inheres, there may be a tugging at one's heart for "more," but that tug is often easily ignored with the large supply of technological gadgetry and solutions to help distract and amuse.[11]

The Clamor of the City vs. the Centrality of Divine Care

ELLUL'S (1972) use of the biblical narrative in his discussion of the curse of the city continues in another of his works, *The Politics of God and the Politics of Man,* where a number of other examples of this dialectic are in operation throughout his biblical voyage.

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[8] Jacques Ellul (1951, 1989). *The presence of the kingdom*, pp. 63-69.

[9] Living in closer proximity to one another inheres a sense of safety and close-knittedness that has become increasingly illusional as post-industrial western society has advanced. Rather than safety and a sense of community, advance city life seems to be increasingly isolating (for a proper explication of this trend, see Anderson, Cessna, and Arnett, *The Reach of Dialogue*, 1994 and Bellah, et. al 1985).

[10] Ellul's arguments concerning automation and the illusion of liberty are scattered throughout his works, but may be found most specifically in *The Technological Society*, 1964. In similar fashion, using television as his text to decry the culture of entertainment, Neil Postman wrote a book about the nature of these distractions called *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. A 20th anniversary edition of this now classic volume was published in 2005.

[11] In their explication of the sociology of knowledge, Berger and Luckmann (1966) described this well: The theoretical formulations of reality, whether they be scientific or philosophical, do not exhaust what is "real" for the members of a society. Since this is so, the sociology of knowledge must first of all concern itself with what people "know" as "reality" in their everyday, non- or pre-theoretical lives. In other words, common sense "knowledge" rather than "ideas" must be the central focus for the sociology of knowledge. (p.15)

Using narratives from both Jewish history and the writings of the New Testament to make his argument, he points to the story of Naaman in the second book of Kings. There, depicting God as one who is not abstract or theoretical but a Creator who acts and moves within the unique course of human lives, the reader is reminded of the dialectical complexity between the importance of the individual commitment to follow God's guidance and the well-being of the assembled believers, or God's People. Consistently, Ellul points to the necessity of going beyond the gifts and resourcefulness of humanity to seek guidance and help from a transcendent God. The engagement with "his people" is one that Ellul posited as the Creator's highest goal and the true locus of power and authority for the people of Israel. This engagement, however, does not contest the inescapable condition of humanity constrained within the bonds of the city, for God's desire for fellowship does not negate human volition. The profundity of "free will" as a gift from God, juxtaposed to the call of God to seek, trust, and depend upon Him for direction and wisdom in their lives is perceived by Ellul as being the correct interpretation. His analysis of the following military dilemma between Naaman and Elisha helps clarify this point:

> At every point the general [Naaman] has a decision to make. At every point this decision is not confronted by an irresistible constraint or by crushing evidence and certitude. He has to listen to what the little slave says. But why should he obey it? And even when the king of Israel sends him to Syria to Elisha, why should he not take umbrage and return to Syria to provoke the diplomatic incident? In addition, the word Elisha speaks to him is certainly not a compelling or totalitarian word. He can refuse to listen to it, and this is exactly why Elisha does not appear, why he treats him thus. This kind of anonymity that does not break through the television screen nor stun the middle-class citizen is God's great respect for the liberty of the one he loves. Naaman, too, has to decide for himself. [. . .] At every point in the story, then, each decides for himself what he has to do, and at every twist Naaman is confronted by a simple word which it is just as easy to set aside or ignore. This whole nexus finally serves to express the full gospel (p. 34).

The need to apprehend a "full gospel" is not only the way Ellul contests the problems associated with the city's curse, but also the view he takes toward advancing the principles of life among the people of God—i.e., functioning within the church. As clear in his interpretation of the encounter between Naaman and Elisha, Ellul advanced a broad interaction and participation of both the *individual* and *the people* in Naaman's healing. One interpretation is that the power and apprehension of God's gifts and purposes are best seen as they flow through the many rather than through a centralized king or single prophet. Another implication is the endued power of individual choice. Although later the reader discovers that God's healing word came through Elisha, the fact that the prophet did not even receive this Assyrian general face-to-face, but sent a message of healing through his humble servant, is telling. Here again we see Ellul's insistence upon the centrality of divine care rather than the action or positions of man being the locus of power.

The City and the Church

NO matter the locale, generation, or type of church government, the drive for rank, certainty, and power is far from absent among the people of God. In spite of the intentions of an individual laying hold of it, the apprehension of power often devolves into domina-

tion. According to Ellul, examples of this in society and in the church occur again and again. Yet, the set of human values that desires centralized power among the people of God has been antithetical to God's own promise of leadership among His people. An example drawn from the history of ancient Israel explicates this in a discussion of the reign of Solomon in the Old Testament. Ellul writes:

> Solomon was just and upright. But then power went to his head, as it did with others. He imposed crushing taxes, built ruinous palaces, and took 700 wives and 300 concubines! He began to worship other gods besides the God of Israel. He built fortresses over the whole land. When he died he was hated by everyone (1988; p. 49).

This underlying thread and obfuscation of power occurs whether or not the king wielding it is deemed "good" or not, eventually becoming anathema to the primary message of God's intervention in human history, which, consistently has been one of love, mercy, restoration, and wholeness.[12]

The human drive for power and resulting domination is clearly a large part of Ellul's meaning of the city's curse as well as its outworking in what it means to participate "in the city." As he sees it, the underlying root of the curse is this very seeking after a promethean-type power that controls nature. Rather than looking to God as the sustainer and giver of Life, people seek centralized human power—something tangible; human beings seem to need a fixed locus of strength and safety where control may be gained and the future predicted. Exploring Ellul's work the reader comes across it again and again. Here, in an explication of the story of Israel's longing for human Kingship during the era of the prophets, he explains the struggle between God and the nation of Israel, a people called out to follow Him:

> […but] God does not want this form of [human] government, for it will introduce confusion between Yahweh and his "incarnation" in the king. God objects, but Israel insists, demanding this reasonable advance. So God warns his people. We are given an extraordinary description of what centralized political power inevitably means: more taxes, military conscription, arbitrary police, the impossibility of limiting power. This is the price the people will have to pay to have efficient political power and to reach the level of progress of other nations (p.18).

What does it take to rid the city of its curse? To function outside of the constraints and structures of "the city" requires the willingness and dedication of the people of God to seek His face and wait on Him, rather than conform to the organizational structures and precepts of government based on man. This might be impossible within society, but what about in the Church? Waiting is not terribly efficient way of getting thing done. Neither is making decisions collectively within the assembly a way to be productive. Avoiding centralized power is not an easy task for Israel, nor for the contemporary Church. Israel's God is not visible; He does not sit on an earthly throne governing them as other peoples are governed. So it is in the Church. The desire to have clear

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[12] Mark 12: 29-31 reads: "The first of all commandments is: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."

directives, quick answers, immediate results and progress, in general, is more tenable within the practice of strong, earthly leadership, but how often does the city's curse seep into the organizational structures of the Church? To explore this idea further is an exciting and worthy venture but requires much deeper review of Ellul's other theological works.[13]

Escape from the City

DESIRES to escape from the pressures (or curse) of the city have been the impetus for many social and ecclesiastic movements, individual ventures, and human attitudes throughout the entirety of history. From Plato's just society and Thomas More's vision of Utopia to the Marxist dream of a common society and the "back to nature" movement of the hippie generation in the 1960s, the longing for an ideal world free from the snares of city life has never been far from the human imagination. In today's media-saturated society, rumblings of a new, ideal world have been associated with cyberspace for the last two decades, particularly as the interactive applications of Web 2.0 begin to take stronger hold. Freedom from the bondage, limitations, and harrows of city life has been much lauded in virtual communities such as *Second Life*. Social networking sites such as *Facebook* and *MySpace.com* allow individuals to interact with "others" while escaping the hazards and risks of interaction in their geographically anchored neighborhoods and streets. Some have perceived these technologies as useful opportunities for the church, particularly in the ability to eliminate the social barriers caused by distance and time. This perception has often promoted hope that the church is entering a new age of enlightenment—a release from the constraints and curse of the city. The logic is that if the space upon which we relate, do business, and find recreation is virtual, the actual ground of "the city" can be avoided. It would seem that the dirt, violence, and underlying sickness of the city cannot touch us. But, is this a true solution?

While much reality *is* socially constructed in cyberspace, and a new age of long-distance "friendships" may now be conceived as being made possible by human ingenuity and skill, cyberspace is yet marked with the city's curse. Despite freedom from the city's actual grit and grime, the simulations and untethered experiences associated with the social networking taking place in the virtual sphere does little to release the person behind the screen from his or her own entrenchment in the city. Like any utopia, cyberspace is "no place."[14] The city's curse follows city dwellers right into the ethereal environments of cyberspace. It is "a world" of conceptual reality built with images and text—a symbolic universe that allows distant relations to stay intact but simultaneously exploits the importance of being fully present with another. Its highly mediated platform is underscored by its illusory and evanescent qualities, each of which foments the development of opportunities for presenting fictionalized (or idealized) versions of oneself. True, relationships seem much more flexible, less stressful, less "city-like," but because its construction exists within the human imagination cyberspace remains laced and tainted with all the accoutrements of the city.

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[13] Among the works to review, the following are of particular significance: Ellul, J. (1981). *In Season Out of Season*. Lani K. Niles (trans) Harper and Row; San Francisco; Ellul, J. (1986). *The Subversion of Christianity*. Geoffery W. Bromiley (trans.) Eerdmans Publishing; Grand Rapids; Ellul, J. (1988) *Anarchy and Christianity*. Geoffery W. Bromiley (trans.) Eerdmans Publishing; Grand Rapids.

[14] The word "utopia" literally means "no place." The derivative is from two Greek words, "ou" meaning "no" and "topos" meaning "place." Literally, then, Utopia means "no place" or place of nowhere.

Perhaps the main premise Ellul advances in his explication of the city is that whether in the church or the wider community, this problem of "the curse" exists and cannot be resolved by simply living better. Technology cannot heal it. New media cannot bring the needed help. Greater interactivity and convergence are not the panacea. There is no technological solution. The problem of the city's curse cannot find resolution by the enactment of laws or enforcing a code of ethics. Neither can the problem be assuaged by better management or the outright destruction of the cities. What, then, does this dilemma mean for modern society? What does this drive for centralized power mean, particularly as it applies to the practical matters of the church? How is human power limited when "city life" begins to manifest itself in the church? Is there a way of escape? The book of Hebrews in the New Testament may provide a telling link:

> Jesus also suffered and died outside the city's gate in order that He might purify and consecrate the people through the shedding of His own blood, and set them apart as holy—for God. Let us go forth, from all that would prevent us, to Him outside the camp...For here we have no permanent city, but we are looking for the one which is to come.[15]

When read in Ellulian light, the above New Testament passage might seem to imply that distancing one's self from the pollution and worldliness of the city is part of identifying with Jesus. Contrary to the seeming logic in this position, Ellul would counter this interpretation with a resounding "no!" Because this is a spiritual battle involving powers that are beyond the reach of human hands, the tension between the city and the Kingdom of God will exist until the end of time. Thus, God's people are called to be "in the world, but not of it." Here again, the reader is brought to the symbolic meaning of the city. However, it would still seem as though answers to these quandaries for the People of God lie in identification with Jesus, and that is outside the city gates.

Escape from the city necessitates something more radical than immersing oneself in virtual reality or packing one's bags and exiting to the countryside, for the city...is within us. The city's curse is not something one can easily flee. It must be addressed from the inside, out. The need for reflection, rest, and time off from the 24/7 pace of this present world is surely a step toward solution, but it will not be enough to stay the menacing tide of methods, programs, and menu-driven lives.

The Church's Plight?

I F Ellul's "mythic" meaning of the city is an accurate depiction of the frailty and fallenness of humanity and the enduring inability to untangle oneself from the structural evil therein, is it any wonder that as the church follows its lead? With the programs, methods, committees, and agendas that have become well-established practices of contemporary church life, the distractions and pace of "the city" does not only seep into the worship experiences of the local church but saturates the collective soul of the People of God, establishing an already entrenched mindset that creates a false perception of the Church's role in society and in the life of individual believers. As the city sets the pace for the contemporary church, it is not surprising to see the lack of vitality and purposeful community among the people of faith. It is no anomaly that the church often resembles a distracted, disengaged organization or club rather than the hopeful,

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[15] Hebrews 13:12-14.

connected, and enlivened community of faith. As form and structure have increasingly set the pace for spiritual formation in the Church, the focus on methods, efficiency, numbers, and expansion have somehow eclipsed the greater goals of servanthood and service to the needy. The simple goals of "loving thy neighbor" and sharing life together in the Body of Christ are often lost in the immediacy of programs, committees, sermons and methods to improve efficiency. Rather than a focus on traditional goals such as spiritual formation, a transformed life, wholeness, the means and methods of evangelism have taken the lead position in the Church, not just in appearance, but in practice. "This is why we are not first asked to preach and convert Babylon, but to pray" (1970 p. 75).

Certainly, not every particular church has fallen into the grip of slavery to the city, just as every *particular* city is not overtaken with the control of its grip. But, if the organizational design and forms established as normative in the city continue to set the pace and standard for life in the Church, is it any wonder that a backlash more closely resembling the corruption, snarls, and snares associated with the city's curse will overtake the flourishing and fruitfulness of a verdant and life-producing fellowship with God in the Garden?

Reflection is perhaps more necessary than chastisement.

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Ecology and Democracy:
Citizen Journalism in the Digital Age

Christine M. Tracy[1]

The symbiotic, often fragile, and constantly evolving relationship of a free press and the functioning of American democracy is a fundamental premise of this paper. Following a description of James Carey's view on the relationship between journalism and democracy and the window he provides to better understand the evolution of that relationship, current definitions of both journalism and the media are examined as a method to release journalism from its often derogatory labeling as "the media." This historical and theoretical background provides context for the development and introduction of an ecological news model. Using the new two-way digital tools, the public can now easily and cost-effectively produce news. However, the ecological news model demands more: it challenges the public to view news production and consumption systematically. It is not enough to report or to know: a working democracy demands engaged citizens who act on their knowledge and beliefs.

O N Tuesday, October 23, 2007, as wildfires raged throughout California, Harvey E. Johnson, FEMA's deputy administrator, held a press conference in Washington D.C. to update the nation's press corps on his agency's response to this national emergency. Johnson told the small group of reporters assembled—who had been given less than 20 minutes advance notice of the event—that he was very happy with FEMA's response to the fires so far: "And so I think what you're really seeing here is the benefit of experience, the benefit of good leadership and the benefit of good partnership—none of which were present in Katrina," said Johnson.

In fact, what astute journalists soon revealed was that the press conference was staged: standing behind a podium in front of television cameras, Johnson answered six questions from his colleagues, who were posing as reporters. This "error in judgment," as it was later described in a FEMA press release, was soon widely reported in a variety of news outlets. It appears from these and other recent events, such as the outing of former CIA agent Valarie Plame, brilliantly reported by PBS's "Frontline," and the recent release of Jeremy Scahill's 400-plus page book on Blackwater, that the watchdog function of the fourth estate is still in great demand.

Indeed, serving as "an independent monitor of power" is the fifth of nine principles Bill Kovach and Tim Rosenstiel outline in their seminal, *The Elements of Journalism*, one of the clearest statements about the purposes of American journalism today. "What is journalism for?" we may ask: "Journalism is for democracy," according to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001, p. 16) The symbiotic, often fragile, and constantly evolving relationship of a free press and the functioning of American democracy is a fundamental premise of this paper. To build my

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argument, I will first briefly describe James Carey's view on the relationship between journalism and democracy and the window he provides to better understand the evolution of that relationship. Next, I closely examine current definitions of both journalism and the media. This is a critical piece of my analysis because it helps release journalism from its often derogatory labeling as "the media." Following the separation of the practice of journalism from the media structures and systems that deliver the news, I introduce the ecological news model.

My main argument is that using new two-way digital tools, the public can easily and cost-effectively produce news. However, an ecological model demands more: it challenges the public to view news production and consumption systematically. Ideally, citizen journalists are also consciously consuming information and, most importantly, are energized to act on their knowledge. It is not enough to report or to know: a working democracy demands engaged citizens who act on their knowledge and beliefs. Finally, I believe this balanced, holistic, and ecological approach to news production, consumption, and energized action will inform and ultimately improve both the social practice of journalism and the government structures it supports.

James Carey on Journalism and Democracy

IN his ritual theory of communication, the late James Carey, former CBS Professor of International Journalism at Columbia and a stellar media ecologist, pioneered a dynamic, culturally, and technologically aware approach to news dissemination and delivery. Unlike more scientific, sterile, and objective viewpoints, Carey believed that newspapers were "a form of drama" and that news "was not pure information but a portrayal of the contending forces in the world." In his 1993 article "The mass media and democracy: between the modern and the postmodern," Carey reminds us that journalism and democracy are intertwined, historically variable, and greatly dependent upon the affordances of current communicative technologies:

> The media have changed decisively in the last 20 years, both as technologies and institutions. Yet democracy has changed also; the ends of political life have been reconceived in recent years. There is a widespread demand for less pro forma political representation, whether by the press or elected officials, and for more real participation. Yet these changes only signal that the meanings of democracy and communication are historically variable. The meaning of democracy changes over time because forms of communication with which to conduct politics change. The meaning of communication also changes over time depending on the central impulses and aspirations of democratic politics. Neither communication nor democracy is a transcendent concept: they do not exist outside history. The meaning of these terms varies with available media and with whatever concrete notions of democracy happen to be popular at any particular time. (Carey, 1993, p. 1)

Key to this analysis is Carey's notion that both democracy and journalism are fluid and flexible concepts grounded in specific histories and times and dependent upon available technologies. Significant social, economic, and cultural trends, such as technological innovation, globalization, and political unrest, have created a new media environment and a new model for news production and delivery. The legacy model, which moved news from producers to

consumers in a primarily unidirectional way, is now being replaced by a much more fluid, flexible schema, which finds citizens producing as well as consuming news and information.

A Preliminary Description of the Model

THE structural characteristics of the legacy media system, which was historically designed and built in an analog, print, and electronic broadcast media environment, include centralization, filtering, one-to-many distribution, and profitability. In contrast, the ecological model, which exists in the digital environment supported by the technological affordances of the Internet and the World Wide Web, is decentralized, unfiltered, many-to-many, and egalitarian. What we are seeing here is not only a powerful and rapid shift in the media environment but in the communicative transactions it supports.

Shifts and trends in communicative transactions include user-generated content, which in the Journalism discipline is often described as the Citizen Journalism movement. Many insightful scholars are breaking new ground in the area of user- and citizen-generated content including Bowman & Willis (2205), Bye (2006), Cooper (2006), Hiler (2002), and Olgod (2006). Of particular interest to this analysis is the work of Stephen Cooper: in *Watching the Watchdog: Bloggers as the Fifth Estate*, Cooper extols the societal value of user-generated communicative forms such as blogs, which transcend their primary function to create and disseminate news and information:

> This author is inclined to think that social structures which evolve through the voluntary interactions and exchanges among people—such as the blogosphere— tend in general to be more beneficial than structures created through the deliberate exercise of power, however well-intentioned—such as regulatory bureaucracies.…For our purposes, we can simply note that the blogosphere would seem to be a near-perfect instantiation of the ideal discourse. (Cooper, 2006, p. 302).

In describing these discourses as "voluntary" and "more beneficial," Cooper has identified a critical component of the ecological model: the value of individual responsibility in the process. Much like natural selection in the biological world, the internally-motivated drive to both search for –*consume*—as well as create—*produce*—meaningful and relevant news and information is the crux of the ecological model. Even more to the point, Cooper describes the ideal situation as "Darwinian: "…the fittest ideas prevail because they are based on the strongest arguments, which are the arguments most persuasive, and hence most acceptable to the participants" (p. 279).

To date, most analysis, discussion, and scholarship has focused on either the consumption of news and information in detailed audience and content analysis studies or on the emerging ability of ordinary citizens to create, publish, and distribute content; but these two occurrences have not been viewed as a holistic system. This analysis is an initial study of the relationship of these two processes. When viewed as an ecology, news is not a product to be consumed but a conscious act to engage and produce shared information that has value in a community: this is how cultures and societies create their histories. Thus, news is not an economic transaction but a social and cultural practice involving knowledge generation, information creation, and public distribution.

Disentangling Media from Journalism

G IVEN this new media environment, it is not surprising that journalists now have a whole host of descriptors for their profession and practice. In addition to "Internet Journalism," used by Wikipedia to define Matt Drudge's work, the term journalism is often preceded by descriptors, such as advocacy, citizen, community, online, public, precision, video, and way new. There are adjectives used to describe the practice and function of journalism—participatory, investigative, or civic; adjectives used to describe media that deliver news—print, video, digital, online, broadcast, or print; adjectives used to describe the genres of journalism—sports, celebrity, science, and environmental; and adjectives used to point out the profession's flaws—yellow, ambush, gonzo, and gotcha.

Correspondingly, there are a host of descriptors to define current media outlets and practices including mainstream media, alternative media, independent media, social media, and, finally, emergent media. Describing media as emergent is particularly useful in this analysis because it foregrounds the evolutionary process whereby media come into existence. It also more accurately depicts the existing technological affordances, distribution channels, and communicative forms now being used to conceive, design, share, publish, and distribute news. Finally, given the variety of adjectives used to describe journalism, it emphasizes the social constructive aspect of media and thus provides an important perspective for defining news as an ecosystem.

Coverage of the July 7, 2005 London subway bombings included video clips from survivors cell phones. These grainy but powerful images were almost instantly broadcast to global audiences on television and the Internet. This event exemplifies the current media landscape, which is experiencing tumultuous change since the advent of digital technologies in the early 1980s. Change, innovation, and experimentation is so predominant now that it has become exceedingly difficult to distinguish the communicative form that delivers the news from the practice of journalism, which motivates individuals to both create and consume news. This is a vital distinction and worthy of serious deliberation because the results of both these endeavors—the product of the media and the product of the practice of journalism—are not the same.

Too often media is substituted for or used interchangeably in discourse with journalism, journalistic practices, and news and information delivery. In the analysis that follows, I make a clear distinction between media, which I define as the communicative form in which the news is conveyed, and journalism, which I define as the discipline, practice, and ethical and democratic responsibility for communicating news to an appropriate public. For example, mainstream media (MSM) is most often associated with the major television networks, the media conglomerates, and large publishers that produce and distribute most American newspapers. In most current popular usage, it also refers to the practices and procedures that produce those products. But they are not synonymous. The social practice of journalism is not the media industry. This is a critical distinction: if the organizations and institutions that currently produce a majority of the news product consumed are structurally flawed, the practice of journalism is not.

This distinction is necessary for many reasons. First, it is important to distinguish the communicative form that delivers the news from the practice that created it. This will help to clarify the complex interrelationship of the two and further elucidate how both consumers and producers of these communicative forms manipulate and design them. Second, this approach may help rescue the profession and practice of journalism from its association with large media conglomerates, whose marketing agenda is degrading the quality of information that most mass audiences consider news. I will first clearly define media and journalism, explain their complex

and often symbiotic relationship, and then offer different language and a novel approach to explicate the current and future state of news generation, consumption, and use.

An Evolving Definition of a Medium

Historically, a medium of communication was originally thought to be a distribution channel or a representational form, and a transmission model dominated journalism and media, and rhetorical studies. This concept of a medium as simply a container, channel, or delivery mechanism is now obsolete: it is also historically inaccurate. As comprehensive histories of media development, such as Paul Starr's *The Creation of the Media* (2004) and Elizabeth Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979*)* and *The Printing Press in Early Modern Europe* (1983) accurately demonstrate, communicative media have always had a dynamic quality. However, in the past, their form (stone, writing, paper, and print) often took many years to be developed and assimilated, so their dynamic quality was not easily recognized. Media are not simply channels or roads by which messages (news included) travel. Instead, a medium is a fluid and flexible form—a *dynamic choice* reporters, writers, and producers make when they are designing and composing a news story.

The advent of digital technologies has made the dynamic quality of media readily apparent. Computer-mediated communication is removing the temporal and spatial constraints of legacy forms and precipitating the rapid emergence of many new communicative media forms, which have created unprecedented access to news and information all over the world. Given this current media environment, news currently takes many forms including oral, textual, visual, and audio. As has been historically demonstrated, it can be delivered to mass audiences in cost-effective and powerful ways, which is the key focus of the news industry.

Cathcart (1993) builds on the historical understanding of media as channels—"a medium is not only a channel or channels of communication"—and extends the definition to include the context and reciprocal quality of media—"but it is also a learned, shared, and arbitrary system of symbols" (p. 292). His definition is useful here because it also requires us to foreground form as the key to "disentangle the content of modern media from their technical forms" (pp. 304–5). It is exceedingly challenging to separate the medium from the message and the message from its cultural ancestry. Rhetorician Kenneth Burke claims it is impossible to separate form and content: however, Cathcart turns to Burke for the answer to this difficult dilemma: he claims that we now need a Burkeian philosophy of media form to complement his philosophy of literary form (p. 304). It is an insightful point because it challenges rhetoricians and media theorists to first understand that there are forms "peculiar to each medium," and second to be able to identify those medium-specific forms (Gumpert & Cathcart (1985, pp. 28–9). As these steps are taken, we will evolve toward a fuller understanding of precisely how news is rhetorically integrated into its consumption and use.

An Evolving Definition of Journalism

The goals and principles of journalism are concretized in the Project for Excellence in Journalism's (PEJ)[i] statement of purpose:

> The central purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with accurate and reliable information they need to function in a free society. This encompasses myriad

roles—helping define community, creating common language and common knowledge, identifying a community's goals, heroes and villains, and pushing people beyond complacency. This purpose also involves other requirements, such as being entertaining, serving as a watchdog and offering voice to the voiceless. (PEJ 2007).

In addition to this definition, PEJ also lists nine journalistic principles. These include: an obligation to report the truth; loyalty to citizens; dedication to verification; independence; monitoring of power; providing a forum for citizen debate and discussion; striving to be interesting and relevant; keeping the news proportional and comprehensive reporting; and finally, exercising a personal conscience—a moral compass directed by ethics and responsibility. (PEJ 2007). These are things journalists are expected to do and to believe they are the practice and the process and the profession's abiding principles. They do not include profit margins, conglomerates, buy-outs and by-ins, the industry, the media and the media monopoly. This is a very important distinction: the practice and profession of journalism is not the business of delivering news, a product generated by The Media and "sold" to national, international, and global audiences. We have to define journalism separately from the news industry if we are to recognize citizen journalists.

In *The Sociology of News* (2003), Michael Schudson devotes an entire chapter to defining journalism and does not exhaust the topic. He concludes with this definition: "[Journalism] is information and commentary on contemporary affairs taken to be publicly important" (p. 14). Similarly, in an opening-day address to Columbia's journalism students, James Carey clearly defines journalism, explicates its role, and distinguishes the field from the media industry:

> Like the novel to which it is at every historical point connected, Journalism converts valued experience into memory and record so it will not perish… Journalism takes its name from the French word for day. It is our daybook, our collective diary, which records our common life. That which goes unrecorded goes unpreserved except in the vanishing moment of our individual lives. Here you will study the practice of journalism. Not the media. Not the news business. Not the newspaper or the magazine or the television station but the practice of journalism. There are media everywhere …there just isn't all that much journalism. (Carey, 1996, pp. 1–2)

In defining and distinguishing the practice of journalism from the media industry, Carey can be seen also to frame the role of the citizen journalist. Given the recording and memory-making role of journalists, it follows that this function can be assumed and has historically been assumed by ordinary citizens. This was indeed the case for much of the history of American journalism until the 1830s, when distribution of news shifted from periodic journals sold by subscription to penny papers sold daily on street corners (Carey, 1989, p. 17).

Introducing Citizen Journalists

JUST as digital technologies are creating revolutionary effects, the penny press similarly signaled the inauguration of a commercial revolution in the practice of journalism as well as the rise of news making as an industry and a business enterprise. This understanding is

critical because it helps address some of the structural problems Robert McChesney (1999) identifies in the operation of the American media: "If we value democracy, it is imperative that we restructure the media system so that it reconnects with the mass of citizens who in fact comprise 'democracy.' The media reform I envision …can take place only if it is part of a broader political movement to shift power from the few to the many" (p. 3). This shift McChesney advocates is indeed happening now, and it is often described as the citizen journalism movement.

In an ironic and paradoxical twist, technological affordances, which previously allowed the mass distribution of news and information to large, increasingly homogeneous audiences, are now giving that same power to individuals. Low barriers to entry provided by the Internet and computer networking technologies, as well as new genres, such as blogs, offer a new media landscape for twenty-first century journalists. Freed from large investments in distribution and production equipment (known as the long tail in marketing terms), individuals and grass roots organizations are pioneering a host of new journalistic styles and practices and generating new communicative media forms, such as YouTube and hyper-local geographically-based Web sites, as well as refreshing older forms, such as obituaries.

One of the most clearly and fully articulated discussions and explanations of the citizen journalism movement can be found in the Winter 2005 issue of Harvard's *Neiman Reports*, which is devoted entirely to citizen journalism. An excellent summary of the current status of the movement is found in Shayne Bowman's and Chris Willis's essay, "The Future Is Here, But Do News Media Companies See It?" In addition to lessons learned from successful citizen media efforts and a very important graphic, "The Emerging Media Ecosystem," Bowman and Willis explain what citizen journalists actually do: "Citizens everywhere are getting together via the Internet in unprecedented ways to set the agenda for news, to inform each other about hyper-local and global issues, and to create new services in a connected, always on society" (p. 6).

Lessons gleaned from projects, such as Wikidpeida.com and Ohmynews.com, also demonstrate that the communicative form and the content are inextricably linked. For example, the news that citizen journalists choose to share is intrinsically different from the news professional journalists have been trained to report. Thus, it is more important than ever to ask the following questions when studying emergent journalism practices, such as the citizen journalism trend:

> Which conventions from legacy media are being adopted?
> What journalistic practices are being used?
> What new communicative forms are emerging?
> Which of these new forms are medium specific?
> How do these forms work rhetorically? Are they effective?

News as an Ecosystem: A Developing Model

As an apparently never-ending succession of innovative Web sites and news delivery systems, such as Wikinews, Google News, and Indymedia demonstrate, the ability for citizen journalists to seize the potential of digital technology and create novel and effective ways to deliver news and information is unprecedented. However, a systemic and environmental approach to news—the development of an ecology of news—requires more. In addition to embracing the power and potential of producing news, citizen journalists must also

embrace their power and potential as consumers of news. This is not something that is regularly mentioned in discussions of the citizen journalism trend or in the literature on media ecosystems. This can be traced, in part, to the fact that the citizen journalism trend and its resulting "products" are still often viewed through the framework of legacy and MSM. For example, in "Journalism as a Conversation" (2005), Jean K. Min, director of OhmyNews International, says: "We believe bloggers can work better with professional assistance from trained journalists. On the other hand, we also believe professional journalists can expand their view and scope greatly with fresh input from citizen reports" (p. 18).

Bowman and Willis (2005) also use legacy media to frame their discussion of emergent media in the accompanying text to their graphic, "The Emerging Media Ecosystem." They state:

> The relationship between citizen media and mainstream media is symbiotic. Information communities and weblogs discuss and extend the stories created by mainstream media. These communities and the blogosphere also produce citizen journalism, grassroots reporting, eyewitness accounts, annotative reporting, commentary analysis, watch-dogging and fact-checking, which the mainstream media feed upon, developing them as a pool of tips, sources, and story ideas. (p. 7)

Finally, the BBC's Director of World Service and Global News Division remarked in the *Neiman Reports* (Winter 2005) that "We don't own the news anymore". I believe these remarks and examples show that even the most robust citizen media formats are still often framed within the MSM and legacy models. What is now needed is an ecological approach, which includes the symbiosis Bowman and Willis identify. However, an ecological approach must be complete; it must include both the product and consumption of news in the model.

In addition to the work of media ecologists such as James Carey, Walter Ong, and Neil Postman, who recognized the power and potential of emergent media forms, their dangers, as well as their capacity to be shaped with humanism, other scholars are helping to define the ecology of news. Sociologist Kathleen Carley and communication theorist David Kaufer eloquently reinforce the need for an ecological approach to studying communicative forms such as news. According to Kaufer and Carley (1993), "Without a systematic ecological perspective…the impact of communication technologies are often misunderstood" (p. 88). They then go on to explain how such an ecology works: "Content, context, agents and the communicative transaction are inextricably bound into a single ecological system such that affecting one ultimately effects all" (p. 88). Finally, they submit a lens in which to frame the present and continuing study of this process:

> Despite a growing acceptance in the literature that individuals, social structure, culture, technology, and language are somehow related as mutually defining elements, the literature has mainly been silent on positing a specific mechanism tying them together. [What is now needed is] an operational model of communication that is sufficiently detailed or precise enough to permit formal analysis. (p. 206)

Kaufer and Carley have closely analyzed the communicative transaction process, and their definition offers a launching point to build an ecological model of news and information

delivery. In *Communicating at a Distance*, they illustrate the role of concurrence within the communicative transaction:

> …the communicative transaction takes place within an ecology consisting of not only concurrent transactions, but their content, context, and agents. Individuals adapt during a transaction, and because of the reciprocity between interaction and cognition, such adaptions lead not only to new mental models but to new sociocultural positions (and hence roles). Through concurrent and recurrent transactions, changes at the level of the individual collectively construct social and cultural changes. In response to interactive-cognitive reciprocity at the individual level, social structure and culture co-evolve. (Kaufer and Carley (1993) p. 160)

This definition clearly locates the communicative transaction as the interface between the individual and the larger environment. The key components of this interface are content, context, and agents: these components are useful to construct an individual's news transaction. When viewed as an ecology, news is not a product to be consumed but a conscious act to engage and produce shared information that has value in a community: this is how cultures and societies create their histories. Thus news is not an economic transaction but a social and cultural practice involving knowledge generation, information creation, and public distribution.

The ecological news model foregrounds quality not quantity. Consumption of news, as defined here, is a conscious choice necessitating informed thought. It requires the audience to question, and it sheds a different light on the traditional concept of news judgment. It allows the audience to question, and it requires their participation. By questioning traditional news judgment, audiences can set an alternative agenda and close the loop, if you will, in the consumption-production components of this ecological approach. A good working example of this still emerging process currently exits in the beta version of the Web site, "NewsTrust.net." Unlike "Digg," "Reddit," "Googlenews," and other news aggregate sites, which asks viewers to simply rate a news story or calculate views and access, "NewsTrust.net" is designed to evaluate the news value of a story and to critique the way the story was reported. This requires readers to consciously exercise their news judgment.

"If the 'wisdom of the crowds', to invoke an overworked phrase, is to be brought to bear on the news, NewsTrust may point the way," said *The Guardian's* Dan Kennedy (retrieved from the NewsTrust "About" page available at http://www.newstrust.net/about/). According to Kennedy, "NewsTrust.net" is a pioneering practice in the exercise of news judgment. In addition to submitting stories to the site for inclusion or review, readers actually rate stories based on traditional news values. They also rate the reliability of news organizations and fellow users. The "NewsTrust.net" review form asks readers questions such as: "Do you trust this publication?"; "Is this story informative?"; "Is this story fair?"; "Is it well sourced?"; "Does it show 'the big picture'?" "Does it provide factual evidence?" "Is this an important topic?"; "Does it present all key viewpoints?"; "Is it well presented?"; "Who much do you know about this topic?"; and "Is it accurate?"

On November 9, 2007, NewsTrust.net featured "Bogus Cancer Stats, Again," a story written and reported by Lori Robertson and Jess Henig from Fact Check, a Web site sponsored by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. NewsTrust.net first describes the story, "Giuliani stubbornly repeats a claim about prostate cancer that authorities call very

misleading," and then links to the full-text of the original reporting of the story. This is not simply reporting: it is, more accurately, reporting on the reporting process itself: this is the key affordance of this site, which is integral to helping readers become more conscious consumers of news.

New Ways to Exercise News Judgment:
The Consumption Component of the Ecological Model

How will this change be evidenced? Exactly how will individuals affect existing and emerging news outlets and production centers? What new consumption patterns will be seen? These are appropriate and progressive questions, and it is evident that a simultaneous focus on both consumption and production—an ecological approach to news— allows us to open up public discourse to the collective level in new ways. While innovative social networking news sites, such as NewTrust.net, "Digg," "Reddit," "Deli.icio.us" and others are shifting the conventional consumption of news, *Wired's* "Assignment Zero," "newassignment.net" and "OffTheBus.net" are pioneering open-resource reporting, beat blogging, and other innovative journalism practices, which are prompting changes in the traditional production of news.

Unlike traditional reporting, which is highly competitive and focused on scooping the competition, open-source reporting embraces a collaborative model: a community of readers with access to multiple resources working together to report news in a highly transparent and flexible environment. In a typical open-source practice, reporters inform readers of a topic under investigation and then ask readers to contribute leads, sources, tips, and ideas—to actually join in the real reporting. Historically open-source reporting is not a new journalism practice: news organizations have offered "tip lines" for years. Instead, the innovation comes from new genres of news, such as blogs and forum, which allow for an unprecedented level of transparency. One such open source reporting site, OffTheBus.net, features "campaign coverage of those who aren't in the club." To prove that fact, the site features detailed, biographic information on its writers and reporters. A good example of this feature is the detailed information offered about Nancy Watzman, who wrote, "A Question for you Mr./Ms. President" on November 8, 2007. She is pictured with her child and her biography reads, in part:

> Nancy Watzman is research and investigative projects director for Public Campaign, a national advocacy and educational center dedicated to campaign finance reforms that reduce the power of big money in elections and amplify the voices of ordinary voters within the political process. She also blogs at Muckraking Mom, whose slogan is, 'because MUCK doesn't scare MOMs.' Over the course of her career, she has worked for a number of Washington-based watchdog and advocacy groups, including the Center for Responsive Politics and the Center for Public Integrity.

Detailed reporter profiles, such as this one, reflect the open, transparent ethos of such open-source reporting sites, whose goal is collaboration and community building. In addition to open-source reporting, other innovative practices such as distributed reporting, which allows readers to submit actual reports to a story that are then collated in a database and distributed. These and

other pioneering practices are also current examples of an ecological approach to news creation, construction, and distribution.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

THIS is a highly exploratory initial discussion and analysis: much more work needs to be done to fully develop an ecological model of news. However, I believe this perspective is quite promising because it builds on the untapped potential of human imagination to generate new communicative forms. It also helps locate older forms that have outlived their usefulness. As news matures and extends its global reach, it is exciting to consider that ecology can inform and extend our traditional notions of democracy as the formative ideology of the American media structure. Writing after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, Carey (2006) asked: "Can we get globalization, democracy, and open communication at the same time or does one of the triad have to be sacrificed to the other—for example, globalization but with a sharp democratic deficit, or enhanced democracy but with necessary restrictions on open travel and communication? (p. 105). Perhaps an ecological democracy, with citizens responsible for news creation and consumption, and fully conscious of the consequences of their irresponsibility, begins to answer Carey's question.

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A Biological Approach to the Rhetoric of Emergent Media

Christine M. Tracy and Robert K. Logan[1]

Emergence theory and the rhetorical canons offer a novel approach and new insights into the evolution and function of new media and media in general. This highly exploratory analysis uses the rhetorical canons and biological theories of emergence to explore how agents enter into and navigate within five different ecosystems—biology, media, design, news, and religion. The primary methodology is based on the five rhetorical canons—delivery, arrangement, memory, invention, and style—and three evolutionary terms—descent, modification, and selection. This original and progressive framework is initially applied here to the five ecosystems to better understand their evolution, function, and future. Searching for common strands in these ecosystems is the beginning of an ambitious inquiry into an eventual "ecology of ecologies."

Introduction

OUR key premise is that rhetorical theory and the rhetorical canons—the primary philosophical tools of communicators— take on a new and highly useful analytical significance when they are combined with the biological understanding of emergence and used to study how different ecosystems evolve. When combined with systems biology thinking, the rhetorical canons help us better understand how new media and the aforementioned ecosystems emerge. Combining rhetorical theory and systems biology thinking to the study of cultural and other ecosystems is a highly novel and promising perspective and this analysis is an initial exploration of this new view of media. In "The Biological Foundation of Media Ecology," Logan shows that "both biological and media ecosystems may be considered as media in themselves and that an ecosystem is both the medium and the message." A media ecosystem builds on the traditional notion of biological ecosystems and their organic interactions. However, unlike their biological cousin, a media ecosystem is limited to human beings and their interactions with each other and the technologies that enable their communication. (Logan, 2007, p. 19) This analysis extends and builds on that work by using the rhetorical canons and definitions of emergence to explain some of the origins and consequences of these interactions.

The Role and Range of Rhetoric

IN many ways, the history of rhetoric and the development of the rhetorical canon parallel the development of human consciousness on this planet. Before writing, the alphabet, print, computing, or any other notational medium other than human memory, rhetoric was—and most rhetoricians would argue still is—the primary interface for communication and cultural

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environments. We believe, however, that *rhetoric is also the primary environment for the biological world*. The primary text of the rhetorical canon more than 2,000 years later is still Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Written in the middle of fourth century B.C., *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* is the foundation of the five rhetorical canons—delivery, arrangement, invention, memory, and style.

> The fact is that Aristotle's approach—asking the right questions of each rhetorical situation—provides the basis for the five canons that would be codified in the Roman's Rhetorica ad Herennium: invention (inclusive of ethos, pathos, and logos), delivery, organization (inclusive of the forms of public address), memory, and style. Most of the theory that comes after him extends what Aristotle had to say; in very few cases are wholly new conceptualizations developed. (Smith, 2003, p. 106)

As the lively debate among rhetoricians writing in the *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* and dialoging at the Rhetoric Society of America conferences attests, "The range of rhetoric is wide" (Burke, 1969), and it contains the memory of the universal nature of human communication. Writing in his eloquent and prescriptive *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric*, Wayne Booth articulates the power and potential of rhetoric in the postmodern age:

> In short, rhetoric will be seen as the entire range of resources that human beings share for producing effects on one another, effects ethical (including everything about character); practical (including political); emotional (including aesthetic); and intellectual (including every academic field). It is the entire range of our use of "signs" for communicating, effectively or sloppily, ethically or immorally. At its worst, it is our most harmful miseducator—except for violence. But at its best—when we learn to listen to the "other," then listen to ourselves and thus manage to respond in a way that produces genuine dialogue—it is our primary resource for avoiding violence and building community. (Booth, 2004, p. xi–xii)

Indeed, if rhetoric can do all this, it can certainly inform our understanding of the new digital media, which differ technologically from the older legacy media, such as print and electric mass media. Although the nature and means of communication are constantly changing, human needs and basic motivations do not. As we have mentioned, rhetoric is not about just speech or persuasion, but communication: it is much more than an analysis of text and public discourse or a set of strategies for negotiating symbolic action (Burke, 2004; Hart, 1997; Bitzer, 1968), it is also highly performative and quite simply, "something we do" (Haskins, 2005, p.4). Rhetoric is also about the achievement of human needs as identified by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, namely the needs of self actualization, esteem, love or belonging, safety, and physiology. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is a comprehensive attempt at understanding and communicating these needs. An illustrative example is this description of happiness:

> 1. Both to an individual privately and to all people generally there is one goal {skopos} at which they aim in what they choose to do and in what they avoid. Summarily stated, this is happiness {eudaimonia} and its parts. 2. Let us, then, for the sake of giving an example {of what might be more fully explored}, grasp

what happiness is, simply stated, and the sources of its parts … 3. Let happiness be {defined as} success {euprazia} combined with virtue or as self-sufficiency {autarkeai} in life or as the pleasantest life accompanied with security or as abundance of possession and live bodies, with the ability to define and use these things; for all people agree that happiness is pretty much one or more of these. (1360b 94–96)

A Biological Frame for the Rhetorical Canons

AT first glance, it seems that rhetoric and biological notions of emergence are unconnected. There are, however, an interesting set of links between the five elements of the rhetorical canon, namely, arrangement, delivery, memory, style, and invention, and the three elements of emergence or evolution, namely, descent, modification, and selection. The overall goal of the rhetorician is persuasion and hence the link of the five canons of rhetoric with selection. The arrangement or rearrangement canon of rhetoric links to the modification element of evolution. *Arrangement*, as in DNA, incorporates rearrangement, as in re-mix, and hence involves modification. Even if one has all the components that could make for an emergent phenomenon, they have to be arranged in a certain order for the innovation to emerge. And it is not much of a stretch to see *delivery* as a form of descent from the rhetors to their audiences. One can also connect delivery with media or mediation. Delivery is basically the medium, but it also involves agency. The rhetor, especially in digital rhetoric, has many options and modes to deliver information.

DNA plays the role of *memory* in the biosphere. Media, both old and new, archive the memories of a culture. This is obviously true of the notated media like writing, print, recorded music, film, and even spoken language archives as has been suggested by Eric Havelock, who described the oral tradition as the tribal encyclopedia. The technosphere operates as a form of memory for the designer or inventor. As Basalla (2002) points out, no invention started from scratch. Each one was based on some previous invention. Archiving and drawing on archives are essential parts of news making. Of all the cultural institutions that exist, none preserve the traditions of the past with greater fidelity than religion. Social mores, languages, media, design, technologies, the dissemination of news, government institutions, and economic systems change with much greater frequency than religion. The stories of the great religions of the world are thousands of years old. Some forms of worship and organization have changed over the centuries, but the stories persist.

Memory is the descent element in evolution. Evolution can be described simply as descent, modification, and natural selection. In nature, modification is the result of mixing genes in sexual reproduction or in environmental causes, such as radiation or chemicals. Descent is merely replication or reproduction. And natural selection is simply the result of the fittest modifications dominating the gene pool. In rhetorical studies, there is much discussion about collective memory and the sites of memory. It is also an ancient technique of oral rhetors, who used physical architecture as mnemonic devices.

Style involves ornament and tells us how rhetors deliver their ideas. If delivery is about the medium, then style is about the message of the medium independent of its content, as expressed by McLuhan's "the medium is the message." The etymology of the word "ornament" is *ornare*, which means to equip, fit out, or supply. Thus, style is not just ornamentation in the sense of decoration, but an essential part of establishing the rhetor's argument. In *The Rhetoric*, style is

termed "lexis" (Latin *elocutio*), which refers to "ways of saying something" and is very different from what is said, or logos. It can be seen broadly as how a thought or idea is expressed in words or a total work or, in a more restricted sense, as word choice or diction.

According to Aristotle, style meant saying something in the right way. However, he offers conflicting opinions about practicing this canon. Style is word choice that is clear and appropriate—a natural style suited to the customs and "not in excess." He also recommended the use of metaphor as a way for rhetors to use imagery to make their words more meaningful and real to an audience. Rhetorical theorists have studied style closely (Lanham, 1992, Gibson, 1993) because it most intimately reflects the rhetors voice, which is a powerful tool.

Rhetoricians view *invention* as the search for and discovery of the best possible argument or line or reasoning to construct for a specific audience, subject or medium. Thus rhetorical invention is closely aligned with invention it is generic sense -- the creation or discovery of something entirely new. Invention tells us about the "what" of an ecosystem. The objective of design is innovation, hence, the design ecosystem incorporates invention as a central theme, but this does not exclude other canons of rhetoric, namely, delivery (distribution) style (user satisfaction); memory (use of elements from the technosphere of previous inventions); and arrangement (the remixing of the elements of the technosphere with the new elements created by invention). The analog of invention in the news ecosystem is putting a slant on a story as well as deciding that certain events are worthy as news. Blogs, wikis, and all the cutting edge participatory genre of digital media are changing the way news is disseminated. Invention in the religion ecosystem is the creation of new myths that move people spiritually and ethically and promotes altruism.

Emergence Theory and Ecosystems

ANOTHER tool that we will make use of in our analysis is emergence theory. In this analysis, we use and define emergence in the following way: an emergent phenomenon is one consisting of a complexity of components from which the properties of the phenomenon cannot be derived, predicted, or reduced to the properties of the components from which it emerged. Thus there is an element within an emerging phenomenon that is independent of its change that cannot be identified or predicted. The working definition of emergence we employ here builds on the biological premise that the properties or behaviors of living organisms cannot be derived from, predicted from, or reduced to the properties of organic chemicals of which they are composed. For example, biology cannot be reduced to physics or chemistry.

It follows, then, given this understanding that language and other forms of mediated communications are emergent phenomena whose properties cannot be derived from, predicted from, or reduced to human biology. The design of new technological tools is also emergent because it cannot be derived from, predicted from, or reduced to human biology or to earlier elements of the technosphere. For example, when we apply this definition of emergence to the social phenomenon of news, which is based on events in human affairs or natural events that effect human affairs, we come to understand it as an emergent phenomenon—a product of events being described and the bias or slant of the creator of the news story. The notion that a news report can be objective is a myth because the experience and vested interests of every news reporter are unique. It follows that the news, like biological organisms, media, and design, cannot be predicted from or reduced to the actual events being reported and the unique perspective of the reporter.

The Emergence of Digital Media and a Universal Rhetoric

WHILE the foundational premise of rhetoric as the art of persuasion remains steadfast, the nature of rhetoric has emerged and shifted over the millennia to reflect the shape of the dominant media of the time. For example, the rhetoric of oral and written communication will naturally differ as the two media of oral and written communication differ from each other in so many ways. The nature of written rhetoric changed with the arrival of the printing press. As pointed out by Innis and McLuhan, the electric media of mass communication brought with it an altogether new kind of mass media rhetoric. And finally with today's digital "new media" many scholars have identified a new rhetoric that they term digital rhetoric (Laura Gurak, 2001; Mary Hocks, 2003; Richard Lanham, 1993; Losh, 2007; Warnick, 2002; Welch, 1990; Zappen, 2005). According to Losh (2007), "Digital rhetoric is characterized by many new genres: e-mail, electronic slides, webpages, blogs, wikis, video games, etc." A number of universities offer courses in digital rhetoric, such as McMaster University, which offered a course in the English department entitled: "Digital Rhetoric and Communication."

Although media through which rhetoric has been communicated have gone through many changes, we are claiming here that *there exists a universal core to rhetoric*, whether oral, written, electric, visual, or digital. The reason for this universal core, or persuasive communication, is that although the media of communication have changed human needs and human motives as described by Maslow, the human psyche, has not, McLuhan aside. The style—the "how" of persuasion—and the voice of twenty-first century rhetors have changed as the dominant media of human society have changed, but *the basic logic and mode of persuasion are the same today as they were in the day of the classical rhetoricians* Plato and Aristotle and of the pre-literate rhetoricians, the singers of tales. We are here defining this universal core—the unchangeable or non-emerging part of the human psyche—as a Universal Rhetoric.

> We may think of Universal Rhetoric in a manner similar to Chomsky's (1957, 1965, 1995, 2000) notion of Universal Grammar (UG); or Brown's (1991) idea of human universals; or Logan's (2006, 2007) notion of Universal Culture. We argue here that a rhetorical analysis can contribute to a better understanding of the ontology of communication and to those elements that remain universal. Chomsky explains his notion of the UG as a result of the human psyche having been magically hard wired with a Language Acquisition Device that contains the UG. An alternative explanation offered by Christiansen (1994, 1995, 2003) is that language operates as an organism with its own evolutionary dynamics, an idea that dates back to Darwin (1871). Christiansen and Ellefson (2002) describe language as "a kind of beneficial parasite… that confers some selective advantage onto its human hosts without whom it cannot survive." Language evolved as an organism that could easily be learned by the human infant, which explains why the languages of the world possess a UG. The human psyche that shaped the grammar of human languages is universal, and hence, the grammar of those languages is universal.

Logan (2007) applied the same argument to culture, which, like language, is essentially symbolic—a set of ideas, beliefs, and knowledge, whose acquisition by the human mind, like

that of language, must be simple and straightforward if they are to be transmitted and hence survive. It therefore follows that culture is also an organism, an obligate symbiont. If we accept this hypothesis, then it follows by analogy that the conclusions Christiansen reached regarding language would apply to culture as well and that we could expect human culture to have a number of universal structures or features. In fact, Donald E. Brown (1991) in his book *Human Universals* cites over 100 universal features of human culture. Similar arguments for the universality of human culture are also made by Johnson and Earle (1987) and Cronk (1999). Extending the arguments of Christiansen (1994) with language and Logan (2007) with culture to rhetoric, we claim here that, independent of the medium and independent of the ecosystem in which it operates, *rhetoric is universal*. While beyond the scope of this analysis, a similar argument naturally follows for the ecologies of media, design, news, and religion that we have identified above because each is a product of human culture. Applying it to the biological ecosystem may be a bit of a stretch, but we justify this on the basis that all of the ecosystems we consider in this article have a biological underpinning because human beings are biological creatures and the various elements of their culture are also a product of descent, modification, and selection.

The Emergence of Digital and Quantum Rhetorics

WE can also apply this biological frame to the invention of digital rhetoric and the resulting digital culture that splintered into a thousand different subcultures because of the long-tail phenomenon. One goal of rhetoric was to persuade all the citizens in a society to adopt a common view of what constitutes good government. Aristotle and Plato, and medieval rhetoricians for that matter, had the view that there was one absolute truth at which one could arrive through rationale arguments. The postmodern view, which we believe is a consequence of the digital communication age in which we live, no longer holds that there are absolute truths or norms to which everyone should adhere.

This does not mean that the art of persuasion is no longer of value—quite to the contrary. Digital rhetoric serves the purpose of finding like-minded thinkers with which to commune. As a result, digital rhetoric becomes quantum rhetoric, where one can hold two opposite points of view simultaneously. There is no longer a correct position and an incorrect position, which is at the logical antipode of the correct position. *The quantum rhetorician sees both sides of the argument simultaneously.* Rather than establishing that one position is correct and useful and the other is wrong and not useful, the quantum rhetorician sees the value of both positions, not in an either-or stance but in a both-and inclusive stance.

McLuhan hinted at this when he declared that all technologies, all media, have both service and disservice. For example in the Talmudic tradition, seatmates take a position on a topic one day, and the next day take the opposite position and argue it with the same passion and ardor they had with their initial position. The Greeks, who fully embraced the classical rhetoric of a right and a wrong position, were convinced by Parmenides that non-being could not be. As a result (Logan 2004), they were unable to invent zero, a feat achieved instead by Hindu and Buddhist mathematicians, who were often criticized by Western mathematic historians for not always being logically rigorous. For the Hindu and the Buddhist, non-being not only existed, it was the path of salvation to Nirvana. They were also early quantum rhetoricians! Zero was also invented by the Mayans, but how they did this has been lost as so many writings of the New

World culture were destroyed by the Spaniards as they searched for the truth operating within the classical rhetorical mode.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

CONNECTING rhetoric, biology, communications, and the creation of technology by design, elevates our understanding of human cooperation, altruism, Ciceronian "good government," and wisdom traditions and also provides insight into that which is divine. For Cicero and later Quintilian, "good government" depended on the character of individual citizens. Character was a critical part of virtue, which prompted good deeds for the state, hence good government. As we further explore the ideas and arguments presented here, we also hope to create a historical context in which we connect the communication thinking of ancient Greece and Medieval rhetoricians with modern day thoughts about digital media and cybernetics.

The rhetorical canons and emergence theory provide a useful framework for explaining how cultural systems and institutions, such as journalism and religion, function and evolve. If the ecosystems we have identified, such as news, design, and interactions can move us closer to the larger notions of a Universal rhetoric and an "ecology of ecologies." Rhetoricans believe the persuasive process can be attributed to five elements—delivery, memory, invention, style, and arrangement. Biologists believe the emergence process can be attributed to three elements—descent, modification, and natural selection. We have initially applied these previously disparate heuristics to dominant cultural structures and discovered common threads. These insights reveal a more robust notion of media and particularly the power of media using digital technologies. This analysis also revealed a universal core in the persuasive process, which is critical to development of a quantum rhetor capable of integrating polarities. We hope this exploratory analysis will lead to further use of this methodology, exploration of the qualities of universal and quantum rhetoric, and a better understanding of how media evolve and function.

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