

Media Science and Communication Studies Possessed in Different Countries-An Overview

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Abstract

In this an article, Author would like to focus, media, communication and science studies in different countries in this world. Media determine our situation.” With these lines, German media scientist Friedrich Kittler begins his influential historical theorization of media, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter. Packed into ittlter’s statement is a crucial claim: that media form the infrastructural basis, the quasi-transcendental condition, for experience and understanding. Like the strata of the seeable and say able that, in French philosopher Michel Foucault’s archaeology of knowledge, make knowledge possible in a given historical moment, media broker the giving of space and time within which concrete experience becomes possible. This broad claim forms the motivating insight behind this volume of essays devoted to “critical terms” for the study of media. In today’s intellectual climate, it would be no exaggeration to cite media as a central topic of research in the humanities and the humanistic social sciences, and for precisely the reason indicated by Kittler. Media can no longer be dismissed as neutral or transparent, subordinate or merely supplemental to the information they convey. Rather, an explosion of work by a diverse group of scholars representing a host of fields, disciplines, and interdisciplines has attested to their social and cultural agency. Not surprisingly, in the wake of this work, “media studies” has emerged as a viable research area, under rubrics like Comparative Media Studies (at MIT) and Literature, Communication, and Culture (at Georgia Tech), and as the focus of an ever-expanding range of research initiatives across the globe. Despite this process of institutional consolidation, however, media studies remains an amorphous enterprise, more of a loosely associated set of approaches than a unified field. One can find practitioners who apply statistical methods to analyze audience response to media content and others who focus on the political impact of media consolidation and deregulation. “Media studies” embraces researchers who study virtual reality environments, hypertext fiction, materialist anthropology

and culture, the history of information theory, precinematic devices, the institution of print, and word frequency in Greek literature. Indeed, the circle could be expanded to embrace any practice involving material artifacts, which is to say, the vast majority of practices in the humanities and humanistic social sciences. We are, it seems, all practitioners of media studies, whether we recognize it or not. The question, then, becomes how we delimit media studies and, perhaps more profoundly, what is to be gained by such delimitation. Turning to Wikipedia (why not, given the key role played by new computational technologies in making the inescapability of media, well, inescapable), we find one strategy for dealing with the amorphous state of media studies: minimal definition. "Media Studies," the entry begins, "is the study of the constitution, history, and effects of media." It goes on to divide media studies (usefully, to be sure) into two traditions: on the one hand, "the tradition of empirical sciences like communication studies, sociology and economics," which "generally focus on Mass Media, their political, social, economic and cultural role and impact in creating and distributing content to media audiences"; on the other hand, "the tradition of humanities like literary theory, film/video studies, cultural studies and philosophy," which "focus on the constitution of media and question ... [how] they shape what is regarded as knowledge and as communicable."

Key Words: Media- academic- discipline- effects- humanities- communication- mass

Introduction

Media studies thus comprises any study of media, within any discipline or interdiscipline, and may be subdivided according to the conventions governing research in those fields. These conventions group into two categories—the empirical and the interpretive—which, though far from homogeneous, designate two broad methodological approaches to media as the content of research. We do not discount the value of such taxonomies. But we and the authors represented in this volume take a somewhat different tack. Rather than focusing on media as the *content* of this or that research program, we foreground a range of broader theoretical questions: What is a medium? How does the concept of medium relate to the media? What role does mediation play in the operation of a medium, or of media more generally? How are media distributed across the nexus of technology, aesthetics, and society, and can they serve as points of convergence that facilitate communication among these domains? Expressed schematically, our approach calls on

us to exploit the ambiguity of the concept of media—the slippage from plural to singular, from differentiated forms to overarching technical platforms and theoretical vantage points—as a third term capable of bridging, or “mediating,” the binaries (empirical versus interpretive, form versus content, etc.) that have structured media studies until now. In a minimal sense, what the emergence of the collective singular *media* betokens is the operation of a deep, technoanthropological universal that has structured the history of humanity from its very origin (the tool-using and inventing primate). In addition to naming individual mediums at concrete points within that history, “media,” in our view, also names a technical form or formal technics, indeed a general mediality that is constitutive of the human as a “biotechnical” form of life. Media, then, functions as a critical concept in something like the way that the Freudian unconscious, Marxian modes of production, and Derrida’s concept of writing have done in their respective domains. Though a distinct innovation, this general concept of mediality that we are proposing reveals thinkers

from Aristotle to Walter Benjamin to have been media theorists all along. Sophocles had no concept of the Oedipus complex, but after Freud it becomes difficult to think about Greek tragedy without reference to psychoanalytic categories. Shakespeare had no concept of media, but his plays may be profitably studied as specific syntheses of varied technical, architectural, and literary practices. The very concept of media is thus both a new invention and a tool for excavating the deepest archaeological layers of human forms of life. It is our collective attentiveness to this deep, technoanthropological universal sense of media that allows us to range across divides (characteristically triangulated) that are normally left unbroached in media studies: society-technology-aesthetics, empirical-formal-constitutive, social-historical-experiential.

As an illustration of the approach to media we are proposing, consider the case of Arnold Schwarzenegger's election in 2003 to the governorship of California. Schwarzenegger's victory has often been attributed to his status as a Hollywood star, as if that somehow guaranteed success. But this explanation, in our view, falls far short. If it were adequate, we would have to explain the fact that the vast majority of governors and other political officeholders in this country are not actors or other media celebrities, but practitioners of that arcane and tedious profession known as the law (see Peter Goodrich's essay on this topic in the book). If Hollywood stardom were a sufficient condition to attain political office, Congress would be populated by Susan Sarandons and Sylvester Stallones, not Michele Bachmanns and Ed Markeys. Something other than media stardom was clearly required. And that something was the nature of the legal and political systems that give California such a volatile and populist political culture, namely the rules that allow for

popular referendums and, more specifically, make it relatively easy to recall an unpopular governor. California has, in other words, a distinctive set of political mediations in place that promote *immediacy* in the form of direct democracy and rapid interventions by the electorate. It is difficult to imagine the Schwarzenegger episode occurring in any other state. But there is more to this particular media event. Schwarzenegger was not just any Hollywood star but an internationally known "action hero." He had attained iconic status first as a prize-winning bodybuilder whose sculpted physique reminds us that one of the earliest media of human expression is the malleable physical body itself. Schwarzenegger's standing as an icon of power and action gave him a decisive advantage over an incumbent who was widely perceived as weak and passive in the face of the various crises California was facing. This perception was reinforced—"re-mediated," as it were—by the mass media themselves. In one notable layout in the *New York Times*, just weeks before the recall vote, Schwarzenegger was shown above the fold surrounded by adoring fans, while Gray Davis appeared in a smaller photo below the fold playing bingo with a senior citizen. If ever a photo layout telegraphed (and arguably helped to produce) the ultimate result of an election this was it. One wonders if a similar layout in the January 28, 2008, *Times*, which juxtaposed Barack Obama, engulfed in an adoring crowd, with Hillary Clinton, alone on a stage, addressing a distant audience, had a similar predictive and productive effect. The California recall election illustrates the need for a multidimensional, "triangulated" approach to media events and phenomena. This one involved a "perfect storm" of political, technical, and aesthetic forms of mediation: the international circulation of cultural icons converged with the aesthetics of masculine body images at a specific historical

moment in a regional political culture with particular electoral conventions. A simple appeal to Schwarzenegger's celebrity status will not do. "The treatment of *media* as a singular noun ... is spreading into the upper cultural strata," Kingsley Amis observed in 1966. And at or around that moment, when it becomes possible to speak of media in the singular—as something other and indeed more than a simple accumulation of individual mediums—media studies emerges as a quasi-autonomous enterprise. The passage from content to medium, from a plurality of divergent contents to the collective singular, lies at the heart of what is arguably the first and still most influential effort to articulate a comprehensive theory of media. In *Understanding Media* (1964), Marshall McLuhan famously identified the medium and the message, or rather, he defined the message as the medium itself. From McLuhan's standpoint, a medium impacts human experience and society not primarily through the content that it mediates but through its formal, technical properties as a medium. The example he proffers in a central section of *Understanding Media* is the lightbulb, which, despite having no content of its own, profoundly impacts social life, literally illuminating the darkness and thereby extending the time of human social interaction. "Understanding media," then, does not mean just (or primarily) understanding individual mediums—electricity, the automobile, the typewriter, clothing—but rather something like understanding *from the perspective of media*. Media, become singular, forms an abstraction that denotes attentiveness to the agency of the medium in the analysis of social change.

McLuhan urges us to focus on media independent of its ties with content, and in the process redefines media itself as content, not just a vehicle or channel. Though some, perhaps many, practitioners of media studies find this

deeply problematic, McLuhan's redirection is foundational for "media studies" in the sense in which we employ it here. For precisely this reason, his approach has a capaciousness that can encompass the multiple and historically disjunctive origins of the term *media* as well as related terms like *medium* and *mediation*. Etymologically, our term *media* is not just the plural of *medium*. According to its first entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it derives from the postclassical Latin *media*, which, centuries before its modern singular use, denoted the voiced stops *b*, *g*, and *d* in Latin and Greek grammar. In this first entry, *media* carries several definitions: in addition to "a voiced stop in ancient Greek," or more generally "a (voiced) unaspirated stop," it refers to "the middle layer of the wall of a blood vessel or lymphatic vessel" and "a principal vein ... in the basic pattern of insect wing venation." It is only in the etymology of a second entry that *media* as the plural of *medium* is mentioned. Definitions of the modern *medium*, derived from the Latin for "middle, centre, midst, intermediate course, intermediary," are broken into two categories: (1) "something that is intermediate between two degrees, amounts, qualities, or classes," and (2) "a person or thing which acts as an intermediary," whether a token of exchange, a material used in artistic expression, a "channel of mass communication," the "physical material ... used for recording or reproducing data, images, or sound," a "substance through which a force acts on objects at a distance or through which impressions are conveyed to the senses" (including "the substance in which an organism lives"), or a spiritualist who communicates with the dead. From the sense involving mass communication, the dictionary notes, "a new singular has arisen." It seems clear that *media* as a collective singular noun is somehow tied to the emergence of the mass media—from the eighteenth century's investment in paper as the

medium of circulation and sociality, to the nineteenth century's invention of electricity as the medium of phenomenality, to the newspapers of the later nineteenth century and the television of the twentieth, forms through which information itself is mediated. In all of these cases, what is at stake is something more than the form of a specific content, and thus something that exceeds the pluralization of the term *medium*. Something that opens onto the notion of a form of life, of a general environment for living—for thinking, perceiving, sensing, feeling—as such. With this, the early modern meaning of medium as intervening substance seems not only to make a disguised reappearance but to do so in a manner—which is to say, with a generality—capable of sustaining the integrity of the term *media* across its various disjunctions and periodic reinventions. As a term denoting the “pervading or enveloping substance” in which human organisms live, *medium* designates a minimal relationality, a minimal openness to alterity, a minimal environmental coupling (in the terminology of contemporary ethological cognitive science), that appears somehow central to our understanding of ourselves as “essentially” prosthetic beings. Following the morphing of *medium* into the collective singular *media*, this minimal relationality comes into focus for itself: thus media studies can and should designate the study of our fundamental relationality, of the irreducible role of mediation in the history of human being. Indeed, this generalized sense of media is at the heart of McLuhan's conceptualization of media as “extensions of man.” By linking media—and the operation of mediation as such—to the historically changing sensory and perceptual “ratios” of human experience, McLuhan underscores the fundamental correlation of the human and the technical. Though never an explicit theme, this correlation animates his

conception of media as a prosthesis of human agency, and it implicates the logic of human embodiment in media history in a way that makes common cause with some important contemporary media theorists and philosophers of technics. It anticipates, for example, the work of cultural critic N. Katherine Hayles, for whom disembodiment is an ideology that facilitates all-too-easy circulations of information without regard to cultural and material realities. In Hayles's view, information always operates in conjunction with bodies, whether these be computational embeddings or phenomenological embodiments, and careful study of the imbrications of bodies and machines serves to underscore our fundamentally prosthetic mode of being. In a slightly different register, McLuhan is the recognized source for Friedrich Kittler's media science, which as Kittler suggests, can be understood as a working out of the impossibility of understanding media, where media forms the infrastructural condition of possibility for understanding itself. Indeed, we propose that McLuhan cuts a path between these two positions: for him, in contrast to both Hayles and Kittler, it is the coupling of the human and the technological that holds primacy; while imbricated in myriad, complex ways, human enaction and technological materiality remain two distinct forms of informatic embodiment, two distinct processes of materialization that, no matter how much they may converge, retain their respective autonomy. For McLuhan, the human body can neither be understood as a first or primary medium, as some posthumanist critics propose, nor relegated to the status of merely optional receiver of technically mediated information, as Kittler proposes. Rather, the body for McLuhan comprises the non-self-sufficient “ground” for all acts of mediation, including those (the vast majority of mediations) that expand its agency beyond the “skin.” The body, in sum, is a

capacity for relationality that literally requires mediation and that, in a sense, cannot be conceptualized without it.

In this respect, McLuhan's work converges with the position of another important media critic, French philosopher Bernard Stiegler. Following the work of his compatriot, paleontologist André Leroi-Gourhan, Stiegler advances a complex argument for the "co-originary" of technics and the human; the break that gave rise to the human as a distinct species, that is, was the invention of technics (or the technics of invention)—the use of objects not simply as tools but as tools to make other tools. The contemporaneity in the fossil record of protohuman remains and primitive flint tools supports Stiegler's theorization of the human as, from the start, a prosthetic being. Human beings, he claims, evolve by passing on their knowledge through culture. Technics, then, is of the essence, the medium for human life. The human and the technical coevolve, and media, in both its singular form, as a quasi-autonomous giving of the sensible, and its plural form, as a constantly evolving set of concrete exteriorizations of the human, designates something of their relation. And it does so in two distinct yet tightly correlated registers: as an always concrete articulation of the conjunction of human sensory and perceptual ratios with the technical processes that broker or mediate the givenness of space and time for human experience, and as a general condition for human life at any moment of its evolution. It is important that we stress just how much this conceptualization of media as an environment for the living differs from conceptions of the medium/media as a narrowly technical entity or system. Before it becomes available to designate any technically specific form of mediation, linked to a concrete medium, *media* names an ontological condition of humanization—the constitutive operation of

exteriorization and invention. The multitude of contemporary media critics who focus on the medium—and media in the plural—without regard to this ontological dimension run the risk of positivizing the medium and thus trivializing the operation of mediation. Whether this leads toward an antihumanist technological determinism (Kittler) or the unending media-semiosis of Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin's "remediation" (itself, fundamentally, a remediation of McLuhan), what is lost in the process is a broader sense of the existential stakes, of how these operations of mediation tie in with the form of life that is the human.

We should also emphasize that our invocation of "the human" is not an attempt to resuscitate some ahistorical human essence, much less a traditional humanism. One of the key implications of thinking of media (tools, artifacts, codes, etc.) rather than language as constitutive of human life is that the assumption that the human is metaphysically distinct from other forms of life is called into question. Birds, bees, and beavers produce a kind of natural architecture; animals communicate with one another and with us. A more exact sense of what we mean by "the human" would emphasize the sense in which humanity is a work in progress, a radically historical form of life distinguished not simply by "media" but by cycles of media innovation, invention, and obsolescence. For in media, to paraphrase the Bible only slightly, we live and move and have our being. And they do not remain static, but constitute a dynamic, historically evolving environment or ecosystem that may or may not sustain a recognizable form of human life indefinitely. The most obvious medium in which the human species dwells is the earth's atmosphere, and that, we know, is undergoing drastic, man-made modifications. Human beings now have a greater impact on the environment than rain. It would not be too far-

fetched to think, then, of the present project as emulating meteorology's study of dynamic interactive weather patterns, as an effort toward a "mediarology" that would track the pressure systems and storm fronts that crisscross the man-made world of symbols we have created. Though written by authors with differing commitments to "media," not to mention highly diverse scholarly investments, the essays in this volume all share some minimal commitment to the broader context of the operation of media and mediation. Each evaluates the role played by media and its cognates within certain conceptual frameworks and lineages, again of markedly diverse scale, that have been and remain central to research in the humanities and humanistic social sciences. The authors represented here take seriously the "middleness" evinced by the term *media* and seek to position media studies as an intermediary or mediator not simply within extant disciplinary formations but across and between disciplines. Without necessarily mandating a concrete shift in emphasis from media as artifactuality to media as process of mediation, these essays exemplify that work of mediation.

We have divided the essays into clusters, premised on three general approaches to media: in the first part of the book, the authors come at the question of media by way of *aesthetics*, which concerns the realm of the senses, the body, and the arts, and places individual human experience at the center; in the final part, with reference to *society*, emphasizing the place of media in making communication and collective relationships possible; and in the middle section, *viatechnology*, with a focus on the mechanical aspects of media and the way that innovations and inventions transform the condition of both individual and social experience. These categories are to some extent arbitrary, and many of the terms that appear under one rubric

could easily be transferred to another. Our point is not that these approaches are sealed off from one another but just the reverse. We want to foster an integrated approach that overcomes the balkanization of the field of media studies, which makes it difficult for scholars interested in, say, politics and mass media to find common ground with the aesthetes who are concerned with the place of affect and perception. We also want to overcome the notion that any one of these rubrics provides the "determining instance" that governs the other two. This is especially important with regard to technology, which is so often placed in the role of cause, with the other domains cast as effects. When Kittler writes, "Media determine our situation," we know that he means media technology: computers, typewriters, fiber-optic cables, phonographs, printing presses, and so on. We instead start from the premise that media are themselves mediated—constituted, that is, by a three-way set of exchanges among the dimensions of individual subjectivity, collective activity, and technical capability. This premise allows us to resist the seductive fallacy of technical determinism, which has haunted media studies from the outset. "The French Revolution," declared William Hazlitt, "might be described as a remote but inevitable result of the art of printing." Our aim is to slow down the drawing of conclusions from a dazzling observation of this sort. Why, we would ask, is this "result" *both* "inevitable" and "remote"? If the printing press leads inescapably to revolution, why did it do so only in France, when the "art of printing" was also highly developed in the Netherlands and England? What sort of causal chain has been compressed into the word "result"? Is the printing press a necessary or sufficient condition for modern revolutions? Probably the former, certainly not the latter. Other conditions must be in place: an educated, literate public capable of consuming

the products of the art of printing, as well as a taste for the pleasures of reading. Political and institutional arrangements—the licensing of print shops, regulation of the press, constraints on the ownership of printing houses—can vary considerably across political and cultural traditions. One might even reverse Hazlitt's formula, noting that “the repression of press freedom in the 1790s was a transatlantic development in the aftermath of the French Revolution.” Similarly, the utopian speculations about cybercommunities during the rise of the Internet in the 1990s have since been moderated considerably by recognition that cyberspace, like any other media landscape, does not simply dictate the nature of individual experiences or social relationships but is itself subject to legal and political manipulation, economic exploitation, and individual variability of usage.

At the same time, though, we want to acknowledge that technology and science are prime movers in the history of media innovation, even when they encounter resistance from individuals and social formations. New ways of communicating, of fabricating forms and images, and of expressing ideas are largely driven, or made possible, by new gadgets and gizmos. Insofar as media studies is a historical discipline, it is driven by an obsession with invention and innovation: How did the invention of metal casting transform Roman sculpture and Chinese bell temples? How did the invention of mechanically imprinted coins affect ancient economies? How did the movement from stone inscriptions to papyrus, or from pictographic to alphabetic writing, change the conditions of communication across large distances and the administration of colonial regimes? What difference has the invention of television made to the American judicial system and the venerable theatrical traditions of the courtroom? These questions suggest some of the complexity

of thinking across the fields of media studies, regarded here as encompassing the domains of human perception, social, political, and economic arrangements, and technoscientific inventions. Rather than impose a language of cause and effect, we propose a language of necessary (but not sufficient) conditions, a vocabulary of catalytic effects and conflicted situations rather than determining forces. This seems appropriate, if only because one of the most conspicuous features of media studies, considered as a singular field, has been its failure to communicate across the borders that divide the technophiles, the aesthetes, and the sociopolitical theorists. Paul Starr's magisterial history of the mass media in nineteenth-century America betrays nothing but disdain for the “culture industry” models of the Frankfurt school, and it contains not a single reference to the work of Noam Chomsky, Marshall McLuhan, or Robert McChesney. Rosalind Krauss's work on the “post-medium condition” of recent artistic practices has little to say about the transformed state of communicative technologies in the period in question. And Chomsky's “propaganda thesis,” which takes American mass media as the hegemonic instruments of corporate capitalist elites, shows little interest in the aesthetic and symbolic features of these media, reducing them to machines for “manufacturing consent.”

We cannot promise that we have overcome, in this volume, all of these failures to communicate, but we have tried to assemble an array of topics and scholarly interventions that make these failures more visible and perhaps set the stage for further discussion. In this sense, we hope that these essays remain faithful to the thought of some of the founders of media studies, especially Marshall McLuhan (explicitly) and Walter Benjamin (implicitly). For McLuhan, the concept of media embraced

the totality of technical, social, and aesthetic reality. Because he portrayed the media as technical devices that interacted with the human sensorium, the physical world, and the sphere of social life, he has often been accused of being a “technical determinist,” but in truth his more common strategy was to examine the complex dialectics of technical inventions. McLuhan’s famous thesis about media as “extensions” of the senses is coupled with a recognition that they are simultaneously “amputations” of the organs they extend. Writing (as Plato first noted) must be understood both as an “aid to memory” and as a tool that may cause oral memory to atrophy. Similarly, the computer (as Bernard Stiegler argues in chapter 5) is the most powerful exteriorization of memory technology in the history of media, but it may be transforming the nature of “natural” human memory in far-reaching ways.

This is one reason that we take *memory* to be a keyword in media studies. It is one of those terms that reveal vividly the need for a theory of media as a collective singularity, a convergence of psychological, social, and technical domains. Memory, which is usually understood as an interiorized and innate psychological faculty, has, from the standpoint of media studies, been understood as a crossroads of aesthetics, technology, and society since ancient times. Mnemosyne was, for the Greeks, the muse of all the temporal arts—poetry, music, and history—and of the human power that assured the remembrance of famous men and magnificent deeds. Mnemotechnics, the training of memory as a psychological faculty, is also a technology of the eloquent speaking body in performance, hence the medium for producing cultural continuities, tradition, myth, and collective identity. Interior memory technologies, then, were understood as constellations of external media: words and images, tastes and

sounds, cabinets and retrieval systems, marks on objects and bodies, buildings and statues, computers and clocks, coins and credit lines. All were vehicles for memory, and all move (or remain in place) in radically uneven, unpredictable ways depending on the situations into which they are inserted and the exteriorizations that enable their functioning. Media studies, therefore, is as concerned with subjective, mental life as it is with machines, codes, and communities. It deals, not only with extensions of the human sensorium, but with their introjections into the structures of feeling and forms of life that constitute human subjectivity and collectivity.

Within this volume, each essay addresses a “critical term.” These, as previously noted, we have grouped under the rubrics of aesthetics, technology, and society, as shown in the table below.

<i>Aesthetics Technology</i>		<i>Society</i>
Art	Biomedia	Exchange
Body	Communication	Language
Image	Cybernetics	Law
Materiality	Information	Mass Media
Memory	New Media	Networks
Senses	Hardware/Software/Wetware	Systems
Time and Space	Technology	Writing

The alert reader will object that many terms are missing from this list: structure, sign, spectacle, surveillance, screen, site, surface, style, simulation—just to take the S’s. Our aim, however, was not to construct an exhaustive glossary, but to commission in-depth essays on a

limited set of terms that seem crucial to the current state of discussion in media studies. The authors were urged to reflect on the historical trajectory of the terms while at the same time engaging with their contemporary inflections. Some of the terms (Law, Communication, the Body) have ancient pedigrees. Others (Mass Media, Cybernetics, Biomedica) are relatively young. And one (New Media) explicitly emphasizes contemporary innovation, while acknowledging that (from a technical standpoint) media have always been entangled in cycles of innovation and obsolescence, innovation and renovation—from the invention of writing, printing, and artificial perspective to the invention of photography, television, and the Internet. It bears repeating that most of these terms could have been placed under more than one heading. Writing, for instance, could be moved from Society to Technology with little trouble, while Communication could be switched from Technology to Society. Other terms seem obviously to fit one category. Art, for instance, might resist a transfer from Aesthetics to Technology. Nonetheless, artists have, since time immemorial, used, abused, and manipulated technology, though that contact has often been seen as lowering of the status of both art and artist. The terms gathered under Aesthetics, in fact, seem particularly conservative and tied to abiding traditions, while those under Technology involve concepts that seem relatively new (including, with perhaps astonishing redundancy, the term Technology itself). Again, our goal is not to produce a fixed framework for thinking about media, but to erect a house of cards that can be (and is always necessarily being) reshuffled into an indefinite number of combinations. The point is really to suggest three entryways into the labyrinth of media, with the understanding that each will sooner or later lead to the other two.

This raises an even more basic question about our approach to media and media studies. Why “triangulate” at all? And is this particular triangulation—Society, Technology, Aesthetics—the only conceivable way of organizing a set of articles on basic concepts in the field? Part of the answer is that we want to avoid the seductions of binarism, the prevalent rhetorical fallback in polemical and preanalytical discourse: past and present, new and old, art and technology, society and the individual, subject and object, space and time, nature and culture, ancient and modern. We especially want to avoid the presentism that plagues so much of “new media” studies today. Our aim is to take the field back beyond the “digital revolution” of the last twenty years to its deeper origins in antiquity and early modernity, and to think of media history as highly differentiated both spatially and temporally. Thus, Alex Galloway’s article on Networks begins, not with the Internet, but with the net that Clytemnestra throws over Agamemnon. A more elusive reason for triangulating the topic of media has been our intuitive sense that media themselves are always and everywhere understood by way of tripartite models. Consider, to list just the obvious examples: sender-channel-receiver (in communication theory), symbol-index-icon (in semiotics), image-music-text (in Roland Barthes’s aesthetics), opsis-melos-lexis (in Aristotle’s analysis of mimesis), and symbolic-imaginary-real (in Lacan’s analysis of psychic “registers”). Think also of the structure of a syllogism, where the “middle term” is called the medium. But beyond these abstractions, our search for what Roland Barthes termed the “third meaning” is driven by the practical reality of media events, operations, and environments. The triangulation of our topic, then, is a way of emphasizing the “middleness” of media studies, its role as a go-between, a mediator, in relation to the numerous other disciplines where it has

had an impact, from ancient mosaics to digital images, from the code of human law to the code of life itself. Among these triangulations is, of course, the idea of media and the medium itself. Are “the media” one thing or many? Singular or plural? What are the relations between the singular, specific “medium” and the constellation of things known as “the media”? To grasp the horns of this dilemma, we broach the venerable concept of “mediation” as such, with its pedigree in Hegelian philosophy, dialectics, and critical theory. If, to this point, we have focused on the opening out of *media* (as the plural of *medium*) through the historical and semantic operation of its singularization, we must now devote ourselves to exploring how the third term, *mediation*, itself mediates—and multiplies levels of mediation between—the separate processes designated by media in the singular and media as a plurality of mediums.

Though it stretches back to ancient times, where it denoted a means of dispute resolution in matters of commerce, mediation acquires the value on which we are here drawing with the development of German Idealism (Hegel) and dialectical materialism (Marx and Engels). For Hegel, mediation was the abstract operation through which the dialectic pursued its forward march. Proceeding through the sublation (*Aufhebung*) of individual contradictions (pairings of thesis and antithesis), the dialectic of reason or spirit (to cite *The Phenomenology of Mind*) itself comprises the ongoing and processural operation of mediation necessary for Absolute Knowledge to emerge triumphant as the culminating product both of philosophical logic and world history. If Marx and Engels do not actually turn this operation on its head, they do correlate it with actual reality in a manner unimaginable for Hegel: in their work, mediation designates the primary form of relation and reconciliation between

contradictory forces in a society, between the material domain and culture, base and superstructure. This analysis, found in the mature work of Marx and Engels, emerges from Marx’s early understanding of mediation as labor, where labor mediates between a worker’s body and nature and, more generally, between the human realm and natural world. Following the expropriation and reification of labor power, it is capital itself which becomes the agent of mediation: the capitalist determines the exchange value of labor, thus transforming labor power into a commodity. Much of the attention devoted to Marxist theory after Marx and Engels has focused on the mediation between base and superstructure and the degree of agency available to social actors within monopoly capitalism. One lineage, running more or less directly from the later Marx through Lukács to Althusser, emphasizes the role ideology plays in the operation and consolidation of capital. On this account, there is little possibility for agency since consciousness itself is “the imaginary relationship to a lived reality”; if consciousness is perforce “false consciousness,” the logic of this position runs, there simply is no possibility for the social actor to gain an understanding of her own repression. In media studies, this lineage finds an instantiation in the Frankfurt school’s conceptualization of the culture industry, which through an account of the one-dimensional ideological function of the mass media likewise diminishes the possibility for social agency.

Another lineage, originating with Antonio Gramsci’s innovative conceptualization of hegemony (as an alternative, more flexible account of state power) and branching off in various directions—including the Birmingham school of cultural studies (Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall), the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, the work of the Italian school

(from Lazzarato to Hardt and Negri), and recent efforts to unite Marxism and media studies—retains a stronger emphasis on mediation, and thus a more robust conceptualization of social agency. For these diverse theorists, mediation names the highly dynamic process through which individual and collective social actors engage with the forces of capital as lived reality; according to these thinkers, the hold of capital cannot be absolute, or (following Althusser) absolutely antihumanist, for the precise reason that it can be maintained (that is, continuously rearticulated) only through its impact on social actors. To illustrate the value of this dynamic sense of mediation for articulating the range of what media studies is and can be today, let us return to Kittler's proposal that "media determine our situation." Bearing in mind our exploration of the paradoxical double case of media, we can now approach this claim more concretely. By "media," Kittler clearly means a plurality of mediums, an empirical accumulation of things, and by "determine" (*bestimmen*), he seems to mean something more akin to the late Marx's account of determination (the operation of the base on the superstructure, or the infrastructure of capital on the consciousness of the social actor) than to the more dynamic Gramscian conception. For Kittler, that is, media seem to determine our situation (the possibilities for action within a certain technico-historical infrastructure) in a manner not altogether different (notwithstanding a fundamental reversal of values) from the Frankfurt school's account of the culture industry: human experience and agency is, at best, the positive effect of a media system but more likely "mere eyewash," the "optional output" he envisions in his introduction to *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*.

The essays in this volume engage Kittler's proposal. But when we posit as the inaugural

proposition for our media studies that media determines our situation, the shift from media as an empirical collection of artifacts and technologies to media as a perspective for understanding allows us to reassert the crucial and highly dynamic role of mediation—social, aesthetic, technical, and (not least) critical—that appears to be suspended by Kittler. Without jettisoning the crucial finding of Kittler's work (and of much of the archaeological work in contemporary media studies)—that media do have agency and do necessarily constrain experience—we seek to reintegrate the empirico-transcendental agency of media into the larger social domain, the domain of mediation, within which culture and life actually happen. In concert with contemporary Marxist theorists of media like Matthew Fuller, we propose that media studies names something other than an activity performed on a certain kind of object or content. As a mode of understanding, a perspective from which to engage our world, media studies rehabilitates understanding from Kittler's antihermeneutical critique (a critique shared by others, e.g., Gumbrecht) precisely by resituating it. What is to be understood is not media in the plural, but media in the singular; and it is by understanding media in the singular—which is to say, by reconceptualizing understanding from the perspective of media—that we will discover ways to characterize the impact of media in the plural. Whether they can be considered to be modes of understanding in themselves, such characterizations will involve much more than a unidimensional account of the technics of a given medium; indeed, by pursuing a generalization of technics along the lines suggested by Stiegler (as the correlate of human life), such characterizations necessarily involve mediations among the domains we have quite artificially dissociated here: society, aesthetics, technology. That these mediations themselves

require yet another kind of mediation—critical mediation—is, in the end, the very burden of this volume and its neo-McLuhanesque injunction to understand from the perspective of media. Rather than *determining* our situation, we might better say that media *are* our situation.

Media studies are an academic discipline and field of study that deals with the content, history and effects of various media; in particular, the 'mass media'. Media studies may draw on traditions from both the social sciences and the humanities, but mostly from its core disciplines of mass communication, communication sciences and communication studies. Researchers may also develop and employ theories and methods from disciplines including cultural studies, rhetoric, philosophy, literary theory, psychology, political science, political economy, economics, sociology, anthropology, social theory, art history and criticism, film theory, feminist theory, and information theory. **Science** (from Latin *scientia*, meaning "knowledge") is a systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe.^[1] An older and closely related meaning still in use today is that found for example in Aristotle, whereby "science" refers to the body of reliable knowledge itself, of the type that can be logically and rationally explained (*see "History and philosophy" section below*).^[2] Since classical antiquity science as a type of knowledge was closely linked to philosophy. In the early modern era the two words, "science" and "philosophy", were sometimes used interchangeably in the English language. By the 17th century, "natural philosophy" (which is today called "natural science") had begun to be considered separately from "philosophy" in general.^[3] However, "science" continued to be

used in a broad sense denoting reliable knowledge about a topic, in the same way it is still used in modern terms such as library science or political science. In modern use, "science" is a term which more often refers to a way of pursuing knowledge, and not the knowledge itself. It is "often treated as synonymous with 'natural and physical science', and thus restricted to those branches of study that relate to the phenomena of the material universe and their laws, sometimes with implied exclusion of pure mathematics. This is now the dominant sense in ordinary use."^[4] This narrower sense of "science" developed as a part of science became a distinct enterprise of defining "laws of nature", based on early examples such as Kepler's laws, Galileo's laws, and Newton's laws of motion. In this period it became more common to refer to natural philosophy as "natural science". Over the course of the 19th century, the word "science" became increasingly associated with the disciplined study of the natural world including physics, chemistry, geology and biology. This sometimes left the study of human thought and society in a linguistic limbo, which was resolved by classifying these areas of academic study as social science. Similarly, several other major areas of disciplined study and knowledge exist today under the general rubric of "science", such as formal science and applied science.

In addition to the interdisciplinary nature of the academic field, popular understandings of media studies encompass:

- i. Online communication
- ii. electronic media
- iii. journalism
- iv. mass communication
- v. media influence
- vi. creative industries

- vii. political economy
- viii. cultural studies
- ix. media production (Television production, Filmmaking)
- x. media psychology

Foundational Media theories include: Media effects theory; Agenda Setting, Priming, Framing, political economy, discourse analysis, content analysis, Hyperpersonal theory, representation theory, imagined community, public sphere, theories of persuasion, attention, and control, etc., Most production and journalism courses incorporate media studies content, but academic institutions often establish separate departments. Media studies students may see themselves as observers of media, not creators or practitioners. These distinctions vary across national boundaries. The essential definition of media studies involves the study of media effects. Specific programs in media studies that focus on the study of media effects have emerged at Fielding Graduate University, Penn State UCLA, and Touro University Worldwide.

Separate strands exist within media studies, such as television studies. Film studies is often considered a separate discipline, though television and video games studies grew out of it, as made evident by the application of basic critical theories such as psychoanalysis, feminism and Marxism.

Critical media theory looks at how the corporate ownership of media production and distribution affects society, and provides a common ground to social conservatives (concerned by the effects of media on the traditional family) and liberals and socialists (concerned by the corporatization of social discourse). The study of the effects and techniques of advertising forms a cornerstone of media studies. Contemporary media studies includes the analysis of new media with emphasis on the internet, video games, mobile

devices, interactive television, and other forms of mass media which developed from the 1990s. Because these new technologies allow instant communication across the world (chat rooms and instant messaging, online video games, video conferencing), interpersonal communication is an important element in new media studies. It has been argued that media studies has not fully acknowledged the changes which the internet and digital interactive media have brought about, seeing these as an 'add-on'. David Gauntlett has argued for a 'Media Studies 2.0' which fully recognises the ways in which media has changed, and that traditional boundaries between 'audiences' and 'producers' has collapsed.

Political communication and political economy

From the beginning, media studies are closely related to politics and wars such as campaign research and war propaganda. Political communication mainly studies the connections among politicians, voters and media. It focused on the media effects. There are four main media influence theories: hypodermic needle model (1930s behaviorism), two-step flow model (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955), limited effects (Klapper, 1960), and the spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). Also, many scholars studied the technique of political communication such as rhetoric, symbolism etc. Much of this research has been developed in journals of mass communication and public opinion scholarship. In the last quarter century, political economy has played a major part in media studies literature. The theory gained notoriety in media studies particularly with the publication of Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent*, published in 1988. In the book, the authors discuss a theory of how the United States' media industry operates, which they term

a “propaganda model.” The model describes a “decentralized and non-conspiratorial market system of control and processing, although at times the government or one or more private actors may take initiatives and mobilize co-ordinated elite handling of an issue.”

News gathering and distribution

This links to another key theme: not so much the normative theories of how news should come about, but rather the empirical practice of how it does really come about. An early emphasis was on ‘gatekeeping’: what are the criteria an editor uses to select items from the stream of information at hand, for instance from material provided by the news agencies? Later, emphasis shifted to the entire process of news gathering and distribution. Classical studies were Making news – A study in the construction of reality by Gaye Tuchman (1978), Deciding what’s news (at CBS & NBC, Time and Newsweek) by Herbert J. Gans (1979) in the U.S., and Putting ‘reality’ together – BBC news by Philip Schlesinger (1987). Another influential early study was The media are American by British scholar Jeremy Tunstall (1977). It discussed the reasons behind the Anglophone dominance of the industry. Sean McBride, a former Irish minister and co-founder of Amnesty International, led a major study for Unesco: Many voices, One world – Towards a new more just and more efficient world information and communication order (1983). Various legal aspects of this debate were summarized in The politics of world communication by Cees Hamelink (1994), social and psychological ones in Understanding global news by Jaap van Ginneken (1998).

Media studies throughout the world

Australia

Media is studied as a broad subject in most states in Australia, with the state of Victoria being a world leader in curriculum development. Media studies in Australia was first developed as an area of study in Victorian universities in the early 1960s, and in secondary schools in the mid 1960s. Today, all Australian universities teach media studies. According to the Government of Australia's 'Excellence in Research for Australia' report, the leading universities in the country for media studies (which were ranked well above World standards by the report's scoring methodology) are Monash University, QUT, RMIT, University of Melbourne, University of Queensland and UTS.

In secondary schools, an early "film studies" course first began being taught as part of the Victorian junior secondary curriculum during the mid 1960s. And, by the early 1970s, an expanded "media studies" course was being taught. The course became part of the senior secondary curriculum (later known as the Victorian Certificate of Education or "VCE") in the 1980s. It has since become, and continues to be, a strong component of the VCE. Notable figures in the development of the Victorian secondary school curriculum were the media artist and director Peter Greenaway, Trevor Barr (who authored one of the first media text books Reflections of Reality) and later John Murray (who authored The Box in the Corner, In Focus, and 10 Lessons in Film Appreciation). Today, Australian states and territories that teach media studies at a secondary level are Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. Media studies does not appear to be taught in the state of New South Wales at a secondary level. In Victoria, the VCE media studies course is structured as: Unit 1 - Representation, Technologies of Representation,

and New Media; Unit 2 - Media Production, Australian Media Organisations; Unit 3 - Narrative Texts, Production Planning; and Unit 4 - Media Process, Social Values, and Media Influence. Media studies also form a major part of the primary and junior secondary curriculum, and includes areas such as photography, print media and television. Victoria also hosts the peak media teaching body known as ATOM which publishes Metro, and Screen Education magazines.

Germany

In Germany two main streams of Media Theory or Media Studies can be identified. The first large flow of media theory based in humanities and cultural sciences as the Theater scholarship ("Theaterwissenschaft") and German language and literature studies widens since the 1960s. In this orientation, the Media studies in Germany today mainly developed and established. As one of the first publications to this new direction is by Helmut Kreuzer, published the study Literature Studies - Media Studies (Literaturwissenschaft – Medienwissenschaft), summed up the units of the "Düsseldorfer Germanistentag" 1976. The second stream is comparable to Communication Studies. Pioneered by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in the 1940s this stream studies mass media, its institutions and its effects on society and individuals. The term Wissenschaft however, cannot be translated as studies straightforwardly, as both science and humanities equally fall under it. Accordingly, German media theory combines philosophy, psychoanalysis, history, and science studies with the media specific research. Medienwissenschaften is currently one of the most popular university courses in Germany, with many applicants mistakenly assuming that studying it will automatically lead them to a career in TV or other media. This has

led to widespread disillusionment, with students blaming the universities for offering highly theoretical course content. The universities maintain that practical journalistic training is not the aim of the academic studies they offer.

India

The media industry is growing in India at the rate of 20 percent per annum. Together, entertainment and media form the country's sixth biggest industry, with 3.5 million people working in it. Within the next 4–5 years, the industry is expected to gross eighty thousand crores (800 billion rupees) annually.

With a view to making the best use of communication facilities for information, publicity and development, the Government of India in 1962-63 sought the advice of the Ford Foundation/UNESCO team of internationally known mass communication specialists who recommended the setting up of a national institute for training, teaching and research in mass communication.

Netherlands

In the Netherlands, media studies are split into several academic courses such as (applied) communication sciences, communication- and information sciences, communication and media, media and culture or theater, film and television sciences. Whereas communication sciences focuses on the way people communicate, be it mediated or unmediated, media studies tends to narrow the communication down to just mediated communication. However, it would be a mistake to consider media studies a specialism of communication sciences, since media make up just a small portion of the overall course. Indeed, both studies tend to borrow elements from one another. Communication sciences (or a

derivative thereof) can be studied at Erasmus University Rotterdam, Radboud University, Tilburg University, University of Amsterdam, University of Groningen, University of Twente, Roosevelt Academy, University of Utrecht, VU University Amsterdam and Wageningen University and Research Centre. Media studies (or something similar) can be studied at the University of Amsterdam, VU University Amsterdam, Erasmus University Rotterdam and the University of Utrecht.

New Zealand

Media Studies in New Zealand is very healthy, especially due to the NZ film industry and is taught at both secondary and tertiary education institutes. One of the main features of the industry, Weta Digital can be credited with the popularity of Media Studies in NZ. Media Studies in NZ can be regarded as a singular success, with the subject well-established in the tertiary sector (such as Screen and Media Studies at the University of Waikato; Media Studies, Victoria University of Wellington; Film, Television and Media Studies, University of Auckland; Media Studies, Massey University; Communication Studies, University of Otago).

UK

In the UK, media studies developed in the 1960s from the academic study of English, and from literary criticism more broadly. The key date, according to Andrew Crisell, is 1959: When Joseph Trenaman left the BBC's Further Education Unit to become the first holder of the Granada Research Fellowship in Television at Leeds University. Soon after in 1966, the Centre for Mass Communication Research was founded at Leicester University, and degree programmes in media studies began to sprout

at polytechnics and other universities during the 1970s and 1980s. Media Studies is now taught all over the UK. It is taught at Key Stages 1–3, Entry Level, GCSE and at A level and the Scottish Qualifications Authority offers formal qualifications at a number of different levels. It is offered through a large area of exam boards including AQA and WJEC.

USA

Mass communication, communication studies or simply communication may be more popular names than “media studies” for academic departments in the United States. However, the focus of such programs sometimes excludes certain media—film, book publishing, video games, etc. The title “media studies” may be used alone, to designate film studies and rhetorical or critical theory, or it may appear in combinations like “media studies and communication” to join two fields or emphasize a different focus.

Examples: The New School in New York City (the first Media Studies Program in the country, created in 1975), The Paley Center for Media in New York City, Comparative Media Studies at MIT, Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Chicago, Media and Cultural Studies at the University of California, Riverside, Rhetoric and Media Studies at Willamette University, Media Studies in Communication at Kennesaw State University, the Instructional Technology and Media Program at Columbia University, and The Department of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University. Formerly an interdisciplinary major at the University of Virginia the Department of Media Studies was officially established in 2001 and has quickly grown to wide recognition. This is partly thanks

to the acquisition of Professor Siva Vaidhyanathan, a well known cultural historian and media scholar Siva Vaidhyanathan, as well as the Inaugural Verklin Media Policy and Ethics Conference, endowed by the CEO of Canoe Ventures and UVA alumnus David Verklin [1]. In 2010 a group of undergraduate students in the Media Studies Department established the Movable Type Academic Journal the first ever undergraduate academic journal of its kind. The department is expanding rapidly and doubled in size in 2011. Brooklyn College, part of the City University of New York, has been offering graduate studies in television and media since 1961. Currently, the Department of Television and Radio administers an MS in Media Studies, and hosts the Center for the Study of World Television.

Conclusion

The University of Southern California has three distinct centers for media studies: the Center for Visual Anthropology (founded in 1984), the Institute for Media Literacy at the School of Cinematic Arts (founded in 1998) and the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism (founded in 1971).

University of California, Berkeley has three institutional structures within which media studies can take place: the department of Film and Media (formerly Film Studies Program), including famous theorists as Mary Ann Doane and Linda Williams, the Center for New Media, and a long established interdisciplinary program formerly titled Mass Communications, which recently changed its name to Media Studies, dropping any connotations which accompany the term "Mass" in the former title. Until recently, Radford University in Virginia used the title "media studies" for a department that taught practitioner-oriented major concentrations in journalism, advertising, broadcast production

and Web design. In 2008 those programs were combined with a previous department of communication (speech and public relations) to create a School of Communication. (A "media studies major" at Radford still means someone concentrating on journalism, broadcasting, advertising or Web production.). The University of Denver has a renowned program for digital media studies. It is an interdisciplinary program combining Communications, Computer Science, and the arts. In 2004 Bernard Luskin of Fielding Graduate University established an EdD program in Media Studies and a PhD program in Media Psychology with a concentration in Media Studies. Courses in Media Studies were started at Touro University Worldwide in 2009.

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