

Concluding Remarks

In the study of media communication there can be few conclusions. Essentially our voyage takes us to the frontiers of meaning and, wherever meaning is confronted, there is doubt and debate, discourses and counter-discourses. The 'truth' about cyberspace, the 'power' of media and the capacity of audiences to resist or reject that power; the 'inevitability' of technological change, the 'victory' of capitalism over communism, of the private over the public, of individualism over community are ongoing issues, not certainties or inexorable trends.

While sharpening and practising our critical faculties as observers of media we need to remember to smile as well as to frown, to recognise in much media performance, and in countless media artefacts, artistry and delight, the capacity of media to stimulate, to enlighten, to reveal, to make us wonder, to make us laugh and to create in us both a relish for our own individuality and a sense of community.

We can be sure that those in control of, or with influence over, media communication systems will take pains (and sometimes cause pain) in order to stay in control. They will use communication for that purpose, which makes it all the more important that we recognise communication as a force for change; that we understand the strategies which are employed to defend privilege, assert inequality, deny freedoms, censor truth.

If, as James Carey has said, communication and culture are interchangeable,¹ then we might argue that communication and democracy are equally so: the one creates, supports, furthers and protects the other. We blur the connection at our peril.