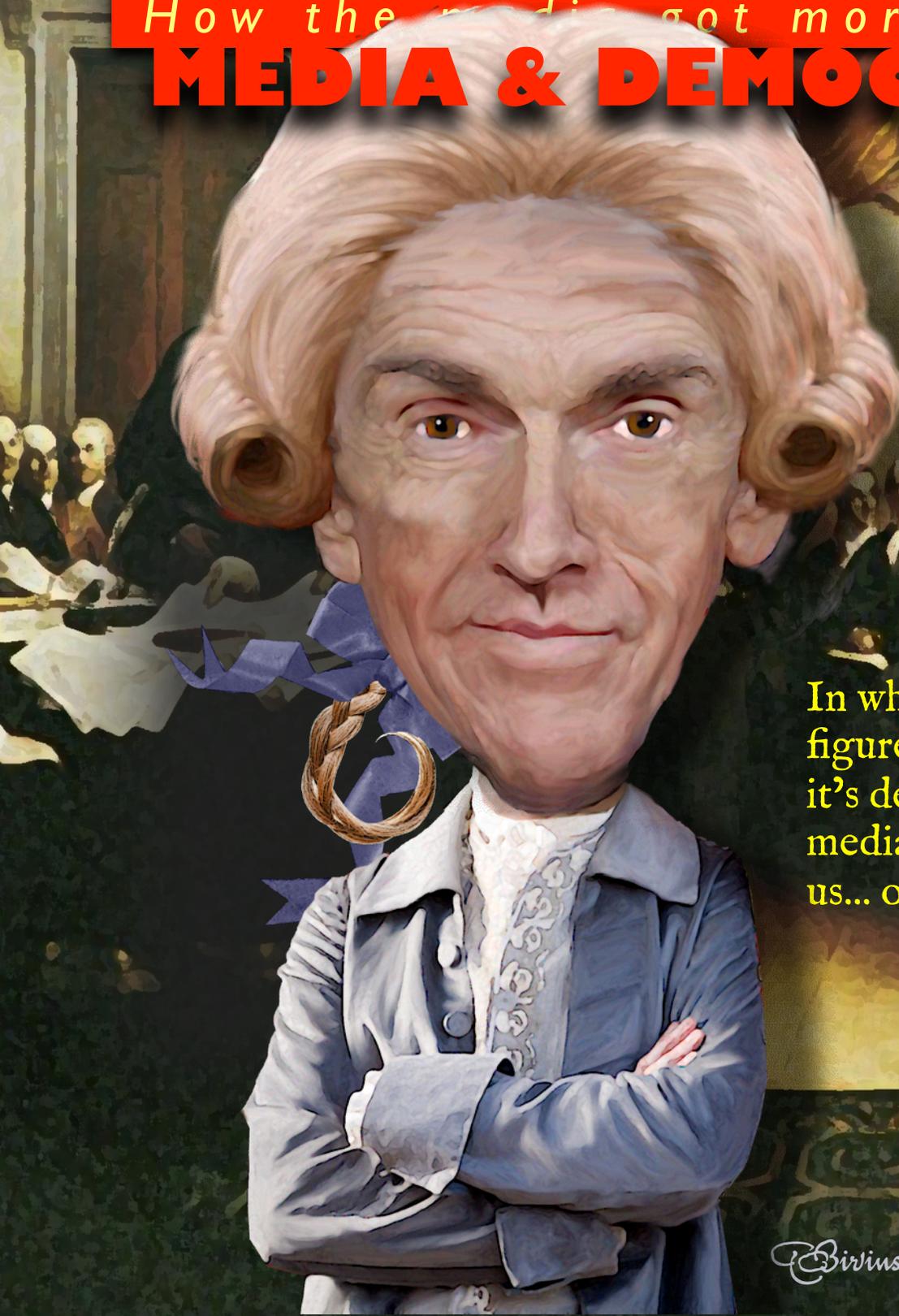


THE STORY OF **ETHICS**

How the media got moral, or not

MEDIA & DEMOCRACY



In which we try to figure out whether it's democracy or the media that has failed us... or both.

THE UNITED STATES WAS FOUNDED AS AN EXPERIMENT IN POPULAR RULE

- Public opinion would be expressed periodically through elections and as a constant pressure on officials.
- Public opinion, in turn, would be cultivated by a **FREE AND VIGOROUS PRESS**

A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT PEOPLE DECLAIMED THE
NEED FOR A FREE PRESS.

"THE PRESS IS THE BEST
INSTRUMENT FOR
ENLIGHTENING THE MIND OF
MAN."

Thomas Jefferson

Everybody knows who he was. If
you don't, look him up you dope.



"THE SOVEREIGNTY OF
THE PEOPLE AND THE
FREEDOM OF THE PRESS
ARE TWO ENTIRELY
CORRELATIVE THINGS."



Alexis de Toqueville

A French historian who strongly
supported democracy both in France
and America. His most famous work
is **Democracy in America** in which he
suggests that the best form of
democracy is one that balances
individual interests with community
well being.

"POPULAR
GOVERNMENT
WITHOUT
POPULAR
INFORMATION
AND ACCESS TO
IT WOULD BE
BUT TRAGEDY
OR A FARCE."

James Madison

The fourth president of the United States and a super good
political theorist. Madison is best known as the "Father of the
Constitution," especially the Bill of Rights (including the First
Amendment).



THAT WAS THEN.

Is the 18th century equation of a free press equals informed citizens equals a viable democracy too high a standard? Maybe it was even then.

We like to think everything looked like this famous painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

BUT IT WASN'T ALL SWEETNESS AND LIGHT

For example, after the government passed a tax on farmers selling whiskey made from their corn. Violence broke out when large, armed groups of farmers tried to prevent the tax from being collected. When President George Washington raised an army to put down the "Whiskey Rebellion," he secured the right of the government to tax its people.



JUST SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE AND WE CAN BREAK FOR LUNCH.

(Historical Note: Not all these people were present at the signing. They wandered in over the summer one at a time to sign in.)



Unfortunate tax collector

Very angry farmers

BY AUTHORITY.
 By the President of the United States of America.
A PROCLAMATION.
 WHEREAS combinations to defeat the execution of the laws laying duties upon spirits distilled within the United States and upon stills, have from the time of the commencement of those laws existed in some of the western parts of Pennsylvania: AND WHEREAS the said combinations, proceeding in a manner subversive equally of the just authority of government and of the rights of individuals have heretofore effected their dangerous and criminal purposes; by the influence of certain irregular meetings while proceedings have tended to encourage and uphold the spirit of opposition, by misrepresentations of the laws calculated to render them odious, by endeavors to deter those who might be so disposed from accepting offices under them, through fear of public reprimand and of injury to person and property, and to compel those who had accepted such offices by actual violence to forego or forbear the execution of them;—by circulating seditious notices against all those who should otherwise directly or indirectly aid in the execution of the said laws, or who, yielding to the dictates of confidence and to a sense of obligation should themselves comply therewith, by actually injuring and destroying the property of persons who were understood to have complied;—by publishing cruel and humiliating publications upon private citizens for no other cause than that of appearing to be the friends of the laws;—by intercepting the public officers on the highways, abusing, insulting, and otherwise ill treating them;—by going to their houses in the night, gaining admittance by force, taking away their papers, and committing other outrages; employing for these unwarrantable purposes the agency of armed banditti disguised in such manner as for the most part to escape discovery:—AND WHEREAS the endeavors of the Legislature to obviate objections to the said laws, by lowering the duties and by other alterations, conclusive to the convenience of those whom they immediately affected (though they have given satisfaction in other quarters) and the endeavors of the executive officers to conciliate compliance with the laws, by explanations, by forbearance, and even by particular accommodations, founded on the consideration of local considerations have been disappointed of their effect by the insubordination of persons whose industry to excite defiance has increased with every appearance of a disposition among the people to resist in their opposition, and to acquiesce in the laws inasmuch that many persons in the said western parts of Pennsylvania have at length been hardy enough to perpetrate acts which I am advised amount to treason, being overt acts of laying war against the U. States; the said persons having on the sixteenth and seventeenth of July last proceeded to arms (on the second day amounting to several hundreds) to the house of John Neville inspector of the revenue for the fourth survey of the district of Pennsylvania, having repeatedly attacked the said house with the persons therein, wounding some of them,—having killed David Lenox, marshal of the district of Pennsylvania, who previous threats had been fired upon, while in the execution of his duty, by a party of armed men detaining him for some time prisoner, till for the preservation of his life and the obtaining of his liberty he found it necessary to enter into stipulations to forbear the execution of certain fiscal duties touching private distilling out of a Court of the United States—and having finally obliged the said inspector of the revenue, and the said Marshal from considerations of personal safety to fly from that part of the country, in order by a circuitous route to proceed to the seat of government;—moving as the motives of these outrageous proceedings an intention to prevent by force of arms the execution of the said laws, to oblige the said inspector of the revenue to renounce his said office to withdraw by open violence the lawful authority of government of the United States, and to compel thereby an alteration in the measures of the Legislature and a repeal of the laws aforesaid.

IT'S MY CORN, BY GOLLY, AND YOU CAN'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO WITH IT.



Washington's proclamation allowing states to raise militias to put down the rebellion was circulated through newspaper publication.

At the same time, the opposition was using local newspapers, running anonymous articles signed by "Tom the Tinker" that threatened those who complied with the whiskey tax. Those who failed to heed the warnings might have their barns burned or their stills destroyed.

THIS IS NOW.

Beginning in the early part of the 20th century, and continuing today, people began to question the place of the media in a MODERN DEMOCRACY.

IN LIBERTY AND THE NEWS (1920), JOURNALIST AND MEDIA CRITIC WALTER LIPPMANN SAID THAT THE CRISIS OF MODERN DEMOCRACY WAS A CRISIS IN JOURNALISM:

Prior to the 1920s, the press had been intensely partisan. Lippmann argued for a new form of journalism that would rid the press of bias.

- This was also a time, following World War I, when propaganda began to be more fully understood, and increasingly used by a developing new occupation called "public relations." Lippmann worried about its impact on journalism.
- Journalism, according to Lippmann, was being practiced by "untrained accidental witnesses" whose personal opinions superseded reality in favor of preconceived stereotypes—thus, creating and perpetuating the "pictures in our heads."



"WHEN THESE PICTURES COME FROM DISTANT PLACES, BROUGHT TO US BY A PRESS WITHOUT MUCH SELF-DISCIPLINE OR SOPHISTICATION OR INTELLECTUAL WEIGHT, OUR ACTIONS OUR VOTES, OUR CHOICES ARE AT THE MERCY OF THE FLAWED PICTURE OF THE WORLD THAT VARIOUS MEDIA PROVIDE."

In other words, he believed that we are all captives to our own perceptions and to the images that are circulated by the press.

THIS WAS A LOT LIKE PLATO'S "PARABLE OF THE CAVE."

LIPPMANN WAS A BIG FAN OF PLATO.

WHO WOULDN'T BE?

SO, WHAT THE HECK IS THE PARABLE OF THE CAVE ANYWAY?

Thanks for asking...



Plato would have been a big fan of Lippmann's, except he lived several thousand years before him and only spoke Greek.

In the "the parable of the cave," Plato likens the existence of most human beings to that of slaves living in a darkened cave. These slaves are chained facing a large wall. Behind them, and unknown to them, a large fire is burning. Between that fire and the chained slaves are people, perpetually moving about, their shadows thrown upon the wall that the slaves must face. To the slaves, forever bound in place, these shadows and the sounds they hear coming from the moving figures are all there is of reality.

It's this reality that the slaves talk and think about, since it is all they know. In order to break the bonds of this "reality," a person would have to free himself from his chains, turn around, and face the fire and the people moving to and fro in front of it. However, such an experience would probably be so frightening that it would result in the slave wishing to return to his original reality.



And if a slave did escape and got to the surface outside the cave, the experience of the blinding sunlight and vast panorama of this new reality would be nearly overwhelming. Even supposing that the slave became used to the reality of the world, he would never be able to explain it to his fellow slaves if he returned to the darkness of the cave, because their frame of reference wouldn't include these possibilities.

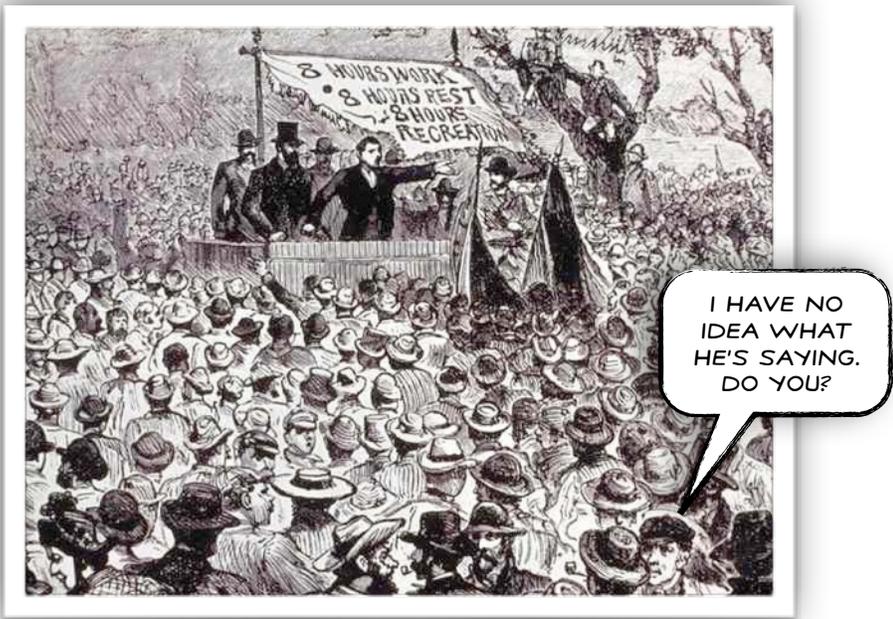
Plato believed most people were enslaved in their own bodies, not able to comprehend the reality beyond their humanity. A more modern interpretation, however, might indicate that we are still prisoners of our own illusions—illusions proffered in large part by the media.



THIS IS WHAT WALTER LIPPMANN BELIEVED.

LIPPMANN SAID:

- "We must go back of our opinions to the neutral facts for unity and refreshment of spirit."
- "Public opinion deals with indirect, unseen, and puzzling
- He proposed that the foundations of American democracy had been eroded by modernity.
- There was simply too much information bombarding the average American to be absorbed usefully.
- He suggested that the rule of the people had become obsolete.
- There were simply too many people for a participatory democracy.



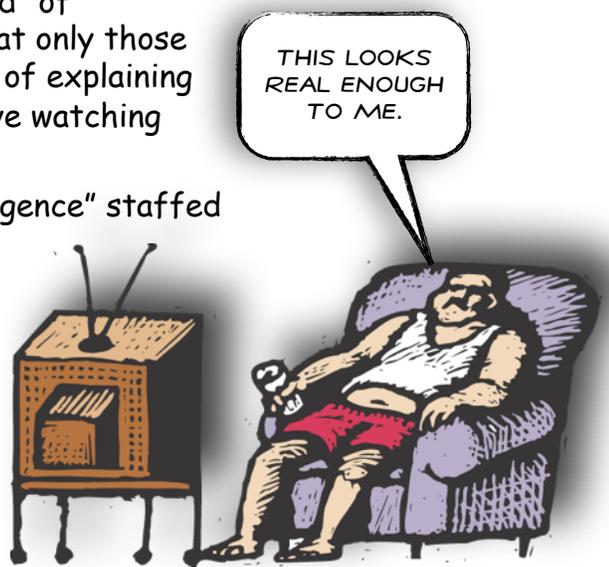
Lippmann believed that the crisis in journalism was reflective of the crisis of democracy as a whole. The modern world was just too complex for personal understanding, thus only knowable second hand—and second-hand information was a muddle of pre-conceived stereotypes. How could democracy function if citizens couldn't understand its intricacies and the media were unable or unwilling to explain them?

HIS SOLUTION?

A TOTALLY OBJECTIVE PRESS!

He believed the press should adopt the "scientific method" of gathering and presenting news. Like Plato, he believed that only those capable of reason (journalists?) should take over the job of explaining the world—certainly not those "slaves" chained in the cave watching TV and playing video games.

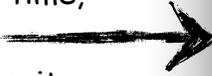
He suggested founding a "central clearing house of intelligence" staffed by experts whose analysis would inform both the government's decision makers and the press, and, via a trickle-down process, the public itself.



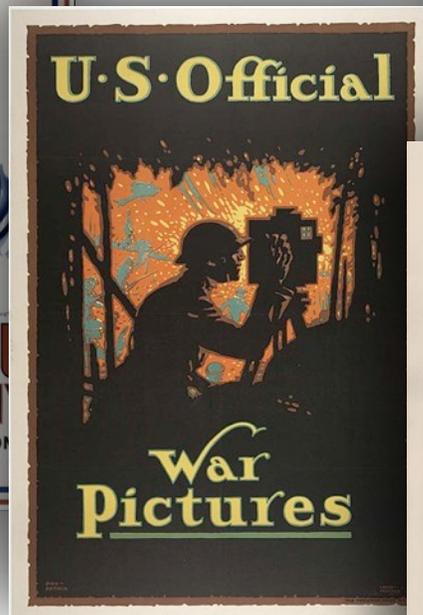
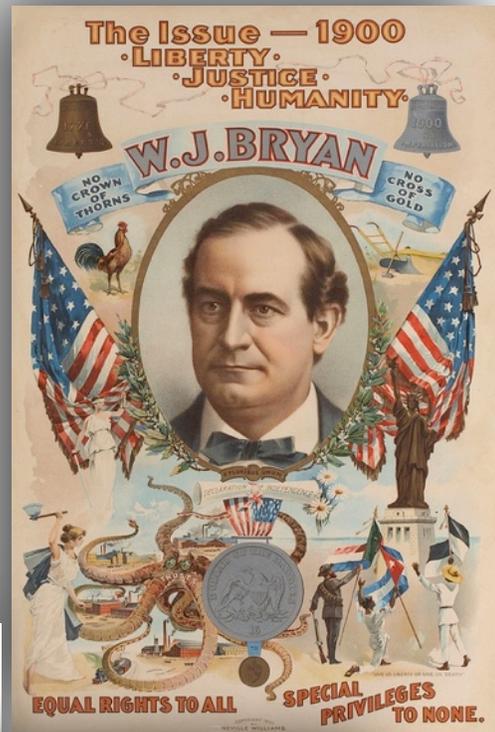
PLATO WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD.

WHY WAS LIPPMANN SO WORRIED ABOUT WHAT WE SEE IN OUR HEADS?

- Well, he and others were acutely aware of the power of propaganda.
- It had been used for quite a long time, especially in political campaigns.
- Then, during the First World War, it took on a whole new meaning.



THE GOVERNMENT TOOK OVER.



- Many of the first PR professionals got their start with the Committee on Public Information, which organized publicity on behalf of U.S. objectives during World War I.
- The massive war campaign was immensely successful, and Lippmann worried that the techniques used during the war would continue to be used after the war.

HE WAS RIGHT...

"The World War left business astounded at what the technique of propaganda had accomplished in the conflict This 'new propaganda,' this new technique that had made men willing to give up their lives and their money — this was something big business might find very useful!"

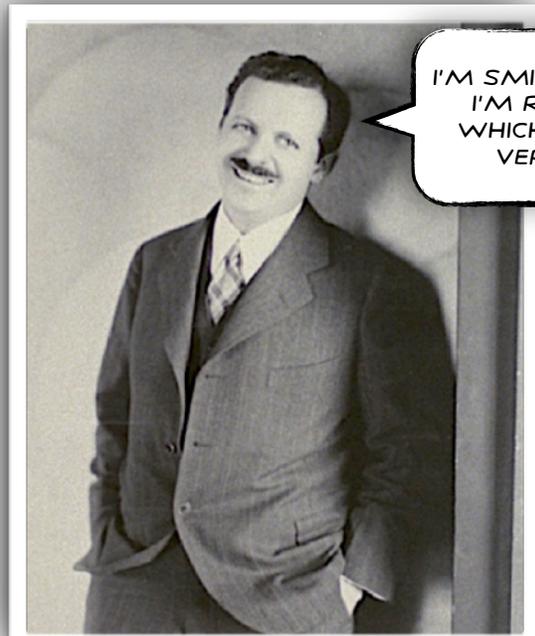
EDWARD BERNAYS
The "Father" of Public Relations



PUBLIC RELATIONS SEEMED TO VIEW DEMOCRACY IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT...

"The conscious and intelligent **manipulation** of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate the unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power."

Edward Bernays



I'M SMILING BECAUSE I'M RIGHT... FOR WHICH I GET PAID VERY WELL.

"Advertisers had always pressed consumers to pick one product over another, and press agents had shilled stories for clients, but now Bernays and a band of colleagues were skillfully manipulating symbols and trends in ways that affected what average Americans ate for breakfast, what sorts of homes they bought, and what colors they chose."

Larry Tye, Edward Bernays' biographer



Some say Bernays was singlehandedly responsible for creating the female market for cigarettes.



WOMEN SMOKING?
RIDICULOUS!



SO. WAS LIPPMANN RIGHT?

- Has the democracy of the founders floundered?
- Can we really, as citizens, participate in a democracy we don't even understand?
- Has the press, and the media in general, failed the public by providing their version of reality instead of the "real" reality?



OR, IS IT REALLY OUR OWN FAULT, THUS STILL TRUE WHAT MARK TWAIN SAID 100 YEARS AGO...



The trouble is that the stupid people-- who constitute the grand overwhelming majority of this and all other nations--do believe and are moulded and convinced by what they get out of a newspaper, and there is where the harm lies.