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The Intellectual and Political Communication: The case of Michael Ignatieff

by

Everett Andrew Wilson

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Abstract

The case of Michael Ignatieff warrants further examination in the context of communications studies, not so much on the scholarly merit of his contributions, but for insight on the discourses that precede and follow an intellectual's encounter with power and the political spectacle. Drawing on an analysis of his published work, speeches and appearances in print-media, this study follows his transition into politics and the compromises that he made as a candidate. Of particular interest are his campaign speeches and press coverage for both the *Federal Election* and *Liberal Leadership Convention* in 2006. In adapting to the political spectacle, Ignatieff surrendered the sceptical realism that marked his critical work before he joined the Liberal Party of Canada. The study deploys an interpretive framework based on the methodology of Max Weber. Four ideal types of discursive, intellectual orientations to politics are offered for comparison with the empirical case.

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Dedication

To Grandma—Freda Wilson

Table of Contents

Approval Page	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures and Illustrations	vii
 INTRODUCTION	 1
 CHAPTER 1: IDEAL TYPES OF INTELLECTUALS	 14
Concept Formation and Weber’s Method of Interpretive Analysis	19
Four Ideal-types of Intellectual Orientations	23
Innerworldly detachment	27
Other-worldly detachment	43
Innerworldly attachment	53
Otherworldly attachment	59
Columns and Rows	67
 CHAPTER 2: INNERWORLDLY DETACHMENT: IGNATIEFF THE	
INTELLECTUAL	70
(Self)Representations of innerworldly detachment	73
Tragic Choice and the Negotiation of a Middleground	80
On strengthening the other side: From human rights to lesser evils.	85
 CHAPTER 3: OTHERWORLDLY ATTACHMENT: IGNATIEFF THE	
POLITICIAN	102
Rejecting piecemeal politics and <i>intellectualising</i> public policy.	104
Becoming an organic, intellectual spokesperson in politics.	118
Taming the ‘free-floating’ posture.	127
Hinting at revolutionary and messianic politics.	137
Representations of the intellectual in press coverage	144
The Finale at the Convention	156
 CONCLUSION: EVALUATIONS AND CRITICAL REFLECTIONS	 159
 NOTES	 167
 REFERENCES	 180

List of Figures and Illustrations

Figure 1.1. Ahmad Sadri's "Cross-Tabulation of the Primacy of Calling or Mission of Intellectuals and Their Role as Carriers or Organisers of Ideas."	25
Figure 1.2. Modification of Sadri's Conceptual Grid to Show the Intersection of Intellectual and Political Commitment.....	26
Figure 1.3 Organisation of Intellectual Orientations by Quadrant: Review	68

INTRODUCTION

Something happened when Michael Ignatieff left his position at Harvard in 2005, and returned home to face the floodlights of the political arena in Canada. By the time he won his first seat in the Federal Election in January 2006, and then announced his bid for the leadership of the Liberal Party in April, the writer added the cloak of a politician to his existing wardrobe of public identities. The case of Michael Ignatieff warrants further examination in the context of communications studies, not so much on the scholarly merit of his contributions, but for insight on the discourses that precede and follow an intellectual's encounter with power and the political spectacle.

In Canada, Britain and the United States, most readers of his work know Michael Ignatieff as a writer and commentator. He was the historian who wrote a dissertation on the penitentiaries of the industrial revolution.¹ He was the scholar who reflected on the Scottish Enlightenment in *Wealth and Virtue*,² while he wrestled with the ideas of St. Augustine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith in his collection of essays on *The Needs of Strangers*.³ He was a biographer who not only captured the memories of Isaiah Berlin in countless interviews,⁴ but also uncovered his own ancestral legacy in *Russian Album*.⁵ He was an award-winning novelist with the publication of *Scar Tissue*.⁶ He was a journalist who reported on ethnic conflict and the atrocities of war throughout the 1990s, and published several books and articles on the challenges of securing peace and order in failed states. He was a professor of human rights and director of the Carr Institute at Harvard where he routinely gave lectures, made appearances in the media, and commented on controversial topics from pre-emptive strikes to the use of torture on suspected terrorists.⁷

As someone who confronted readers with challenging questions on contemporary problems, Ignatieff fits well within the general profile of a public intellectual. Russell Jacoby associates the term with scholars, essayists, critics and artists who address both an educated and a general audience. They commit “not simply to a professional or private domain but to a public world—and a public language, the vernacular.”⁸ As Edward Said has maintained, intellectuals not only make *representations* as conveyors of meaning, but may also encounter mediated representations of themselves and their contributions. When they are recognisable figures in their society, intellectuals form *public identities* not only through circulation of their own written and oral messages, but also through the images, responses and interpretations of their work.⁹ What the performer reveals to audiences, and what observers construct in turn, both shape the “public presentation” of an intellectual.

Whether they enjoy public stature or mainly address specialists in their field, the concept of *intellectuals*—as such—merits a broader, working definition. Edward Shils defines intellectuals as agents who not only display an uncommon awareness of general symbols, abstract principles and latent values in their culture, but also desire to “elicit, guide and form the expressive disposition of their society.”¹⁰ Intellectuals not only search for higher planes of understanding, beyond immediate perceptions of everyday existence, but also externalise the quest for meaning as creators of culture and producers of knowledge.¹¹

The case of Michael Ignatieff, and his recent experiment in public life, prompts reflection on a central predicament that James Joll formulated in his comparative analysis of Leon Blum, Walter Rathenau and F.T Marinetti as examples of “intellectuals in

politics.” The author wondered “how far a man of intelligence or imagination, sensibility or originality, independence or scrupulousness can in fact stand up to the strain of the ruthless machine-politics of the twentieth century, and whether the intellectual in politics is not always going to be doomed to failure because of the nature of his own virtues.”¹²

The above problem also raises a question for political communication: how intellectuals in politics adjust their rhetorical styles, their discursive postures and orientations to power and knowledge when they enter public office. Ignatieff’s electoral campaign in 2006, and his candidacy for the Liberal leadership, arguably mark the formative stages of such a transition, and deserve attention for this reason.

When Ignatieff worked exclusively as a writer, journalist and scholar, he occasionally idealised the difference between the person of ideas and the person of action, and between the intellectual and the politician. Two years before he became an MP, Ignatieff reminded an audience at a public lecture in Toronto: “I don’t have a clever way out. My business, since I’m not running for office, is to present problems, not solutions.”¹³ Indeed, his writing usually avoided easy answers. He presented struggles and their consequences— from ethnic conflict and nationalist longings, to the competing agendas of peacekeeping missions and the fate of universal rights in a pluralistic age. He presented situations and their tragedies—from the dark face of modern warfare and the outcomes of military intervention, to the burden of American imperialism and the ethical quandaries of counter-terrorism. Delivering results was the uncertain task of office holders, while the mirror holders—intellectuals such as Ignatieff—sketched their hopes and fears from the sidelines. When he claimed to “present problems, not solutions,” Ignatieff asserted the idea of independence —the freedom of critical detachment that

supposedly insulated his vocation from political practice. As Ignatieff understood his role, independence creates room to take risks, defend positions, speak out, and appear controversial, but without the pressure to perform miracles—without the need for a "clever way out" to satisfy a constituency.

When Ignatieff won a seat in the riding of Toronto-Etobicoke in the 2006 Federal Election, and then announced his candidacy for the Leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada, he entered a new phase of public engagement that complicated the above distinction between mirror holders and office holders. He no longer addressed an audience exclusively as a critic on the sidelines, but assumed the position of an elected representative with ambitions to lead his adopted party to power.

As someone who spent most of his career in Britain and the United States, Ignatieff arrived without the same scars that marked his contemporaries in Canadian politics—if only because his journey on Parliament Hill had just started. Supporters lauded his inexperience as an asset, while Ignatieff earned the label, "rookie MP," throughout coverage of his campaign. He was the rookie who would supposedly revive an embattled party with new energy. He was the rookie whose absence from the domestic scene represented both an asset and a curse. The newcomer claimed to avoid the stains of old feuds in public life. Even so, his absence fuelled charges from opponents who questioned his commitment to Canada. As some critics in the press complained, Ignatieff was away when the country wrestled with constitutional change, and struggled through the failed Charlottetown and Meech Lake Accords in the 1990s. Ignatieff was away when federalists and separatists battled for the future Quebec and Canada in the Referendum of 1995. Although he occasionally gave lectures at Canadian universities, addressed

Canadian problems in some of his writing, and produced work for the CBC and TV Ontario, he faced criticisms for spending too many years abroad—for skipping decades of shared memories.¹⁴

The candidate eventually adapted to or learned to negotiate the routines and constraints of campaign politics. Some of the literature in political communication has argued that success in “vote getting,” interest representation, and self-preservation in politics is often conditional on the ability of actors to effectively navigate what Edelman calls the *political spectacle*.¹⁵ Survival often requires that elites achieve their goals by adopting what Jacobs and Shapiro have described as “a poll-driven strategy of crafted talk to rally public support and minimise their risks of electoral punishment.”¹⁶

Politicians face media coverage that regularly views electoral campaigns as a “horse-race”—a metaphor that Nadeau and Giasson use to capture the oversimplification of public life in news reporting. Rather than explore the intricacies of policy programs, or detail the perspectives of candidates, journalists instead focus on the perceived gains and losses of winners and losers. Leaders face a mediated realm that often treats campaigns as predictable, orderly games of strategy and posturing, rather than as opportunities for sustained dialogue and debate.¹⁷ The political spectacle may also foster conditions where alternative ideas fall prey to a *spiral of silence*. Noelle-Neuman locates an underlying fear of social ostracism, which sometimes permeates public discourse, and encourages voluntary censorship of heterodox thinking when ideas deviate from a perceived consensus.¹⁸

Ignatieff encountered, to some extent, the above environment where managing impressions seemed essential, where selling the right image assumed priority, and where

achieving popularity with voters often defined the criteria of success and survival.

Throughout the leadership race from April to December 2006, the task for Ignatieff remained not only to align his values with the Liberal Party, but also to reconcile his intellectual style with the rituals of communication on the campaign trail: the reassuring promises, the scheduled announcements, planned rallies, rehearsed slogans, choreographed displays and targeted rhetoric. In his public appearances and speeches, he addressed delegates and journalists who now gauged his performance on the stage perhaps as much as the content of his ideas.

The implications of a political spectacle accent a unique problem for the intellectual who negotiates positions of power. As Murray Edelman has observed, the demands of leadership in politics generally differ from the expectations of leadership in the sphere of ideas. The politician succeeds by demonstrating an ability to cope. Through stylistic play and symbolic gestures, which channel hopes and allay fears, the leader gives the impression of managing distressing situations. Central to this theory of politics is a concern for the divorce of language from substance: "It is language about political events, not the events in any other sense, that people experience [...] So, political language is political reality; there is no other so far as the meaning of events to actors and spectators is concerned."¹⁹ Whether political figures solve problems as effectively in practice, as they suggest in language, is less important than the surface projection of a personality who takes charge, intervenes quickly, acts resourcefully, and displays ingenuity while also meeting the expectations of a scrutinising public. By contrast, intellectual leadership usually demands more than conformity masked as innovation on the public stage. It ideally requires a talent for gratifying and enlightening others, challenging established

ways of thinking—all while broadening the capacity for synthesis of contending choices and perspectives.

Karl Mannheim's²⁰ version of the free-floating thinker, whose interpretative flexibility encourages questioning rather than blind acceptance of the taken for granted, might have a political advantage over the born and raised partisan. The independent intellectual, as Edelman has suggested, is "far more likely than the clearly identified individual to become dissatisfied with approved, long established ways of thought and to recognise opportunities for winning support for policy innovations, challenges to elites, or syntheses of ideas long thought incompatible."²¹ Openness to unconventional and novel ideas is both an asset and a curse in politics, however. When principles and methods are likely to betray the rituals of the status quo, compromise may present the only alternative to political defeat. Intellectuals survive in politics, according to Edelman, "by adopting courses of action that reflect the structural possibilities in the situations in which they find themselves, just as other leaders do, even when this means ignoring their innovative ideas."²² To survive, such leaders often match their language and rhetoric with the prevailing interests, desires and apprehensions of their audience even when their own value preferences differ.²³ Therein lies the potential for concessions that result from an intellectual's transition to politics. The drive for originality and independence on the one hand, and the expectations of existing structures on the other, simultaneously pull in opposing directions.

Indeed, with political language as a force shaping perceptions of political reality, words mattered in the context of Ignatieff's encounter with the political spectacle.

Whether they appeared between the dusty covers of Ignatieff's previous work from the

1980s and 1990s, in his transcribed lectures, or in recent articles for *Prospect Magazine* and the *New York Times*, words mattered in a new context. Words from the past confronted Ignatieff in the political arena whenever the campaign re-ignited debates from his intellectual life. Under the hot lamps of cameras and constant coverage, complicated positions—on everything from Quebec sovereignty to the invasion of Iraq—suddenly needed clarification, elaboration, and a response that satisfied a new audience. Words mattered. In November 2005, when Ignatieff accepted his first nomination as a candidate in the upcoming election, words mattered when protesters pulled phrases from his *Blood and Belonging*²⁴ to discredit his image. Dissenting members of the party cited passages that allegedly trivialised Ukraine's struggle for national independence, and insulted the Ukrainian-Canadian community in Ignatieff's riding of Etobicoke Lakeshore.²⁵ Words mattered when essays, such as "The Burden"²⁶ and "Lesser Evils"²⁷ returned to haunt Ignatieff with questions about his loyalties. By publicly defending the invasion of Iraq on the eve of the mission, Ignatieff met charges that he was an "apologist" for President Bush. Words mattered when statements by Ignatieff, on the use of "permissible duress" in interrogations of detainees, filtered through the media with allegations that he defended torture.²⁸ In fall 2006, words mattered when reporters needed sound bites on the emerging crisis in Lebanon and Israel, and when Ignatieff stumbled with his response on the conflict in the Middle East.²⁹

Ignatieff lost the leadership race. On the fourth and final ballot, on 2 December 2006, Ignatieff finished with 45.3 percent of the vote (2521 delegates) against Stéphane Dion who won with 54.7 percent of support. Admittedly, the "winner" in this case was also an academic. Yet, Dion had served in federal politics since 1996, while Ignatieff had

just launched his journey in public life. Dion was an established Minister of Parliament with experience in the cabinets of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin. Moreover, he was a different kind of intellectual. Although he was a scholar by training, he lacked the qualities of a generalist such as Ignatieff, who regularly addressed the public in a variety of forums and media. Dion wrote detailed policy papers and books in political science, but rarely left the confines of his profession and expertise. Moreover, Dion usually avoided the rhetorical flair and literary flamboyance that marked Ignatieff's journalistic prose and critical essays—qualities that occasionally led to untenable claims and performative misfires. Dion was an "academic-turned-politician" as some journalists defined his career,³⁰ while Ignatieff retained the image of a "writer" even as he entered the political arena. Dion was a safe choice in a contest that analysts described as an "anyone but Ignatieff" campaign, which coalesced in the last months of the race.³¹ Even so, until his eventual loss at the convention, Ignatieff grabbed the media spotlight throughout most of the campaign.

What is interesting about Ignatieff's experience is not so much his defeat, but the communications that shaped his efforts. Drawing on an analysis of his non-fiction books, essays, speeches and appearances in print-media, this study follows his transition into politics, and tentatively explores some of the compromises that he made as a candidate. It devotes special attention to his campaign speeches and press coverage for both the *2006 Winter Election* and *2006 Liberal Leadership Convention*. The project focuses on Ignatieff's attempts to reconcile his orientation and critical project as a writer, on the one hand, with the immediate goal to win support and capture votes on the other. What concessions was he prepared to make in the process? How did his discursive style and

value-orientations change with new access to power? Finally, how did critics in the press respond to Ignatieff's performance, and represent his public identity in turn?

With a focus on the values and representations of the candidate, the above questions accent a longstanding literature on the diverse relationships between intellectual activity and political life. Some observers voice concern for the integrity of independent thought under the grip of power,³² while others ponder the folly of visionaries who turn reckless fantasies into political action.³³ The Jacobins in revolutionary France of the 18th century,³⁴ and the rise of Lenin's Bolsheviks in Russia after 1917,³⁵ represent extreme examples not only of intellectual ambitions to remake the world, but also of the potential brutality in large-scale efforts at social engineering.³⁶ By contrast, the Fabians who pushed social reform in Britain,³⁷ the experts who formed Franklin D. Roosevelt's *Brain Trust* in the 1930s,³⁸ and the American social scientists who steered "Project Camelot" in the 1960s,³⁹ illustrate how an intellectual stratum may influence policy from the sidelines without seizing power directly.

Meanwhile, other types of engagement thrive on detachment and alienation from the political sphere. The goal is neither to possess nor to direct an official post, but to facilitate debate and independent inquiry. Such critical voices may function as court-jesters who mock authorities,⁴⁰ as moralists who expose the errors of the world, as polemicists who rally support for their cause,⁴¹ as gatekeepers who defend traditional ways of knowing,⁴² as spokesperson for movements,⁴³ or as free-floating thinkers⁴⁴ who defy conventional ideologies and sectional interests. Still, other intellectuals defend a clear separation between the sphere of the mind and the sphere of practical activity,

between leading a purely contemplative life and intervening politically to influence the direction of their society.⁴⁵

To ground the analysis of Michael Ignatieff, the following chapter constructs from the extant literature a framework for conceptualising a variety of discursive, intellectual orientations (or postures) for the purposes of comparison. It draws inspiration not only from Max Weber's methodology of concept formation in the interpretive social sciences,⁴⁶ but also the recent work of Ahmad Sadri⁴⁷ on a Weberian sociology of knowledge, to propose four *ideal-typical* relationships with the powers and the sphere of ideas. The possibilities of either an innerworldly or otherworldly orientation to intellectual activity, and the alternatives of attachment and detachment with respect to the political sphere, are cross-tabulated to form a hypothetical, conceptual grid with four quadrants. The continuum from *otherworldliness* to *innerworldliness* typifies the extent to which discourse respectively concerns ultimate ends versus immediate reality, the pursuit of absolutes versus acceptance of contingency, theoretical versus context-dependent knowledge.

Otherworldly detachment values not only the "contemplative life" for its own sake, but also freedom from political pressure and the preoccupations of everyday praxis. *Innerworldly detachment* claims distance from the centres of power as well, but commits actively to dialogue, criticism, enlightenment and action in the public sphere. The difference, then, lies in the degree of commitment—whether to advance remote ideas and abstract pursuits, or to engage the masses and raise the level of debate. By contrast, the juxtaposition of otherworldly and innerworldly forms of *political attachment* centres respectively on the extent of alignment with utopian solutions versus gradual reforms;

with a politics based on ends versus a politics based on means; with an appeal to principles versus an emphasis on technique; and with an ethic of ultimate purpose versus an ethic of moderation.

The creation of the above typology is the outcome of an intentional, reductive exercise that makes no *a priori* claim to validity in the empirical world—beyond the usefulness of ideal-types as modest tools for tentatively sifting and organising an infinite, social and cultural reality. The framework serves only as a heuristic device to assemble motifs in the literature on the relationship between politics and intellect. In chapters two and three, the use of ideal-types provides indirect markers for comparison in the interpretive analysis of communications before and after his transition into politics. The tentative theory offered here is that Ignatieff's message on the podium appeared increasingly otherworldly, as the writer deviated further from an ideal-typical posture of independence in the public sphere.

In the struggle to win support and to project an appealing personality on the stage, Ignatieff underwent a transformation. As the campaign progressed, his speeches appeared to surrender the sceptical outlook and awareness of uncertainty, which had marked his critical work before he joined the party. While a devotion to a calling seemed evident in his emotive style and prose as a writer, the rituals of campaign rhetoric turned such zeal into jovial slogans and vague visions, which peppered his performance. By the end of the race, to manage impressions and contain the effect of unpopular positions, Ignatieff was now selling optimism without the sense of critical distance that defined his earlier work. Even when he idealised his subject matter as an essayist, and even as he elevated complex problems to general discussions of abstract values, Ignatieff admired the view

from the ground. He claimed to avoid extreme positions and easy explanations. He professed a worldview in which the choices between good and evil were rarely as clear in practice as they seemed in theory.

Yet, if the discursive posture of the Harvard scholar and journalist approximated the innerworldliness of an independent intellectual, Ignatieff now conveyed an other-worldly attachment to party and country in his political communications. The hypothesis of an ideal-typical shift between two discursive orientations serves to elucidate the compromises that Ignatieff made on the podium. If anything, it articulates the general direction of his transformation—how the political spectacle seemed to excite a sterile idealism in the performance of someone who claimed to be passionately engaged but sceptical as a writer.

CHAPTER 1: IDEAL TYPES OF INTELLECTUALS

The prospect of calling a person an intellectual, by virtue of their vocation in the arts and sciences, is a uniquely modern phenomenon. Before the 18th Century, one might find references to learned men and women, artists, philosophers, poets, crafts persons, scientists and rhetoricians. However, if the Latin words *intellego*, *intellectus*, or *intelligentsia* did appear in pre-modern texts, they often represented an activity, a pursuit, a talent for reasoning and understanding. Rarely was the intellectual deployed as a noun for describing “the thinking person.” The term usually referred not to individuals, but to heavenly bodies, to the spirit, or to pure mind. By contrast, the modern and secular view of intelligentsia would become an amorphous category that grouped philosophers, writers, critics and artists together as particular types of thinkers.⁴⁸ A sustained, sociological interest in categories of intellectuals has perhaps only emerged in the last century, while an explicit focus on their communicative practices remains a relatively recent area of scholarship.⁴⁹

“All men are intellectuals,” as Antonio Gramsci would remark, “but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.”⁵⁰ One could expand the distinction further. Intellectuals may espouse *political* views in some sense of the word, even if few take politics as their vocation, or officially serve a function in the political system. As with most loosely defined concepts in social research, there are perhaps as many theoretical portraits as there are overlapping categorisations of the term. Taxonomies abound. Some observers differentiate intellectuals from academic researchers, by suggesting that the former are more likely than the latter not only to address general audiences in an accessible language, but also to engage debates in the public sphere outside the

university.⁵¹ Others distinguish between the expert officialdom of policy analysts and advisors who perform for the political establishment on the one hand, and intellectuals who contest the powers and the status quo from the margins on the other.⁵² Some commentators will stress how intellectuals function organically as representatives of group interests. Others emphasise their faculty for transcending conventional, social structures as relatively classless agents who define their own calling.⁵³

Meanwhile other literatures stress how the worlds of legislators and interpreters are fundamentally incompatible. One can rarely be a mirror holder and an office holder simultaneously without compromising the demands of each role. Arthur Melzer wrote recently in an introduction to an edited volume on the contemporary, critical thinker: “[intellectuals] must positively avoid rule, for nonrule is one of the essential preconditions of [their] right and power to rule public opinion.”⁵⁴ The difference between the activities of political leaders and the contributions of modern intellectuals is straightforward for Melzer. While the former has access to the levers of the state, the latter gains authority and influence from the sidelines—by delivering speeches, by distributing pamphlets, by appearing on discussion panels, by writing essays, newspaper columns and books. The former exercises direct power through official channels, while the latter persuades the public indirectly through the force of words.

The sociologist Steven Fuller invokes a similar separation of powers in his slim volume of advice for the contemporary critic, whom he loosely modelled on Machiavelli's *The Prince*. The politician and the intellectual stand at opposite ends in the battle over public opinion. Fuller presents the former as an opportunist who panders for personal advantage. The latter functions “better as [a] sophist who help[s] to boost

arguments that are not so much prohibited as unpopular or otherwise unsupported by the usual informal market mechanisms through which ideas are exchanged."⁵⁵ The assumption is that a division of labour between intellectuals and the powers—as opposed to their collaboration—is what sustains an open society. Critics such as Raymond Aron⁵⁶ and, more recently, Mark Lilla⁵⁷ advance a similar dualism, but for different reasons. The risk is not so much a danger for intellectuals, but a danger for society. The erotic passion of intellectuals for ideas—and their quest for revelation in a rationalised picture of the world—has an intoxicating effect on public life, which runs against the piecemeal pace and daily compromises of democratic politics.

Whether the concern is for a loss of independence through the politicisation of intellect, or a loss of stability through the intellectualisation of politics, the problem of betrayed responsibilities persists as a theme in the literature. When they are detached philosophers who lead a contemplative life, intellectuals allegedly betray their calling whenever they become partisans and activists.⁵⁸ When intellectuals are the organisers of social, political and aesthetic movements,⁵⁹ they face criticism for their recklessness when their visions of utopia end in disaster.⁶⁰ When intellectuals are bohemian writers, amateurs, court jesters and so-called independent thinkers,⁶¹ they have abandoned their post whenever they align themselves comfortably with academic institutions and the salaried professions.⁶² Yet, when intellectuals are academics who conduct disinterested research, they risk betraying their profession whenever they make value judgements or speak outside their field of expertise.⁶³ When they are gatekeepers who facilitate rational, critical dialogue in the public realm,⁶⁴ intellectuals risk undermining their integrity when they assume the status of celebrities, pundits and entertainers over the airwaves or in the

press.⁶⁵ Indeed, Ernest Gellner was perhaps right when he acknowledged the difficulty of the situation. The perception that intellectuals routinely commit some form of “treason” seems almost unavoidable.⁶⁶

What seems to hamper theoretical discussions is precisely this preoccupation with locating the essence of the vocation: "What are the defining qualities of the intellectual?" "What are their roles, functions and responsibilities in society and culture?" To be sure, any working definition may begin with such broad, ontological questions. Edward Shils, for example, opens with an inclusive account—a universal category: "There is in every society a minority of persons who, more than the ordinary run of their fellow men, are inquiring, and desirous of being in frequent communion with symbols which are more general than the immediate concrete situations of everyday life and remote in their reference in both time and space."⁶⁷ As interpreters and creators of culture, intellectuals not only contemplate the meaning of their world and the ends for which their society strives, but also want to convey externally their insights. Depending on the period and the context in which they operate, intellectuals will find avenues for expression in a variety of media and genres—from the printed word to the live performance, from artistic creations to scientific analysis, from detached, expert commentary to scathing, critical prose. As voices in the public sphere, intellectuals may elaborate values and ideals in their community, or clarify difficult moral and political choices. Alternatively, they might defend traditional institutions, or work to preserve a cultural heritage. They may also present alternative conceptions of reality, attempt to redefine the existing symbolic order, and facilitate the rejection of prevailing assumptions. In the process, according to Shils,

intellectuals continually negotiate their place and authority as interpreters in the cultural landscape.⁶⁸

Still, there is perhaps always a danger in taking the Idea—the perfect Form—of the intellectual too seriously, by assuming that an essential core of defining features not only awaits careful extraction by the theorist, but also mirrors some external world. There is perhaps always room to confound normative considerations and theoretical generalisations on the one hand, with a belief in the actual, existing meaning of an idea on the other. In short, there is perhaps always the risk of confusing a concern for "what ought to be" or "what could be the case" with knowledge of "what is." As an abstraction, the idea of an intellectual might be conceptually "real" only for observers who recognise the construct—those who find it valuable when they selectively order the infinite complexity of reality around their specific interests in a given situation.⁶⁹ To be sure, the point is neither to dwell on the limits of human knowledge (and the solipsism in the last statement), nor to deny the place of values in the creation of meaning, but to recognise the role that interests play in the formation of concepts. References to an intellectual, to particular types thinkers, or to any other construct, may serve as ideal-types in social research. A discussion of ideal-typical constructions—and their methodological applications in this present study — is in order.

Concept Formation and Weber's Method of Interpretive Analysis

The ideal-type is a purely hypothetical construct in scholarship, which Max Weber developed to guide his own interpretive analyses of social and cultural phenomena. Ideal-types are “perfect” examples or extreme cases. They are “perfect” not because they claim to represent a true or preferred image of reality, but because they appear internally consistent. They make sense logically because they are abstractions rather than concrete examples from everyday experience. To construct ideal-types is not to imply their moral or aesthetic superiority, but to merely suggest possibilities. Whether they appear beautiful or ugly, divine or profane to the discerning mind, is unimportant. Depending on the object of inquiry, someone might outline ideal-types of love or ideal kinds of leaders, while another imagines the “flawlessly executed crime” or the “perfect storm.” The goal is to imagine the potential outcomes of following through with ideas, values or principles, if all the conditions for their realisation were possible. In the end, ideal-types serve as points of comparison—as references that facilitate an interpretation. Yet, the aim is not to somehow judge the world for perceived deficiencies—to lament the failure of ideals to reflect reality. Rather the objective is to understand how and in what ways the findings from the world approximate or deviate from expectations in theory. Only then can the Weberian scholar draw conclusions about the individual character of a phenomena under investigation. One can then discern those elements that seem unique to a particular context.⁷⁰

As students of his methodology have noted, Weber advanced an alternative to popular approaches in the social sciences that tended to follow either the mechanistic models of the natural sciences, or the idealism and historicism of the Romantic tradition

at the time.⁷¹ He rejected the belief that one could somehow deduce the “importance” of an historical or sociological event by establishing firm, law-like relationships in the data—or by averaging their outcomes— as the physicist might approach a conceptual problem. As Weber describes his own discipline,

The historian’s ‘sense of the situation,’ his ‘intuition’ uncovers causal interconnections—not generalizations and reflections of ‘rules.’ The contrast with the natural sciences consists indeed precisely in the fact that the historian deals with the explanation of events and personalities which are ‘interpreted’ and ‘understood’ by direct analogy with our own intellectual, spiritual and psychological constitution.⁷²

As Weber would argue, to assume otherwise would be to imply that one no longer makes choices, no longer decides what makes sense, but lets the infinite stream of empirical evidence decide its own meaning. His interpretative methods were highly individualistic for this reason. Even when Weber treated large topics such as "capitalism," "bureaucracy," and the major "religions," his orientation was non-collectivist. The goal was neither to generalise causal connections nor to calculate some Aristotelian mean of properties, which transcends time, space, and cultural values. Rather the aim was to understand diversity and divergence from the ideal-type—a construct that was normally dependent on the interests and hermeneutic lens of the observer.⁷³

The literature often draws connections between Weber and Heinrich Rickert’s approach to concept formation. Thomas Burger⁷⁴ has underscored how both theorists take as their starting point the problem of accounting for complexity. Both recognise how concrete reality is infinite and heterogeneous. The diversity of agents and conflicting perspectives—the plurality of human actions, intentions, desires and ends —complicates the field in which one navigates as interpreters of the social world. Rickert’s solution to

the problem of managing an infinite, empirical universe was to locate the convergences and similarities around discrete phenomena, which justify grouping them together. Such taxonomies help observers discern and explain what seems significant: “We reduce the extensive multiplicity of the world around us by designing a plurality of phenomena with one word. The intensive multiplicity of each single phenomena is overcome because we are able to subsume it with certainty under the meaning of a word.”⁷⁵ Both Weber and Rickert were interested in a scientific approach that engages the process of “abstraction” systematically and in a logically consistent manner. By clearly justifying the criteria of inclusion and exclusion in the development of a concept, some internal validity would be possible.

Where Weber’s application differs from Rickert’s understanding of concept formation, according to Burger,⁷⁶ is in the epistemological status of each approach. Weber was more reluctant than Rickert was to believe that “raw data” from the empirical world could guide the formation of concepts. Weber rejected the notion that ideal-types merely represented a simplified version of an actual, existing meaning in the world that awaits discovery. Weber questioned the merit of treating ideal-types as anything more than hypothetical constructions—as anything more than unreal abstractions, which serve a limited but instrumental role. Through a constellation of inferences, speculative rationalisations, and intentional distortions of reality through ideal-types, the researcher attempts to clarify an often-unclear world. As Weber describes his hermeneutic approach,

the analysis of reality is concerned with the configuration into which those (hypothetical!) 'factors' are arranged to form a cultural phenomenon which is historically significant to us. Furthermore, if we wish to 'explain' this individual configuration 'causally' we must invoke other

equally individual configurations on the basis of which we will explain it with the aid of those (hypothetical!) laws.⁷⁷

To go beyond hypothetical deductions, by asserting actual rather than possible meanings in the data, would risk the reification of concepts.

Weber rejected the possibility of absolute knowledge in social research –the existence of a higher plane of Truth from which to judge the validity of an outlook. Since human beings have finite minds and limited faculties of perception, as Weber admits, researchers must contend with a partial view. However, to claim a neutral position in the face of incommensurability is equally problematic. It invites a naive relativism where all knowledge-claims and orientations appear equally valid at best, and meaningless at worst, in the presence of conflicting value-interpretations. Such a posture assumes a degree of bad faith according Weber, because the burden of interpreting a situation remains nevertheless: “the fate of an epoch which has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must know that we cannot learn the meaning of the world from the results of its analysis, be it ever so perfect; it must rather be in a position to create this meaning itself.”⁷⁸ The theorist distinguishes clearly between the ideal-type on the one hand, and the “findings” from external reality on the other hand. The former are tentative inventions, even if they sometimes draw insight from observations. Ideal-types are intentional but meaningful distortions of reality. The social scientist compares the abstract and the concrete—the ideal-type with the data—to understand their differences and similarities. Yet, the two realms will rarely approximate or reflect each other completely.

Four Ideal-types of Intellectual Orientations

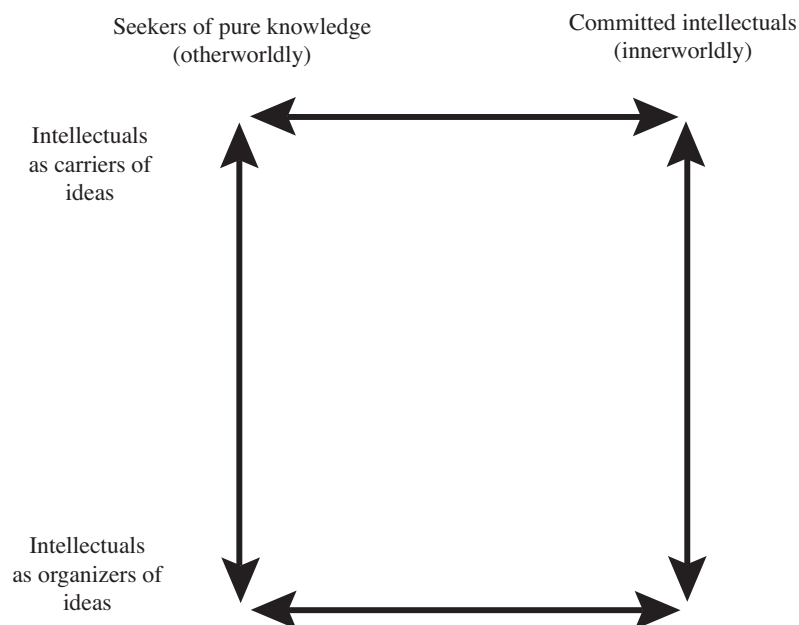
In a unique synthesis of Max Weber's occasional meditations on the roles of intellectuals from his essays on bureaucracy, religion, charisma and the scientific vocation, Ahmad Sadri⁷⁹ proposed a framework for organising possible styles of thinkers along an intersecting grid. Each quadrant represented loose configurations from a limited set of hypothetical types, which prepared the foundation for comparative, empirical study. A modified version of his scheme will ground this present analysis of Ignatieff's communications.

On one axis, Sadri outlined what he called the contrasting postures of "Otherworldly" and "Innerworldly" thinkers. Both varieties depart from the lifeworld of quotidian concerns, but proceed with divergent goals: "They all aspire to attain a higher state of bliss, to attain Sophia, Gnosis, Knowledge, Truth, Beauty, Overall Patterns and Structures, and in short, the Meaning and Essence of life."⁸⁰ The difference between otherworldly and innerworldly commitments lies in their aspirations, respectively, either to transcend the immediate world in the pursuit of core ideas, or to orient knowledge in the service of practical, political or civic aims. As Sadri views the distinction, the two ideal-types overlap to some extent: "Only in so far as one engages in a particular kind of reasoning is one a man or woman of knowledge, science, letters or arts. Only in so far as this person turns back to bring a Promethean gift to the masses is he or she an intellectual."⁸¹ Moreover, this theorist builds on Max Weber's comparison in the essay, "Politics as a Vocation,"⁸² between an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility. The former style represents a mystic flight from everyday concerns into the realm of absolutes, while the latter represents a pragmatic philosophy that works

within rather than against the realities of an often-imperfect world. While an ethic of responsibility takes the fallibility of human choices and the consequences of actions into account, an ethic of ultimate ends trades this sense of proportion for the promise of nirvana in the search for absolute Truths and conceptions of the Good. How intellectuals reconcile the two modes, in their discursive and political activities, provide clues on the value spheres they occupy—whether innerworldly or otherworldly.⁸³ As pure types, the two orientations appear at opposite ends of a continuum, while most of the examples from historical and contemporary experience shuttle somewhere between the extremes.

On the other axis, Sadri advances a qualitative ranking of (1) *higher-order intellectuals* and (2) members of an *intelligentsia*, who represent respectively the carriers of new perspectives and the organisers of existing ideas. The former embodies a creative, heretic or prophetic approach to the production and dissemination of knowledge. The latter performs "intelligence work" as a routine, procedural task in the service of institutions, guilds and societies. Members of a "rank-and-file" *intelligentsia* manage the continuity of disciplines, cannons, traditions and movements by reinterpreting and applying the insights of *high-order intellectuals*. The two axes intersect to form a taxonomic grid of four ideal-types that guide the classification and comparison of value orientations.⁸⁴

Figure 1.1. Ahmad Sadri's "Cross-Tabulation of the Primacy of Calling or Mission of Intellectuals and Their Role as Carriers or Organisers of Ideas."

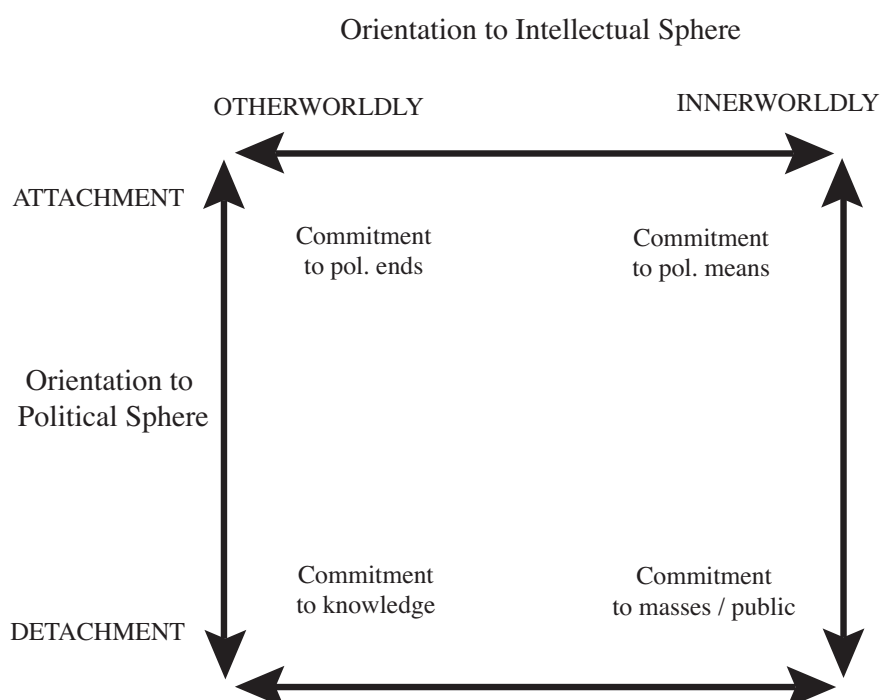


(Source: Ahmad Sadri, *Max Weber's Sociology of Intellectuals*, p. 121)

However, Sadri's second axis—which separates the leading masters from ordinary intelligentsia—is unhelpful as a useful conceptual distinction, given the aims of this present study. The goal is not to class a multitude of thinkers along a hierarchy of functions, but to understand the transformations of one individual and his adjustment to a new world of political performance. The interest is not in a static taxonomy of structural relationships, but in the changes that occur through Ignatieff's own agency as a public speaker. The opposing concepts of political detachment and attachment—a distinction between "independence from" and "proximity to the powers"—will replace Sadri's original scheme as the second axis in our grid. In doing so, the attention focuses explicitly on the intersection of political alignment (whether committed or detached) and intellectual engagement (whether "a flight from" or a "a return to" the cave of immediate

reality and practical deliberations). This modification accommodates arguments by Arthur Melzer who claims that modern intellectuals often assume an "innerworldly detachment" in their relationship with the political arena and the realm of ideas.⁸⁵ From this ideal-typical construct, the three alternatives merit consideration as well—namely, the prospect of an "otherworldly detachment," an "innerworldly attachment," and an "otherworldly attachment" as possible orientations for the intellectual.

Figure 1.2. Modification of Sadri's Conceptual Grid to Show the Intersection of Intellectual and Political Commitment.



With a Weberian approach to concept formation, the validity of such hypothetical categories depends neither on their representative accuracy, nor even on their verifiable location in the empirical world. What matters is their effectiveness and modest utility as indirect tools of comparison and reference. To interpret reality through ideal-types is to invoke approximations and possibilities, but not necessarily an actually-existing meaning.

Innerworldly detachment

This posture maintains not only a commitment to the public sphere and a sensitivity to the challenges of immediate reality, but also distance from the political apparatus and the centres of power. Those who claim an innerworldly detachment will intervene in current affairs, not through direct participation in the legislative process and the administration of the state, but through faith in enlightenment. Through the wide circulation of ideas and arguments, the goal is to raise the consciousness of a public, and somehow effect change in the process. The intellectual is simultaneously engaged and unaligned—at once grounded in the concerns of the everyday, but free to wander, and imagine possibilities without the challenge of turning ideas into actions. The public communications of such figures address a general audience, but reach beyond the immediate to consider larger questions of the value, meaning and ends of one's activity and existence. Central to the position is a tension between the desire for emancipation through critical inquiry in the public sphere, on the one hand, and the estrangement of the critic from the sphere of political practice on the other. Someone within the tradition would rather steer public opinion, and influence political life indirectly, than assume the powers and responsibilities of an official post.

Attached-detachment is Arthur Melzer's term for the discursive location of the independent thinker. An inner contradiction permeates the lifeworld of the progressive figure who combines a resolutely apolitical stance on the one hand, with an idealistic longing for change on the other. Implicit in the orientation is faith in the enlightenment of the masses. The writer produces arguments, criticisms and rationalisations with a tacit

belief in the power of reason to shape politics and history by circuitous means. Unable and unwilling to wield power directly over state and institutional mechanisms, the politically detached agent nevertheless embraces the possibility of somehow improving the human condition. The possibility of progress lingers in some form:

Intellectuals live in a world that takes for granted the existence of a whole dimension of reality unsuspected by earlier ages: History or Progress or the Historical Process. And they are ineluctably drawn to orient their intellectual lives toward this new dimension—to attach themselves to the historical process and seek to ‘make a contribution’ [emphasis added].⁸⁶

The process begins and ends with the hope of disseminating ideas widely, while swaying minds independently.

Melzer implies a slightly different historical process from the approach of experts in the University who seek to make a contribution to the literature in their respective field. Whereas the classical scholar generally views the contemplative life as an end in itself, Melzer believes that modern intellectuals perform a comparatively larger role in society. Their activities raise the consciousness of the public whom they address, and hope to improve the social and material condition of humanity in the process.

The capital in History refers to the Hegelian idea of reason perfecting itself over time. The term not only implies a dialectical approach to philosophy, but also refers to the ideological battles that have allegedly shaped Western Thought: “history in the grand sense has been characterised over fundamental principles: the rivalry of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy; the struggles between the church and state, or Protestantism and Catholicism; the conflicts among fascism, communism, and capitalism.”⁸⁷

Participating in what the theorist calls the Historical Process becomes not only an effort

to subvert and challenge orthodoxies, but also an attempt to build a new stage, a new order, and a new reality: “[Intellectuals] live in the inspiring belief that [their] own thoughts and insights, however small or partial, once ‘published’ in the modern sense [...] will reach out beyond [the author], combining additively with the contributions of thousands of others in order somehow to ‘make a difference.’”⁸⁸ What motivates the modern intellectual is the promise that each idea, each vision, each movement, revelation, theory and paradigm may inspire the public imagination to new levels.

Melzer grounds his argument in a comparison between the Ancients and the Moderns, between the political orientations of the traditional philosopher and the contemporary intellectual. Classical philosophers prefer detachment from the spheres of political life, according to Melzer, because they regard the life of the mind as distinct from the concerns of ordinary life. The portrait roughly outlines what Sadri meant by the otherworldliness of some intellectuals who long for solitude—for an escape from everyday, earthly problems. In the Ancient world, contemplating the cosmos is not only an end in itself, but also requires a radical withdrawal from temporal existence and from distractions. Nevertheless, if the classical philosopher “ever engaged in politics or agreed to rule,” as Melzer paraphrases Plato, “it would not be because he thought it a great and noble good, but an unavoidable necessity”⁸⁹ The Philosopher-Kings in Plato’s Republic serve as Melzer’s ideal-typical illustration of the wise-person who rules reluctantly, who rules if only to prevent the worst kinds of individuals from taking office.

The broad strokes that fill Melzer’s portrait of the intellectual, however, seem incomplete and somewhat unconvincing. At first glance, this scholar seems to make a fundamental distinction between the Philosopher King on the one hand, and the modern

intellectual who allegedly participates in the historical process by educating rather than legislating. The former looks to the heavens, and rules over the land. The latter looks to the horizon, and guides the enlightenment of the people.

Yet, Melzer seems unaware of the contradictions and assumptions that underlie both ideal-types of authority. Do intellectuals actually have a “right and power to rule over public opinion”⁹⁰ in the sense of a real entitlement? Perhaps unintentionally, Melzer appears to equate all intellectual work with publicity and propaganda—with the straightforward communication of ideas and ideology in the pursuit of Progress. Today, one might indeed question whether writers, artists and scholars exercise—or have ever held—such sweeping influence over the cultural sphere and the minds of citizens. One could also question whether all intellectuals necessarily believe that they are disciples of Hegelian philosophy—whether all intellectuals dream of moving History forward with their spoken and written “contributions.” An ironist, sophist or cynic, for example, may issue public commentary in ways that avoid answers and direction, but instead complicate the dream of a smooth, dialectical path to improvement.⁹¹

Moreover, Melzer’s account of “political rule” seems to focus narrowly on the exercise of state control and brute force, without considering how rulers may also achieve goals through the delicate art of persuasion and deliberation when they govern. The discursive space of the intellectual and the politician could overlap in some instances, given how both may rely on the play of language and crafted talk. Such concerns are worth raising, if only to underscore the difficulty of applying judgements universally, as if all forms of leadership in politics and all forms of intellectual activity in civil society could fit in one of two categories: to rule or not to rule; to lead by the force of arms or by

the force of words. Melzer's hypothetical reduction is still valuable, however, as a theoretical elaboration of Sadri's juxtaposition of otherworldly and innerworldly orientations to the sphere of ideas.

The notion that intellectuals can be politically active, without necessarily participating directly in political institutions, is a commonplace in the work of Jurgen Habermas on the concept of an independent public sphere. This theorist located the origins of the normative ideal in the civil associations of Europe, which emerged in the 18th Century. Habermas posits an ideal-typical difference between the ancient and the modern public realms. In the former period, the notion of a distinct, “public” category of society—one that operated outside both the private sphere of the home and the grip of the state—was almost non-existent before the Enlightenment. If the kingdoms of the Middle Ages had a “public domain,” it assumed the form of a “publicness (or publicity) of representation.”⁹² The kings and noblemen displayed and performed their authority, usually unchallenged, before the people. Such representation occurred “in the open” nevertheless—in festivities on the streets, for example, where the feudal lords demonstrated their greatness and power to crowds of onlookers. Officials of the imperial order, guardians of the state, servants of the court, and priests of the Church, were all public persons with “official business” by virtue of their role as representatives of the sovereign power.

As the domain of commodity exchange expanded in the 18th Century with the collapse of the feudal system, a new class of educated property owners would form a category of society that operated outside official channels of state authority. Habermas would describe this new realm as “the sphere of private people come together as a

public.”⁹³ Ideal illustrations of such “gatherings,” according to the author, were the assemblies of diverse writers, artists, critics, merchants and urban gentry who met regularly in the clubs, coffee houses, literary salons and secret societies of the period. Here, they would engage in what Habermas calls rational-critical dialogue. Through organised debates about art, literature, philosophy and current affairs, the bourgeoisie learned not only to communicate their subjective understandings of the world, but also to apply their own faculties of reason in public.

Although participants in rational-critical debate were members of a privileged middle class, they nevertheless sustained what Habermas would call the fiction of a common humanity in their deliberations. As the author argues, the notion of a community of freethinking human beings—a faith in *sensus communis* or a capacity for shared understanding that transcended class structures—was a powerful idea at the time. Those who engaged the process usually believed in “a parity on whose basis alone the authority of the better argument could assert itself against that of social hierarchy and in the end carry the day.”⁹⁴ The circulation of newspapers and pamphlets would create forums where writers could discuss the political issues of the day, expose the failings of authority figures, and challenge prevailing assumptions. In this respect, the press originally provided a space where civil society could articulate positions—and imagine a public—outside and against the sphere of political authority.

Within the context of the literary salons and the expansion of print media, as Habermas has argued, the “intellectual” would emerge as a unique species of independent thinker. Once the public sphere shifted away from the princely court to the town, authority over the interpretation of ideas—or the Truth—was no longer restricted to the

professoriate and the clerics. It was no longer restricted to otherworldly pursuits. To be sure, the Church and the Universities would still make moral pronouncements and royal decrees as delegates of the state. However, these publications would appear alongside the growing numbers of journals by urban, middle-class writers who offered their own analysis of public affairs. The debates in the periodicals were extensions of discussions in the coffee houses. Moreover, these intellectuals spoke as generalists rather than as expert commentators. As Habermas (1991) describes the ideal arrangement in his portrait of the art critic: “his expertise only held good until countermanded; lay judgement was organised in it without becoming, by way of specialisation, anything else than the judgement of one private person among all others who ultimately were not to be obligated by any judgement except their own.”⁹⁵ Against the abstract musings of the saintly scholars, the work of the first generation of secular intellectuals stressed a practical orientation. Questions that concerned poverty, crime, civility, charity and education, for example, garnered widespread attention in the moral weeklies. The goal of publicity and public debate for the intellectuals was mutual enlightenment—an opportunity for a community of readers and writers to speak to and for each other.

Habermas seems to suggest that such a conversation between the state authorities “at the centre,” and the world of letters “at the margins,” occurs almost indirectly, or almost spontaneously. The exchange occurs when the idea of openly judging the arts—of requiring that writers legitimate their claims before a public—spills over into the political realm. Public criticism of literature eventually becomes public criticism of politics. In the process, the actions of political authorities along with the artists and the novelists are not only open to criticism, but soon require legitimation by the people.⁹⁶ Whether such a

transformation occurs as smoothly in practice, as it does in theory, is uncertain. The theory assumes that independent thinkers have agency and influence in politics simply by writing, publishing, criticising and debating—and without necessarily legislating or administering the state as the politician or bureaucrat wields power.

Yet, as Habermas interprets the history of the public sphere, he acknowledges how the normative ideal of rational-critical dialogue would begin to fade overtime. What Habermas describes as the “refeudalization of the public sphere,”⁹⁷ would begin with the retreat of the independent thinker from the conversations of everyday life. Once the textual products of the intellectuals became commodities for the consumption of audiences—rather than subjects for debate among a critical public—fewer opportunities would emerge for writers, artists and philosophers to speak and be heard effectively.

Refeudalization occurs once,

the recognition in print of an artist and work was only fortuitously related to their recognition by the public at large. Only then did there rise a stratum of “intellectuals” that explains to itself its progressive isolation from, at first, the public of the educated bourgeoisie as an—illusory—emancipation from social locations altogether and interprets itself as “free-floating intellectuals”⁹⁸

This growing division between the elites and the masses in modern society would eventually undermine the political relevance of the intelligentsia. Gradual disengagement from the public sphere would begin when the texts and representations of the independent thinker were no longer tied to the debates that unfolded in civil society. Once the “parity among equals” began to dissolve along with independent dialogue in the salons, members of the intelligentsia would once again become quasi-feudal lords. That is, intellectuals

would serve as mere idols and celebrities who publicised their views “from above” as mouthpieces of their tribe, rather than engage “the people” down below.⁹⁹

Such early comments on the unfortunate distance between the intelligentsia and the layperson anticipated arguments that Habermas would later make in his essay, “Modernity—an Incomplete Project.”¹⁰⁰ While the Enlightenment project of the 18th century sought to emancipate culture from the grip of abstract speculation, and redirect its energies toward the enrichment of everyday life, this dream no longer seems possible according to Habermas. As he writes, “the 20th century has shattered this optimism. The differentiation of science, morality and art has come to mean the autonomy of the segments treated by the specialist and their separation from the hermeneutics of everyday communication.”¹⁰¹ Habermas believes that the alienation of intellectuals from the larger public continues, today, among the grand theorists and among academics who challenge so-called “modern” tastes and ideals under the guise of a new post-modern aesthetic that seems largely inaccessible to the layperson.

Yet, Habermas believes that such a move, or postmodern turn, will not necessarily resolve the original problem of an excessively rationalised political sphere and commercialised cultural sphere. Deconstructing the texts of the arts and letters, as an academic exercise, will not necessarily deliver on the promise of emancipation on the social and political front. It will not necessarily restore the relevance of everyday praxis – the need for a unity of ideas and action—in the deliberations of the public sphere. Until this restoration can occur, the project of modernity will remain incomplete as Habermas maintains. If anything, the author identifies one of the challenges to confront the otherworldly, academic today: how to remain relevant, how to connect meaningfully in a

larger society with allegedly fewer, open forums that remain free from the constraints of commercialised communication, disciplinary specialisation, and vested ideological agendas. In effect, Habermas seems to lament the retreat of the intellectual from a posture of innerworldly detachment, towards the other ideal-typical quadrants on the conceptual grid (see Fig. 1.2.).

Russell Jacoby¹⁰² voices similar concerns over a perceived flight from the public sphere, and the disappearance of an independent but engaged intelligentsia. He underscores what he calls a missing generation of young, accessible thinkers in contemporary North America. As he maintains, many of the talented writers, artists and philosophers—those who emerged in the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s—have allegedly abandoned their post in the public square. With the growth of suburban landscapes in the last decades of the century, what Jacoby sees as the decline of the urban, bohemian cafés meant shrinking spaces for intellectuals to write, create and interact. Survival would often require joining the university. Here, according to Jacoby, often with the security of their tenured status, the next generation of talent “became radical sociologists, Marxist historians, feminist theorists, but not quite public intellectuals.”¹⁰³ Their ideas would rarely travel outside the lecture halls, the scholarly journals and the conference rooms, because the new thinkers were often writing for peers rather than engaging a wide audience.

Indeed, one detects some nostalgia in the contemporary writings on intellectuals—a romantic longing for a lost age where the learned professions were apparently more influential than they are now, and where ideas perhaps carried more political weight than they do today. In the 1990s, Edward Said¹⁰⁴ reflected on the legacy

of prominent, scholarly figures, and tried to uncover the defining qualities of intellectuals, almost as if he were rescuing a forgotten ideal.

Said outlines a politics of representation as the central mode of address for the independent thinker. As he defines the quality, “the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, a philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public.”¹⁰⁵ What the author means by representation takes several forms. Intellectuals convey a message by re-presenting—by re-packaging complicated thoughts and critical perspectives in ways that are accessible to a public rather than to an elite audience.

The “vocation for the art of representing”¹⁰⁶ is the art of the critical voice, of asserting a position on matters that would otherwise have gone unnoticed. Representing a cause, what the author calls a principled stand, defines the role in the public sphere. As the author writes, “intellectual representations are the activity itself, dependent on a kind of consciousness that is sceptical, engaged, unremittingly devoted to rational investigation and moral judgement; and this puts the individual on record and on the line.”¹⁰⁷ As Said admits, working as a spokesperson and writer requires as much boldness as caution. The intellectual is, in many respects, “beset and remorselessly challenged by the problem of loyalty.”¹⁰⁸ How to balance the particular and the universal, how to reconcile one’s ties to community with one’s responsibility to humanity, are the challenges facing writers and artists as they represent their views.

Moreover, Said suggests that intellectuals can be representations in and of themselves. The identity, style and mannerisms of thinkers are often inseparable from

their work, just as the public and private worlds often collide when an author brings words and ideas to the masses. As he writes,

When I read Jean-Paul Sartre or Bertrand Russell, it is their specific individual voice and presence that makes an impression on me over and above their arguments because they are speaking out for their beliefs. They cannot be mistaken for an anonymous functionary or careful bureaucrat.¹⁰⁹

Said concentrates on the signature of the intellectual—the alleged aura that separates individuals such as Sartre and Russell from the ordinary, the everyday, the mainstream and from each other.

As an ideal illustration of innerworldly detachment, Said's version of the intellectual pulls in more than one direction. It combines a degree of marginality and freedom in the sphere of ideas on the one hand, with the expectation of influence and recognition on the other. To represent is not only to perform, to be present, to be visible. Intellectual activity implies a public rather than a private life; and, in the process, it often means adopting the conflicting image of the saint and the jester, the moralist and the eccentric, the philosopher and the tragic fool. Yet, as the author warns, being an intellectual ultimately entails some form of exile and estrangement, given how the hardened, unpopular critic and spokesperson almost “always stands between loneliness and alignment.”¹¹⁰ Avoiding both the comforts of solitude and the rewards of success means working somewhat outside the political realm, while living partially within its grip.

Said weaves the synthesis of an Aristotelian mean in many respects. His version of the intellectual is neither a complete expert nor a complete fool, neither entirely

rational nor entirely undisciplined, neither wholly apologetic nor wholly subversive, and is neither fully focused on the particular and the concrete, nor fully absorbed in the abstract and the universal. It claims the inner contradiction in a posture of detached-attachment. The grounded but independent thinker negotiates a middle-position in the cultural landscape from which to make representations, and stimulate critical debate.

Yet, Said's romantic portrait seems to deviate somewhat from Habermas' normative ideal of rational-critical dialogue in the public sphere. Although the author censures the notion of celebrity intellectuals, Said almost elevates public thinkers to idols worth admiring for their daring and darting displays. Publicity matters. The appeal of the spokesperson matters. What grabs Said perhaps more than the materiality of critical work is the intangible spirit of the intellectual gesture—the magical presence that allegedly transcends the specific arguments of a critical writer. Said appreciates the endearing qualities and principled character—perhaps even the unique style or voice—of intellectuals, almost as much as a courtier would celebrate the *bon mots* of cultured personalities in princely courts.

The account is not so much about the lively discussions that would sustain a public of critically engaged citizens, but about the literary delegates who take standpoints, who stand alone in exile, who stand before a mainstream audience to speak the truth to power. The attention turns more to the solitary outlaw as political agitator than to the social context of debate—the back-and-forth exchange among agents with competing views in a struggle for understanding. By stressing the individuality of the writer as messenger and guide of the social conscience,¹¹¹ such a conception of intellectual life emphasises a one-way flow of communication. The enlightened leader

transmits ideas to the public, from above, as the self-appointed voice of the powerless—as the outsider who speaks in the name of the unnamed and underrepresented groups down below.

The central contradiction in a posture of innerworldly detachment surfaces in Said's own discourse. The author simultaneously advocates distance and advocacy, both positive and negative liberties as a writer. He espouses not only *freedom from* obligations to the powers, but also *freedom to* pursue publicly "a cause" and "a mission" in the service of political values. As Said maintains in one section of his lecture, being in a position "where you are principally serving and winning rewards from power, is not at all conducive to the exercise of that critical and relatively independent spirit of analysis and judgement that, from my point of view, ought to be the intellectual's contribution."¹¹² Yet, the author adds in the next paragraph, "to get more political, whenever I have been asked for help by a Palestinian group, or by a South African university to visit and to speak against apartheid and for academic freedom, I have routinely accepted."¹¹³ The call for independent judgement in the former statement, and the phrase "to get more political" in the latter view of alignment in the public sphere, smoothly coincide in the same portrait of detached-attachment.

Such an orientation to politics and intellect assumes that public criticism carries political weight, by virtue of the writer's non-alignment and status as an outsider. Innerworldly detachment motions to the masses. It motions from a higher plane of abstract principles, into the agora of public opinion and the marketplace of ideas. One dreams of swaying minds with reasoning and prose—of moving men and women to reflection and action. Emile Zola's writings from the *Dreyfus Affair* illustrate perhaps an

extreme version of this gesture. The prominent French novelist of the 19th Century faced charges of criminal libel for publicly questioning, in "J'Accuse," the wrongful conviction of a Captain Alfred Dreyfus for treason. His response bears the markings of the same, central tension. He spoke as an independent agent—as a voice on an innerworldly mission to intervene *down below* with an appeal to absolute principles *high above*:

If you strike me down, you will only be raising me up. He who suffers for the sake of truth and justice becomes august and sacred. Gentlemen, look at me. Do I look like a man who has sold out? Am I a liar? Am I a traitor? Then why on earth would I be going to such trouble? I have no political ambitions, no sectarian axe to grind. I am a writer and a free man; I have devoted my life to work; tomorrow I will melt back into the crowd and resume my task where I left off.¹¹⁴

The passionately frustrated moralist descends from the light into the cave.

The publication of J'Accuse emerged as a symbol of political action and dissent on the part of intellectuals. The affair implicated the novelist in a national struggle over anti-Semitism, the constitution and the integrity of the justice system, even as the writer eschewed politics.¹¹⁵ For Zola, to be a political intellectual was to publish and publicise—to embody a cause, and to project externally the voice of a citizen. To be political was to play an unaffiliated amateur rather than a professionally bound jurist, legalist or partisan. Zola's innerworldly detachment was political, but perhaps only to the extent that he defended pure Forms—conceptions of Truth and Justice—with ambitions to rescue current affairs with enlightenment and criticism.

The above profiles of innerworldly detachment have emphasised what one might call the serious character of the independent thinker. Whether the individual is a utopian visionary or a pragmatic scholar, a stolid expert or a detached moralist, the assumption is

that intellectuals adhere tediously to their ideals. Some commit to specific values, traditions and Truths, while others might commit to the promise of unrestrained inquiry and dialogue itself. The portrait of an esteemed and erudite company of learned figures, however, appears against another ideal-type of intellectual: what Ralf Dahrendorf¹¹⁶ describes as the tradition of the fool. Amid those who govern the state, who glorify elites, who preach doctrine, who “claim to know ” and those who follow the lead, one finds the court jester who defies the conventional ranks of the social order. The fool remains unattached and unaligned—and often eschews the burdens and privileges of belonging to a class or profession. Often unconcerned with their own status—with conforming to expectations, filling prescribed roles, and answering to authorities—fools may confront powerful agents and institutions in society without fear of endangering their position.

Without shame, pride or self-interest, court jesters rarely have much to lose when they confront rulers and ruled alike with embarrassing questions. For this reason, fools are indispensable in public life according to Dahrendorf: “Certainly not always successful, and by no means always welcome, the fool nevertheless carried, in his person, the only hope of getting attention for the other side that everything and every political decision has.”¹¹⁷ By challenging and perhaps shocking audiences with their work, intellectual jesters not only foster dialogue on alternative values, but also encourage reflection on existing norms. Like the sophist and the rhetorician, Dahrendorf’s ideal intellectual makes the weaker argument appear stronger, if only to stimulate critical inquiry on the decisions of officeholders and the direction of the state. The court jesters of modern society thrive on their lack of real power and responsibility. Their freedom from obligations to conform— their freedom from responsibility as political servants and

spokespersons for a group, party or cause—means more freedom for risks in their pronouncements. Their peripheral status suggests opportunities. Independence from the centres of power not only gives such intellectuals the strength to challenge authority, but also makes them relatively harmless—even when they broadcast reckless ideas. As Dahrendorf suggests, the measure of a mature, open society often lies in the ability to tolerate—rather than persecute or banish—agents who espouse alternative views.

Other-worldly detachment

A posture of other-worldly detachment implies a retreat from immediate reality. The quest for knowledge, the pursuit of Truth, the love for an art, science or philosophy represents the aim of intellectual activity in itself. Whether the fruits of intellect make a tangible contribution to society, or enlighten a public with new perspectives, is less important for the solitary thinker. Instead, such an outlook normally rejects earthly distractions, while figuratively embracing the cosmos—the realm of pure Ideas and sublime abstractions. What matters most is the discovery of eternal and ultimate meanings that are usually remote in their reference and relevance to practical and political affairs. Contemplation for its own sake directs the final destination. Someone within the tradition could devote a lifetime to the perfection of grand theories, test obscure hypotheses in the name of basic research, admire the intricacies of riddles and paradoxes, search for hidden meanings in the classics, revisit the mysteries of a buried past, play the stargazer and the shaman, or simply roam with the freedom of disinterested inquiry. Here, the dissemination of ideas is not primarily for public consumption, but rather for members of an elite who share the same background of understanding and the

same affinity for "difficult" scholarship. The conversation serves those who command the language and assumptions of their discipline and tradition. The exchange attracts those who have the resources to decipher the bewildering codes and the loaded concepts that usually require a specialised vocabulary. The communications of independent, otherworldly thinkers tend to obfuscate rather than reveal their intellectual secrets before the laity.

Some critics would disagree with the idea of uniting power and intellect in the service of radical, political transformation. In the 1920s, for example, Julien Benda¹¹⁸ would defend the virtues of a dispassionate, contemplative life as a check against the emotional excesses and political ambitions that seemed to consume the cultural elite of his time. In *La Trahison des Clercs*, Benda presents the intellectual—or more accurately, the cleric or the scholar—as a unique, moral thinker who ought to embody the highest aspirations of a culture, as someone who articulates the ideals of virtue, justice and the good life. True intellectuals are “all those whose activity essentially is not the pursuit of practical aims, all those who seek their joy in the practice of an art or science or metaphysical speculation [...] and hence in a certain manner say: ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’”¹¹⁹ Accordingly, great minds ought to resist the passions of the layperson and the amateur thinker, either by fleeing the corporeal world in the pursuit of pure reason and pure justice, or by preaching universal principles as “moralists [gazing] upon the conflict of human egotisms.”¹²⁰ Therein lies the difference between the lay critic and the classic scholar, for Benda. While he would believe that the former has a stake and interest in the material world, the latter not only eschews the preoccupations of the mainstream, but also views the detached life of the mind as the highest aspiration.

Underlying Benda's traditional account is considerable resistance to the emergence of the secular critics, writers and pamphleteers of modern society—a resistance that echoes Plato's suspicion of sophistry and dramatic recitations in the *Republic*.¹²¹ When Benda turns to the intellectuals of his time, he observes how reason seems to no longer rule the passions, as he would expect. A desire for immediate results, and a disdain for philosophy and metaphysics, consumes most modern thinkers whom Benda believes have abandoned their higher calling. Rather than follow universal conceptions of justice and reason, intellectuals espouse national sentiments and narrow ideologies. Rather than extol the virtues of disinterested Truth, writers and artists would play “the game of political passions by their doctrines.”¹²² This is the great betrayal that the author outlines in his famous polemic: the demise of the detached thinker and the rise of the intellectual as a professional demagogue.

The author of *La Trahison des Clercs* regrets a perceived decline of gatekeepers in society who not only stand apart from the emotionally-charged controversies and violent conflicts in public life, but also speak-out in the name of higher principles. Benda looks to the early twentieth century, and sees,

[a] body of men who used to be in opposition to the realism of the masses, but who now, not only do not oppose it, but adopt it, proclaim its grandeur and morality; in short, a humanity which has abandoned itself to realism with a unanimity, an absence of reserve, a sanctification of its passion unexampled in history (181).

The turn to realism implies descent and decline—a great fall from the virtues of disinterested philosophy.

Benda's idea of intellectuals in politics is not the image of philosopher-kings who deliver peace on earth, but the portrait of corrupt clerics who have surrendered their otherworldly pursuits to join the mad mob below. One finds in *La Trahison des Clercs* perhaps the ideal-type of solitary thinker—someone who not only values disinterested Truth and free inquiry, but also maintains an unwavering commitment to independence from society. Whether such thinkers make this flight successfully is another matter. Unlike the contemporary *clerics* whom the author criticises, Benda's perfect intellectuals reject all particularistic loyalties in the real world. They would rather search for higher ground—for some moral horizon from which to censure injustice and defend the Good—than entangle themselves in deliberations that risk dividing humanity into warring factions.

Benda considers the implications of uniting power and intellect in the service of political goals or utopian projects. He rejects the idea almost entirely. The trials of public life ought to remain separate from the sphere of intellectual activity. Benda writes, "I entirely dissociate myself from those who want the 'clerk' to govern the world [...] for it seems to me that human affairs can only adopt the religions of the true 'clerk' under penalty of becoming divine, i.e. of perishing as human."¹²³ While this author celebrates the moralists and the idealists who escape the temptations of worldly pursuits, he knows how such utopian thinkers—because they commit themselves wholly to heavenly principles—would be destructive as legislators. They would be incapable of compromise. They would be unable to make the conciliations that politics regularly demands of leaders. Having their minds set on purely speculative arts, and knowing that their *kingdom is not of this world*, Benda's version of the independent thinker avoids positions

that require allegiance to the *kingdoms of this world*—whether a nation, tribe, party, guild, movement or project. The function of intellectuals, for Benda, is neither to figuratively steer the rudders of the ship, nor to debate the practical course, but to defend universal principles as voices of conscience on the sidelines.

While Benda laments the decline of the detached moralist in his society, Walter Lippmann¹²⁴ imagines a comparatively more practical or functional role for the learned professions in the early twentieth century. In *Public Opinion*, Lippmann positions independent thinkers as disinterested experts who develop specialised knowledge in their field. Given the complexity of modern democracies, Lippmann assumes that the masses are generally unable to digest the full range of perspectives on all political questions. Private citizens have limited time and resources to weigh all the options—to understand all the nuances of public policy when they form an opinion as voters. A functioning democracy requires trained professionals who can sort through the labyrinth of details and myths, claims and counter-claims, incomplete evidence and gaps of information. The expert supplies the conceptual tools to understand a situation clearly, by providing perspectives that address “divergent groups of people in a way which is neutral to their prejudice, and capable of overcoming their subjectivism.”¹²⁵ For Lippmann, the independence of intellectuals rests on their impartiality—their freedom to investigate problems without letting their beliefs interfere with the inquiry. The posture seems more otherworldly than innerworldly, precisely through this striving for objective truth—and a suspicion of amateurs who seem incapable of grasping such truth.

The ideal, dispassionate expert searches outward to a world in the pursuit of facts and empirical data, rather than inward where personal interests fashion one’s perceptions

of reality. On the one hand, Lippmann questions the validity of lay understandings and the knowledge of non-specialists. As he maintains in *Public Opinion*, people tend to see the world through their own lenses. Individuals carry an array of images and stereotypes in their heads when they make sense of their surroundings and the events in their lives. When amateurs encounter something unfamiliar, they usually replace what is unknown with their own expectations—their own, unfounded sense of the truth. In the absence of a sufficiently detailed account of reality, the layperson relies on prior understandings and prejudices to complete what usually becomes a distorted picture of the external world. Just as the Platonic philosophers are ideally free from the chains that bind the non-expert to false illusions, Lippman's specialists want freedom from the biases and blind spots that prevent the casual knower from understanding a situation completely.

As the author claims, “expertness in any subject is, in fact, a multiplication of the number of aspects we are prepared to discover, plus the habit of discounting our expectations. Where to the ignoramus all things look alike, and life is just one thing after another, to the specialist things are highly individual.”¹²⁶ The expert does not claim knowledge of everything on all subjects, but understands the particulars. Such a scheme fits well within the image of a highly differentiated society—one where specialists carve their small niche within a discipline, just as factory workers each fill their limited role on an assembly line.

Lippmann's ideal-typical experts relate to the political sphere as the mirror holders who *represent the unseen world*:

No administrative scheme is workable without good will, and good will about strange practices is impossible without education. The better way is to introduce into the existing

machinery, wherever you can find an opening, agencies that will hold up a mirror week by week, month by month. You can hope, then, to make the machine visible to those who work it, as well as to the chiefs who are responsible, and to the public outside (207).

The public needs intellectuals who hold mirrors to the world, which reveal a universe of intangibles, make the invisible appear visible, dispel misconceptions with reliable analysis, and draw interesting connections between seemingly unrelated forces at play in society. The intellectual is a translator in many respects—a scholar who renders hitherto unknown realities into something intelligible.

The intellectual's mirror on the world will only function correctly, however, if those who investigate stand apart—not only from those who legislate, but also from those who merely opine and presume. If Lippmann's ideal-typical experts have an influence on political decisions at all, they do so indirectly and unintentionally; they do so simply by providing their best assessments as impartial observers. As the author warns, “the power of the expert depends upon separating himself from those who make the decisions, upon not caring, in his expert self, what decision is made. [...] For when he begins to care too much, he begins to see what he wishes to see, and by that fact ceases to see what he is there to see.”¹²⁷ Often the consequence for experts who align themselves too closely with their audience is the loss of their independence. Once the intellectual fashions a mirror on the world, which intentionally serves some vested interest, flatters some officeholder, or reassures some party, the result is a tainted image—one that undermines the value of free inquiry.

Here, Lippmann describes a different kind of *betrayal of the clerks* from the trespass that worries Julien Benda. The latter scholar would have questioned Lippmann's

turn to realism altogether. Benda would have censured the suggestion that intellectuals ought to concern themselves with the particular—with the pursuit of narrow specialisations, and with the tasks of measuring, recording and reporting the alleged “facts.” To compromise the conscience for an impartial analysis, to trade metaphysics for an applied science, and to analyse the environment rather than examine philosophy for Truth, would all represent forms of treason for Benda. By contrast, Lippmann’s concept of betrayal concerns the loss of integrity within the scholarly professions. Experts betray the requirements of their science and their discipline when they preach *what ought to be* rather than search for *what is*, and when they no longer speak a language of common measures and standard procedures when they interpret their world.

Experts maintain a posture of otherworldly detachment when they remain within the boundaries of their field—when they insulate their work from the pressure to *influence* and *be influenced* in turn. Such ideal-typical scholars would rather profess their ignorance on some unfamiliar subject than offer an unfounded opinion or partial assessment. As Max Weber makes clear in his essay on “Science as a Vocation,” social scientists can rarely provide all the answers—especially when normative questions or ethical concerns are at play. The contributions of experts are generally limited. Weber recognises the inability of science to determine the correct choice in a moral dilemma or the right solution to a social problem. Science is unable to supply a worldview that somehow clarifies how one ought to proceed. As Weber conveys the responsibilities of the scholar,

Now one cannot demonstrate scientifically what the duty of an academic teacher is. One can only demand of the teacher that he have the intellectual integrity to see that it is one

thing to state facts, to determine mathematical or logical relations or the internal structure of cultural values, while it is another thing to answer questions of the value of culture and its individual contents and the questions of how one should act in the cultural community and in political associations.¹²⁸

Weber clearly distinguishes between existential knowledge of “what is” on the one hand, and normative claims that prescribe “what ought to be” on the other hand.

The scientific mind can respond to the former, but not to the latter without compromising its receptivity to the full range of possibilities, angles and avenues of free inquiry. For Weber, the scholar aspires to understand rather than dismiss or judge its object of investigation—including any values that appear diametrically opposed to the beliefs one holds in private and public life outside the academy. In this respect, the challenge becomes a question of balance—how to reconcile an ethic of responsibility to the truth in scientific and academic life, with an ethic of ultimate ends in the moral-political sphere of value judgements.¹²⁹

Unlike Lippmann who concentrates exclusively on the ideal expert, Weber envisions a broader role for the intellectual. The independent thinker is not a technocrat who only produces thick, statistical reports and detailed, cost-benefit analysis for the consumption of a specialised audience, but a skilled interpreter who facilitates discussion of the ends and values for which men and women strive in society. In an essay on “Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy,”¹³⁰ Weber gives the analogy of a politician who mistakenly assumes that policy problems are only disputes over the means—over the proper techniques for reaching an already-established goal. To the contrary, as Weber claims, conflicts over values are almost always present and rarely

resolved, because the dialogue over competing conceptions of the Good is ongoing. A policymaker selects a course that seems normatively correct amid the range of available alternatives. Yet, the burden of choice remains nevertheless. In evaluating a problem, the results of social science might help one assess the means to achieve an end; or they might lend insight into the possible meanings of a desired goal; or they might underscore the implications of pursuing one avenue over another. For Weber, however, the final choice,—the final interpretation of “the correct path”—rests with those who lead rather than interpret, who strive for influence rather than value freedom in the production of knowledge.¹³¹ As both Lippmann and Weber would probably agree, the expert who acts on the results of an analysis no longer navigates the world strictly as a disinterested thinker, but assumes the moral-political burden of prescribing courses and making choices.

Julien Benda, Walter Lippmann and Max Weber all assume a dualistic view of the relationship between intellectuals and political life. Theory and practice, ideas and action, interpretation and legislation are often presented as dichotomies that refer to separate, opposing spheres of activity. The person of action decides and executes, while the intellectual evaluates and judges from afar. Benda’s solitary thinker, who speculates and theorises, stands apart from the rest of society who are immersed in everyday affairs. Lippmann’s experts, who strive for dispassionate analysis, remain distant from those who persuade and coerce by power and convictions. Weber’s social scientists, who study the ends and values that inform policy, ideally keep their personal preferences from skewing the presentation. Yet, all three scholars view with some suspicion the prospect of having

intellectuals effect change by setting their ideas in motion as handmaidens of the political world.

Innerworldly attachment

This posture combines accountability to political institutions and the centres of power with a commitment to practical reason, a willingness to compromise, and an openness to piecemeal solutions. With this orientation, the intellectual in politics could be a dispassionate functionary, a prudent minister, or a skillful delegate who manages the flow of the political machine and the state apparatus. The focus is on the particular and the immediate circumstances—on mitigating tensions and solving problems as they arise. The approach to politics is more likely to embrace the trials and errors of small experiments in public policy than to embark on lofty and massive, but often untenable, transformations of the social order. The outlook is more realist than idealist. The style of leadership is more likely to value action over speculation, modest improvements over sweeping change; and is more likely to pursue achievable goals than to chase wild dreams. The attached, innerworldly thinker would rather let the contingencies and uncertainties in everyday politics work calmly on the conscience, than alienate the life of the mind from lived experience.

Under such conditions, the intellectual is almost always conforming to the expectations and procedures of a system—almost always bowing to the group-think of controlling agencies and powerful interests. These pressures mark the style of communications within the tradition. The attached, innerworldly writer is willing would rather play the devout spokesperson for a larger entity than speak-out independently, and

would rather stand in the background than take the front-stage. Yet, in the absence of a bold personality, the approach usually fails to engage a general audience with inspiring, rational-critical dialogue. The aims are practical and pragmatic. They concentrate more on *techne* than on *episteme*—on the means rather than the ultimate ends of producing, organising and disseminating knowledge.

In the *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci separates what he calls organic intellectuals from traditional intellectuals. While the former reflects a broad category of administrators, technicians, artists and entrepreneurs in modern states, traditional intellectuals represent an elite of ecclesiastics and clerics—figures who have historically been gatekeepers in areas of theology, moral philosophy, justice and education. Almost anyone who organises, produces, and distributes ideas in society is an intellectual in Gramsci's sense. The author can make this claim, because he views intellect as an expression of technical ability. As he suggests, just as “the entrepreneur himself represents a higher level of social elaboration, already characterised by a certain directive (*dirigente*) and technical (i.e. intellectual) capacity”¹³² to shape the economic structure of society, the feudal lords of antiquity possessed similar talents as military strategists. Anyone with a faculty for leadership—anyone with a talent for directing movements, parties, corporations, governments or associations—functions as an organic intellectual. Because traditional clerics view their theoretical pursuits as separate from politics and practice, Gramsci portrays their activities as generally outmoded in industrial societies that value action and results.

Organic intellectuals wield power by their skills at coordination and clever manoeuvring. Gramsci draws inspiration from Machiavellian philosophy. In his classic

treatise on political leadership, *The Prince*, Niccolo Machiavelli¹³³ stresses how maintaining power is a practical art that requires prudence, strength and ingenuity. Holding power requires endless shifts and skilful adjustments against the waves of fortune –Machiavelli’s own metaphor for the inevitability of political and social change. Flexibility is necessary for this reason. Adherence to tradition, alone, will rarely prevent the world from moving forward. As Machiavelli suggests in his analogy of the river, anticipating the floods in all their forms– those chaotic and unpredictable forces that could mark one’s peril—is essential for the leader who wishes to remain in control. Otherwise, one would surely drown. For Machiavelli, exercising power is like balancing on a moving water wheel.¹³⁴ One must constantly remain on top, tactfully align one’s speed, and carefully adjust one’s path. Any uncalculated moves might end the entire enterprise.

Just as wielding power is a strategic balancing act in Machiavelli’s world, directing the will of the masses is a pragmatic exercise according to Gramsci. Perhaps for this reason, references to *The Prince* surface regularly in his discussion of intellectuals and political action in *the Prison Notebooks*. As Gramsci describes the ideal, the activities of organic intellectuals extend beyond idle talk and deliberation. The principle mode “can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, ‘permanent persuader’ and not just a simple orator.”¹³⁵ These political organisers and social engineers—these “permanent persuaders”—appear essential to the formation of historical blocs of power, according to Gramsci. Intellectuals shape the course of events as chiefs of political parties, bureaucratic institutions, professional

associations, protest movements, guilds, clubs and unions. While the ideas and motives of groups might differ, the Gramscian intellectual emerges organically from the superstructures and institutions of the state. In the process, intellectuals may either modify the status quo or preserve a tradition, either build new social formations or re-define existing ones. Yet, their function would remain the same: to organise, shape and redefine ideas, interests and relations. They are the engines of the *Modern Prince*. By the concept of a “myth-prince,” Gramsci does not mean “a real person, a concrete individual [... but] an organism, a complex element of society in which a collective will, which has already been recognised and has to some extent asserted itself in action, begins to take concrete form.”¹³⁶ The organic intellectual enables and serves this process of formation.

Like the talented Princes in Machiavelli’s essay, Gramsci’s leaders—or *dirigentes*—of opinion strive to remain on top of the metaphorical, moving wheel of culture. When they are artists, writers, managers, innovators and philanthropists, intellectuals act as power brokers in civil society. Competition for scarce resources creates demand for figureheads who organise and represent particular groups and ideas within the larger community. Such intellectuals not only secure the interests of organisations, classes and societies, but also speak for the few and the many in a mass age where the individual is often anonymous. Just as the professional association might need a leader to represent the educated career person, a labour movement might elaborate its own intellectual elite to defend the working class and the poor. Moreover, either in concert or in opposition to leaders who directly control the State—who influence what Gramsci calls political society—the “cultural” work of the intellectual class penetrates the private realm of ordinary life. Such elites accomplish their task—that is, they secure

the consent of a following—by strategically infiltrating, ideologically, the life-world and shared assumptions of the population. For Gramsci’s ideal-type of intellectual, serving a group, interest or cause as an agent in civil society represents a form of active, political engagement in itself— whether such representation occurs at the centre or at the margins of the official thrones of government.

Karl Popper’s ideal of gradual reforms in political life also resonates with the pragmatic tradition of innerworldly attachment. In *Open Society and its Enemies*,¹³⁷ he presents utopian movements and their intellectual proponents as general threats to democratic life. Popper contrasts the sweeping, revolutionary projects of idealists, with the comparatively more restrained advocates of “piecemeal change.” While the former desires the total transformation of the state, the latter accepts modest experiments in society. While the romantic tradition proposes a rigid blueprint, which demands innumerable sacrifices in the construction of an ideal constitution, the piecemeal tradition modifies institutions gradually through trial and error.

The utopian engineer—to use Popper’s own analogy— not only wants an entirely new political machine, but also believes that the machine requires perfect conditions to function properly. The idealist demands a clean slate from which to reconstruct the world with broad strokes. Yet, sometimes this call for renewal implies destruction, especially when power and intellect combine to paint paradise with real, human lives. As Popper warns, “this is the way the artist-politician must proceed. This is what canvas-cleaning means. He must eradicate the existing institutions and traditions. He must purify, purge, expel, banish and kill. (‘Liquidate’ is the terrible modern term for it).”¹³⁸ The aesthete is

akin to a tyrant in politics. For Popper, those with an all-consuming passion for Beauty and the Good risk becoming blind rather than enlightened leaders.

By contrast, advocates of piecemeal change propose improvements to the machinery of the existing order without necessarily disrupting the whole system. The administrator who develops an innovative social program, the legislator who modifies the mandates of institutions, the entrepreneur who tests different modes of production or the philanthropist who supports emerging organisations are all examples of agents who lead small-scale experiments in their communities. Their aim is neither to realign nor to rebuild the whole regime, but to adapt and accommodate what already exists. Perhaps more importantly, as Popper has argued, the pragmatic approach embraces conciliations, incorporates the lessons from previous failures, and accepts change.

In many respects, Popper takes a Socratic view of the role of intellect in political life. Self-criticism—a willingness to question the extent of one’s knowledge, and an awareness of one’s own ignorance —ought to underpin the rational-scientific spirit according to this author. The goal of inquiry should not be the pursuit of solid proofs and definite answers, but rather a relentless questioning of assumptions. The ideal-type of Popperian thinker neither marshals evidence blindly to support a preferred conclusion, nor asserts uncritically some body of indisputable facts. Instead, the goal remains to falsify what one already takes for granted—to daringly ask whether an accepted truth is indeed true, and whether the professed wise person is indeed wise.¹³⁹ Popper offers the piecemeal approach as an ambitious alternative. He writes,

In fact, it might lead to the happy situation where politicians begin to look out for their own mistakes instead of trying to explain them away and to prove that they have

always been right. This—and not Utopian planning or historical prophecy—would mean the introduction of scientific method into politics, since the whole secret of scientific method is a readiness to learn from mistakes.¹⁴⁰

To be sure, Popper does not condone an elevated podium for the expert or scientist in public life, as does Lippmann. Instead, he defends an open society that embraces a scientific spirit in general— one that relies on experiences from the real world, and engages the problems of everyday life. He imagines an orientation that would rather search endlessly for meaning than claim the privileged possession of knowledge.

Otherworldly attachment

The fourth and final ideal type in our conceptual grid represents the extreme marriage of idealism and power. It stands opposite the Popperian ideal, and counters to some degree the Machiavellian realism in Gramsci's model of organic intellectuals. The posture combines utopian fantasies with political ambitions, merges love for big ideas with a longing for big changes, and blends faith in ultimate ends with the desire for absolute transformations. The politically aligned intellectual within this tradition wants not only to imagine alternatives, but also to realise their speculative dreams in practice, often with minimal regard to the costs or the means. The orientation assumes a blank canvas from which to paint the world in the image of ideals. The convictions of the attached, otherworldly thinker are not only unshakeable and all-consuming passions of the mind, but also potentially blinding and destructive in the political arena. In striving for the impossible, the visionary can easily overlook the actual world and its constraints.

When the powers go unchecked, such an intellectual will often put principles ahead of practical concerns, and will rarely convey a sense of proportion in policies and positions. The view on politics treats the current complexities, the contradictions and the exigencies of daily existence as obstacles to some greater vision. The fallibility of human agents and the imperfections of the political landscape are inconvenient realities that the intellectual in power would rather deny than accommodate and accept. The aim of public communications is to galvanise support and neutralise opposition rather than facilitate enlightened debate. For the militant of utopian causes, constructing captive images and impressions seems more important than conveying substance and detail to a public. The posture appears elitist and distant for this reason. Grand narratives and convenient fictions simultaneously conceal and reveal the path that the messianic leader prescribes for the people. Inspiring illusions take the foreground. If spin and spectacle serve a purpose, the goal is to persuade the multitude—not by appealing to critical faculties and a capacity for enlightenment, but by exciting the passions in a climate of hope.

A variation of the utopian orientation surfaces in the writing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau from the 18th Century. This author regrets the marginal status of the philosophic professions, and longs for an arrangement that aligns intellectual activity with the improvement of humankind. Rousseau laments how often scholarly pursuits appear either useless or pompous. In an essay on “The Moral Effects of the Arts and Letters” (c. 1750),¹⁴¹ Rousseau decries the impotence of the Academies and Salons of his time, which housed the activities of his contemporaries. As elites allegedly published their “mediocre judgements” about art and literature, and quarrelled over the nature of reality, ethics and politics, citizens in the streets would be starving. The arts and sciences

had lost their practical import, according to Rousseau. Critics and scholars would evaluate intellectual work not so much for its honesty and its usefulness in cultivating good actions in civil society, but for its aesthetic qualities—whether it appeared clever, well-argued or well written.

In many respects, for Rousseau, the problem facing the “world of letters” was the unfortunate divorce of ideas from practice—of the word from the deed. As he writes, “so long as power alone is on one side, and knowledge and understanding alone on the other, the learned will seldom make great objects their study, princes will still more rarely do great actions, and the peoples will continue to be, as they are, mean, corrupt and miserable.”¹⁴² In many respect, the remark echoes a passage from Plato’s *Republic*. In Book V, the author has Socrates announce, “until philosophers rule as kings in cities or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophise, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide [...] cities will have no rest from evils.”¹⁴³ The above passages underscore a challenge for utopian thought: how to make the transition from lexis to praxis—how to jump, for example, from the fruitful exchanges among writers and readers towards an effective unity of theory and practice in the political realm.

The prospect of revolutionary change is, indeed, a dream for the vanguard intellectual who engages in what Edward Shils¹⁴⁴ has described as ideological politics. Vanguard intellectuals not only align themselves closely with a coherent system of alternative ideals and principles, but also advocate the disintegration of current “systems” of thought, which appear in opposition to some preferred, idyllic model. The ideologue

would rather advance the total transformation of an existing order than embrace the slow pace of stable reforms. Proponents of ideological politics, writes Shils,

have believed that sound politics require a doctrine which comprehends every event in the universe, not only in space but in time. To live from year to year and to keep afloat, to solve the problems of the year and of the decade are not enough for ideological politics. [... Ideological politicians] must see themselves moving toward a culmination of history, either to a new epoch, totally new in every important respect, or bringing to a glorious fulfilment a condition which has long been lost from human life.¹⁴⁵

When vanguard intellectuals participate in the political process, they rarely work harmoniously within existing institutions, but operate against constraints as crusaders for alternative arrangements. A posture of otherworldliness persists through this resistance to pragmatic adjustments. As Shils argues, the visionary in power hopes to dismantle the existing framework, and encourage loyalty to a new system that matches the ideologue's vision.

In *Exodus and Revolution*, Michael Walzer¹⁴⁶ issued two comparable versions or readings of the archetypal journey toward a "promised land" in politics. He describes *Messianic politics* as a derivative of, but also a radical departure from, the less-volatile alternative of *Exodus politics*. Both varieties struggle for revolutionary ideals in the sense that both imagine a better place. Both long for an arrangement more attractive than the present condition. However, the means of striving for the end—for the "promised land"—differ in that the former ideal-type of engagement is more otherworldly than innerworldly.

With Messianic politics, the promised land sheds its concreteness and precision. The quest for improvement is no longer an ongoing pursuit in historical time and space,

but the desire for a fixed and utopian arrangement. It searches for a permanent End—a complete resolution and final rest:

The picture of ‘the new heaven and the new earth’ is worked out, instead, in opposition to this world, this life. It is not hard bondage but daily trouble, not the ‘evil diseases’ of Egypt but disease itself, that will vanish when the messiah comes. History will stop—an idea entirely alien to the Exodus texts, which almost seem designed to teach that the promise will never definitively be fulfilled, that backsliding and struggle are permanent features of human existence.¹⁴⁷

A political vanguard may even long to *force the End*. In doing so, it acts politically with an ethic of ultimate purpose rather than with an ethic of prudence and restraint. It desires absolute rectification and reversals of the social world. Walzer associates this zeal for total transformations with the schemes of revolutionaries who not only aspire to deliver humanity from error, but also claim that their activities—by forcing the End—will unconditionally guarantee the arrival of a perfect order.¹⁴⁸

Exodus politics is comparatively more moderate than Messianic politics, but more ambitious and visionary in scope than the apathy and reticence of those who passively accept their condition. It is revolutionary but not necessarily radical, because the long and wavering path to fulfilment is humanly scaled rather than sweeping and apocalyptic:

Absolutism is effectively barred, I think, by the very character of the people, frightened, stubborn, contentious. [...] The presence of the people makes for realism, not only because some among the people are tough-minded and skeptical realists, asking hard questions. [...] The people also make for realism because the pace of the march must be set with their feelings in mind, because their rebellions must be dealt with, leaders chosen from their midst, and the law expounded in their hearing.¹⁴⁹

It remains faithful to the idea of politics as an ongoing march across the desert, and through the wilderness. Exodus politics flows from what Walzer calls “the classic narrative, with a beginning, a middle, and an end: problem, struggle, resolution—Egypt, the wilderness, the promised land.”¹⁵⁰ However, the journey is not an absolute flight from one extreme to the other—from bondage to paradise— but an arduous, unending process on the ground where leaders must lead, defend, educate and accommodate the people. The march through the wilderness is always full of constant choices, backsliding and concessions. *Exodus politics* is less extreme than vanguard politics for this reason.

A vanguard commitment to ultimate ends in politics usually overshadows and undermines room for detachment—room for unbridled and playful inquiry, but also for doubt and scepticism. Vladimir Lenin, for example, viewed open debate with suspicion, as a force more disruptive than enabling in vanguard movements. It risked fracturing the unity of a political cause, by confusing the spirit of original doctrine:

the much vaunted freedom of criticism does not imply substitution of one theory for another, but freedom from all integral and pondered theory; it implies eclecticism and lack of principle [...] If you must unite, Marx wrote to the party leaders, then enter into agreements to satisfy the practical aims of the movement, but do not allow any bargaining over principles, do not make theoretical 'concessions.'¹⁵¹

The passage reveals an extreme illustration of otherworldly attachment in discourse. The discourse not only views the total organisation of intellectual systems as a political necessity, but also censures deviation from master visions in the pursuit of power. The daily trade-offs, which make praxis and *Realpolitik* possible, represent inconvenient realities rather than the preferred means of enacting ideas. The intellectual-politician

longs to save politics with systems, not with a series of compromises, but with rationalisations that promise a "true" path to human fulfilment.

Jacques Barzun¹⁵² shares the same reservations as Karl Popper does about the dangers of "systems-think" in political life. This author warns against intellectual-politicians who refuse to change their mind, who are unwilling to accept an imperfect world, and who are unable to admit when they are wrong. In a chapter on "The Case Against Intellect," Barzun suggests why such thinkers should avoid political office altogether. Problems arise when the intellectualisation of politics follows absolute principles, excludes alternatives, trumps one system of thought over another, and brands the other as evil.

The activity of refining arguments, responding to criticism, separating truth from falsehood and extracting clever insights, are all gestures that divide as much as they unite and preserve. For Barzun, the convictions of intellectuals risk overpowering the political landscape, especially when faith in "ideas" consumes public life:

To introduce strictness and rigour into the politics of adaptation, variety, and pluralism would be to give birth at once to a dozen groups of eternal enemies. The more firmly each group was 'dedicated to an idea' the less it could allow the others to live, the more each would fear for its life, and the more the life of the population would become a battle, of words and then of arms.¹⁵³

A functioning, civil state ideally requires what idealistic intellectuals seem to lack.

Democratic politics expects some level of worldliness and flexibility—some talent for casting a wider net over the diverse interests in society, not only in the rhetoric of leaders, but also in their policies. Barzun believes that critical thinkers—those who build careers

on winning arguments and proving the other side wrong at any cost—seem more likely to suffocate than thrive in a political world that demands countless conciliations.

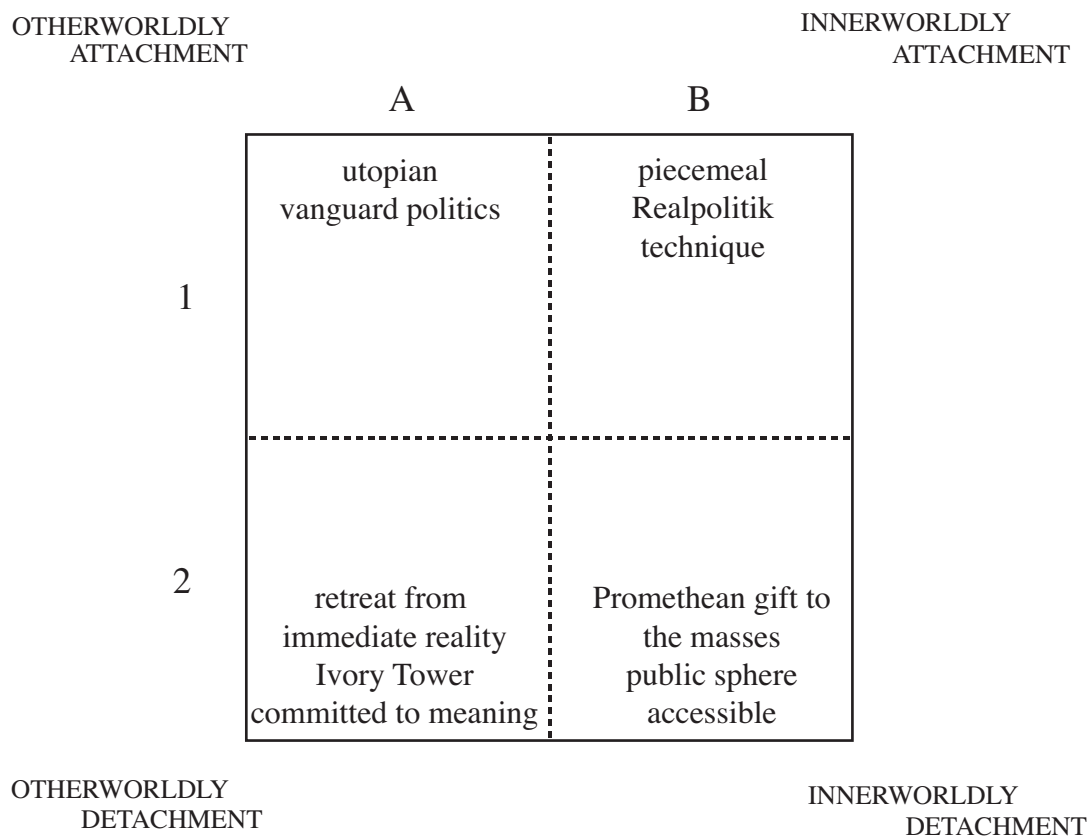
Although Barzun warns against intellectualising politics in democratic society, his views on the “proper sphere of intellect” are nevertheless elitist. Just as Benda laments the decline of the detached cleric in society, Barzun turns to his own generation, and sees a *House of Intellect* under siege by disorder and disunity. He recalls how the spread of literacy, the growth of public education, and the expansion of communications systems has gradually eroded the figurative walls that traditionally separated the learned class from the “commercial rump” of society. As he writes, “few acknowledge a proper sphere and matter of Intellect: most dream distractedly of sublime artefacts and antisocial fantasies, of scientific wonders and nuclear threats, of benevolent programs and civil principles.”¹⁵⁴ Barzun describes the intellectuals of the post-war period as fundamentally lost, diminished and powerless in a culture of statistical reports, thick newspapers and talking heads. The voices of reason must now compete with numerous other spokespersons in the public sphere, each with their own opinions, their own specialised jargon, and their own claims for the spotlight. In their effort to appease an audience, as Barzun maintains, most writers and scholars have traded clarity of mind for the latest “thought clichés”—stereotyped expressions that satisfy the common reader and listener, but usually contain only emptiness upon closer inspection. He worries that a growing obsession with idle conversation has almost killed the spirit of rational thinking. With fears of offending or embarrassing another party, and with fears of stirring controversy in the media, one avoids almost anything that might appear political.

Barzun presents the intellectual almost as the victim of a mass age, which has not only undermined the clerk's privileged claim to authority, but has also cheapened the exercise of reason in the public sphere. "Anything tinged with intellect must be enlivened," laments Barzun, for "the common assumption appears to be that the products of intellect are all dead, but that it is possible to inject them with life before they reach the receiving mind."¹⁵⁵ Accordingly, the drive to pander, popularise and entertain marks the initial fall of intellect, while Barzun brands those who willingly "take the leap" as traitors of the House.

Although the author shares Popper's concern for the dangers of intellectualising politics, his general outlook on the fate of the intelligentsia is reactionary. He not only channels a Platonic disdain for sophistry, but also laments the decline of an imagined, golden age when intellectuals supposedly held error and vanity in check. Barzun almost derides all four ideal-types of innerworldly and otherworldly orientations for betraying some virtuous equilibrium—for being either too accessible or too remote in the public sphere, and for being either too mediocre or too reckless in politics.

Columns and Rows.

An advantage of the conceptual framework, in this chapter, is the capacity of the horizontal and vertical axes to capture various, residual debates on the role of the intellectual.

Figure 1.3 Organisation of Intellectual Orientations by Quadrant: Review

For example, Ralf Dahrendorf's *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, which draws inspiration from the philosophies of Edmund Burke and Karl Popper, weighs the contending attitudes of intellectuals toward political change and social engineering in the 20th Century.¹⁵⁶ In this sense, the book explores some of the tensions along the upper row (quadrants A1 and B1), between otherworldly and innerworldly attachment to politics, on the question of reconciling ends and means. Mark Lilla's *The Reckless Mind*¹⁵⁷ associates an apocalyptic sensibility and messianic outlook to the political theories of scholars such as Heidegger, Jaspers, Foucault and Derrida among others. In this respect, Lilla directs criticism almost exclusively towards the vanguard movements as they reside along column A, where abstract musings translate politically into ultimate ends. By contrast,

James Allen Smith's *The Idea Brokers*¹⁵⁸ explores almost exclusively the constellation of policy elites, think tanks, technocrats, activists, and critics who influence public life either directly or indirectly along column B where practical judgements and political action intersect. Richard Posner's recent work, *Public Intellectuals: A Study in Decline*,¹⁵⁹ seems to revive the classic debates along the lower row—on the extent to which men and women of ideas can or should engage the public sphere (in B2) outside the confines of disinterested scholarship and academic discourses (in A2). What follows is an analysis of Ignatieff's transition to politics, as he deviated further from an initial orientation that seemed to approximate the innerworldly detachment of a sophisticated thinker in B2.

CHAPTER 2: INNERWORLDLY DETACHMENT: IGNATIEFF THE INTELLECTUAL

For scholars, intellectuals are sophists, jesters and clowns, unworthy of more attention than Madonna or Peter Mansbridge. After his days as a scholar, Ignatieff became a media personality on BBC. His TV shows provided him with the opportunity to travel to unpleasant parts of the world and write adventure-travel books about his experiences. Intellectuals hailed them as important. Thus, when another intellectual introduced him at the Liberals' policy convention last spring, he was 'a man who needs no introduction' (*Professor Barry Cooper, Montreal Gazette, October 2005*)¹⁶⁰

A lot of times it's easier to think of ourselves as sober-side entertainers than as anything else. The problem with being in the entertainment business is we're not very entertaining, and if entertainment is all we are really doing, somebody—a clown or an actor or a singer—is going to do it a lot better. (*Michael Ignatieff, Speech at Concordia University, September 2005*).¹⁶¹

As a writer in the public sphere, Michael Ignatieff occasionally delivered on the promise to make the weaker case prevail over the stronger. At first glance, this curious but controversial practice seems like a strategy worth avoiding. Sophistry can take the pursuit of truth in unconventional and often-unexpected directions. In place of widely accepted methods, assumptions and lines of argument, one boasts unpopular and sometimes untenable positions, often with few resources other than a talent for clever displays at best, and a reputation for specious reasoning at worst.

And so the rhetorical question lingers: "why defend the weaker side of an argument against the stronger?" One might want to believe that only sophists, dilettantes, subversives, simpletons and fools would travel a path that flirts with error and uncertain claims. Some students of intellectual culture, however, have included the public thinker

and contemporary critic within this long-standing, sophisticated tradition.¹⁶² The vocation has origins in Ancient Greece where professional spokespersons and paid teachers of philosophy would not only dazzle crowds with their persuasive logic, but also face charges for their perceived spinelessness and opportunism.¹⁶³ While the age of the original sophists has passed, and while the label has generally faded from popular usage today, the notion seems nevertheless useful as a heuristic device. To suggest here that Michael Ignatieff approximates a modern-day sophist is neither to discredit his work, nor to judge the value of his methods, nor to deny the particulars of history and context that distinguish the ancients from the moderns, but rather to advance a theoretical conception. In the ideal-typical sense, sophistry seems to characterise Ignatieff's unique posture of innerworldly detachment.

The assumption that sophisticated rhetoric is necessarily fallacious and deceiving almost begs the uncomfortable question of who defines the criteria of truth and error. The problem of uncertainty is an example, in itself, of an anxiety that sophists could consciously exploit in their activities. A sympathetic reading might view the playfulness of sophisticated logic as a strength. That the sophist can indeed find support for both sides of an argument, *without necessarily discerning the Truth*, as Plato has complained, draws attention to an unsettling reality. One confronts the complexity of truth-claims. The activity not only injects doubt over the stability of knowledge, but also complicates the taken-for-granted. The gesture challenges those who would rather deny than confront a plurality of choices and conflicting consequences. A sophisticated approach begins not by sweeping opposing realities aside, but by embracing their tensions and exploring their tangents. Through a combination of moral scepticism, naive defiance and creative

deliveries before an audience, the heretical thinker unravels the irreconcilable conflicts and inconsistencies that haunt the soul of the body politic.¹⁶⁴

For Plato and his followers, sophistry was always suspect because it entertained the "other side"—the side that probes and agitates, the side that seems deeply sceptical, and the side that corrupts impressionable audiences with clever diversions. In the *Republic*, Plato has Socrates blame the rhetoricians for "turning young and old, men and women, into precisely the kind of people they want them to be."¹⁶⁵ He warns:

When many of them [the sophists] are sitting together in assemblies, courts, theatres, army camps, or in some other public gathering of the crowd, they object very loudly and excessively to some of the things that are said or done and approve others in the same way, shouting and clapping, so that the very rocks and surroundings echo the din of their praise or blame and double it.¹⁶⁶

What troubles the Platonic thinker is the flexibility of their manoeuvres—the willingness of sophists to pursue avenues of inquiry that sway opinion in contending directions.

Boosting the other side, and strengthening the weaker case, have their virtues and rewards nevertheless. The orator may not only find pride, honour, vanity, excitement and self-righteousness in defending weaker causes, and taking a stand in the agora, but may also stimulate vital dialogue and debate in the process. As Fuller has argued,¹⁶⁷ sometimes the alternatives appear weak, only because they have the disadvantage of rarely receiving a full hearing. An open society thrives on public forums where disadvantaged positions can take the podium—where ideas can elicit reactions, and invite scrutiny, but avoid the de facto silence of censorship. Sometimes the intellectual task is to revisit what the rest was willing to discard and disregard. The amateur casts aspersions on the stronger case, by toying with the contradictions and the loopholes. A dilettante

approach has the advantage of freedom and distance in this respect, because the outlook rarely believes completely the convenient fictions that sometimes sustain prevailing assumptions in a community.¹⁶⁸

Michael Ignatieff claimed the above orientation to some extent. Even when he recognised the limits of amateurism, he valued the independence of the dilettante. He accepted the fallibility in a style that makes tentative assertions, establishes debatable connections, and leaves thoroughness and detail in the margins of a larger picture. Ignatieff admired an approach that takes risks, makes mistakes, and faces the uncertainty of knowledge in the end.

(Self)Representations of innerworldly detachment

Ignatieff's personal account of his own profession offers clues on his value preferences and his location on the ideal-typical grid in the previous chapter. When he delivered a speech on his vocation, at Concordia University in Montreal, he sketched an image of critical engagement that typified his own strategy as a writer. He reminded his audience of the difference between expert knowledge and public intellectualism: "English people put the word public in the phrase to distinguish the people who get up in public and 'stand for something' from the academics and specialists whose ideas might have the advantage over intellectuals of actually being true, but who do not take them into the market place of public argument."¹⁶⁹ He situates his public identity through critique of alternative roles. While he simultaneously flatters and mocks the otherworldly detachment of scholars who avoid public attention, he figuratively casts his lot with intellectuals such as Zola whom he praises for descending into the agora.

Ignatieff acknowledges the uncomfortable status of the label, “public intellectual.” As he conceded, to claim the title seemed pompous and arrogant: “It’s putting on airs, lining yourself up as the latest in a long line going back to Voltaire.”¹⁷⁰ Ignatieff asked his audience: “If I am called a public intellectual, and if I accept the term—pretentious as it is—where does my authority come from? What gives me the right to stand up here and pretend that I am one?”¹⁷¹ The authority of the public intellectual, as Ignatieff admits, appears less stable than the domain of journalists. The latter profession strives to remain grounded and consistent with the facts and observations, by being on the scene, by accessing a few trusted sources, and by distancing the investigation from heresy and overarching speculation. Caught in the moment, the journalist rarely needs an epic synthesis, which oversteps the bounds of a story to distil hidden patterns and permanent meanings. In the face of new information, the journalist revises accordingly, and moves ahead without having to defend yesterday’s interpretation.¹⁷²

As Ignatieff views the difference, public thinkers build reputations by waging a riskier war in the battlefield of ideas:

You go to intellectuals for arguments and opinions, the more pungent and personal the better, the more oppositional the better, and the grander—that is, the more detached from the daily news—the better. You go to intellectuals for master narrative, for the argument that puts all the facts in context, wrapped up in a pungently political analysis that attributes responsibility for some greater wrong.¹⁷³

He believed that the authority of intellectuals stems not so much from their expertise in assembling, organising and presenting the raw materials of an inquiry, but rather from their bold arguments, unconventional observations and unrestrained expressions. The

public thinker masters a cause, and finds theories to account for the facts—however rough and hypothetical. Even if the interpretation stretches the imagination, and risks appearing incomplete and misguided in the end, what seems to matter more for Ignatieff is the interpretative effort rather than the definitive conclusion.

Lippmann's hierarchical valuation of experts against amateurs, of empirical analysis against normative judgements, objective truth against intuitive understandings,¹⁷⁴ generally fails Ignatieff's view of his orientation to ideas. What mattered more was the wider lens on a problem rather than the narrow focus on certainties. As Ignatieff describes his own moral and philosophical conversion as a war correspondent and essayist, "what turned me into an intellectual was—and is—bafflement, not understanding what I see when I look at it up close. More than curiosity, bafflement, disorientation, confusion, even anguish, when I look at people shooting at each other and can't really understand why, because they can't either."¹⁷⁵ Here, one finds the voice of an amateur who strives not only to remain grounded, but also to present problems that defy concrete answers. The view approximates a sophisticated outlook that would rather explore than explain away the incommensurability of the world.

Ignatieff claimed to know the dangers of becoming over-zealous—of succumbing to the intoxicating effect of one's ideas and sense of self-importance as a public figure. Drawing from personal experiences, he describes the ease in which the media can transform critical intellectuals into ineffectual pundits. He accents a comedy of errors in the life of the professional commentator:

You do some reporting, you write a book, and you then allow yourself to be characterised, in interviews, as an expert in areas that at first may be something you do know something about, and then gradually you find yourself opining about things you actually know nothing about, and pretty soon, if you are not careful, you can't tell the difference between the things you know something about and the things you know nothing about. And then, in a few quick steps, you lose your authority—first with the audience who start to suspect that you are one of those stuff-shirt experts who are just making a living out of the current disaster, and then with yourself, since you start thinking the same thing.¹⁷⁶

His dramatised confession on the casualties of punditry is not only disarmingly self-reflective, but also revealing as an example of his claim to worldliness. Ignatieff rhetorically distances himself from the status of a celebrity—a role that seems uncomfortably close to his own career as a critical writer. Ignatieff touches on a central tension in the orientation of *attached-detachment*, as Melzer has described the ideal-type.¹⁷⁷ Ignatieff longs to be accessible and relevant as a voice in the public sphere, but without completely compromising authority and discipline in the production of knowledge.

Ignatieff wanted to avoid the extremes of attachment and detachment—of either blind submission to the public spotlight on the one hand, or complete withdrawal from the agora on the other. He wanted to be serious: "I'm not happy to be in the entertainment and diversion business. I haven't got the talent for enchantment and I don't want to be famous for being famous. I want what everybody wants, respect."¹⁷⁸ Neither the charlatan who panders to popular tastes, nor the academic who obfuscates knowledge, seem particularly appealing to the author. Rather, Ignatieff prefers an approach that is pragmatic without being pedantic, sceptical without being cynical and intuitive without

being naive. In this respect, he echoes Edward Said's¹⁷⁹ attempt to fuse Gramsci's version of *traditional* and *organic* roles in an ideal public intellectual who is simultaneously idealist and realist, who stands on the periphery of political power, but treats debate and criticism as politically valuable.

A hermeneutic that draws on concrete experiences—through contact and discovery in the field—seems more valuable to Ignatieff than either the musings of an obscure social science or the fleeting interests of mainstream media. He stressed the importance of being a witness:

You can't have authority on any subject—any country, any problem, any issue—unless you have walked the streets, talked to the people, felt scared, felt good, felt confused about the place you were in. [...] There was something singular about knowledge: it had to happen to you and you alone, and nothing else could substitute for personal experience. The authority that I acquired—what separated me from the commentators and from the academic experts—was that I had been there. I knew something they didn't.¹⁸⁰

To be there as an intellectual was to hold a privileged perspective. To be there on the ground was to encounter human struggle and conflict in their raw form. To be there was to look beyond what Ignatieff saw as the tidy, rationalised picture of the universe that often consumed analysts who worked exclusively from their armchairs in the university. His criticism of the *otherworldliness* in the contributions of obscure theory and disinterested research approximates Russell Jacoby's derision of the "Ivory Tower" mentality in which academics extricate their theories from contact with everyday reality.¹⁸¹

Even though Ignatieff valued concrete encounters “on the ground” over abstract musings, he desired more than a report from the field. Once again, he claimed the posture of “attached-detachment.” As he describes his task, he was there to outline options, consider consequences, and set observations within a larger framework of meaning—all while addressing an audience in a public language. He was there to explore the general alongside the particular, and move between theoretical knowledge and practical considerations—between a concern for abstract values, which transcend the everyday on the one hand, and insights that are context-dependent on the other. Ignatieff seemed to avoid the choice of either narrow engagement or complete detachment, idealism or realism. Rather, he advanced a hermeneutic that shuttled between the extremes—between the view from up close and the outlook from afar. To borrow the metaphor from Amid Sadri’s illustration of innerworldliness, Ignatieff wanted not only to approach the bright light of Ideals and Forms, but also to enter the cave with a Promethean gift for the masses.

To be sure, his self-portrait of the intellectual vocation was also self-serving. It cleared a space for his particular brand of intellectualism. Whenever Ignatieff conceptualised his personal calling as a public thinker, he often distanced himself from the unappealing qualities of a fictional other—a class of unnamed thinkers who, unlike Ignatieff, represented everything that was wrong with contemporary thought. He expressed almost the same dissatisfaction with the intelligentsia as Barzun¹⁸² did at mid century.

In an essay for *Queen’s Quarterly*, Michael Ignatieff outlined what he saw as the “decline and fall of the public intellectual”¹⁸³ at the end of the millennium. He described

the independent thinker as absent in an age where critique is now the domain of “worthy professors, cultural bureaucrats, carnival barkers, and entertainers.”¹⁸⁴ As ideas spin into impenetrable theories at the university, as dissent becomes an exercise for posturing journalists, and as values become increasingly inclusive and relative, the quality of intellectual engagement has allegedly suffered. The author holds the otherworldly detachment of the university disciplines in contempt as much as he chastises the narrow, innerworldly attachment of the administrators, the functionaries, the bureaucrats and the crowd pleasers.

The prospect “of defending the good and ridiculing the second-rate,”¹⁸⁵—a quality that Ignatieff (1997) ideally ascribes to the intellectual—has almost vanished in a world where television screens, pop celebrities, pundits and advertisements dominate the cultural landscape. The situation seems grim for the author: “In place of thought, we have opinion; in place of argument, we have journalism; in place of polemic, we have personality profiles; in place of reputation, we have celebrity.”¹⁸⁶ The serious, independent thinker appears marginalised between a ballooning culture of media consumption on the one hand; and on the other, a growing community of uninspiring specialists and careful analysts who rarely take positions outside the walls of their institutions. What is missing in contemporary life is the independent voice: the public thinker who risks the comforts of silence and the safety of the salaried, academic and technical professions. What is missing is the daring thinker who ventures into the public sphere, “to winnow the wheat from the chaff, to demystify, to clarify, to translate.”¹⁸⁷ He recognises the value of such heroic figures in everyday life, but laments their disappearance as the West enters the 21st century. He adopts the same *declinist*

discourse, which Steve Park¹⁸⁸ has identified in many, contemporary writings (e.g. by Russell Jacoby and Richard Posner)¹⁸⁹ on the ‘vanishing intellectuals.’ Ignatieff’s account of decline points to the same failure that Barzun ascribes to the “House of Intellect.” Underlying Ignatieff’s diatribe on the “carnival barkers” of his generation, however, is the implication that he is somehow unlike the rest—unlike the career-minded professors and star-struck pundits, in his caricature of the intelligentsia, whom he believes have fallen from grace.

Tragic Choice and the Negotiation of a Middleground

Of his published work, *The Needs of Strangers*¹⁹⁰ offers perhaps the most insight into his brand of political philosophy. In one chapter on St. Augustine, the author ponders the significance of two contrasting freedoms. The first is the freedom to choose and act in the world; the other is the freedom that comes with certainty—with the knowledge that one has chosen and acted rightly. Although the human spirit yearns for both, rarely are the two freedoms attainable together without contradiction. Therein lies the dilemma: “We have assumed that freedom is a problem of external constraints: give everyone enough income and sufficient rights, and they will be free to act in accordance with their choices. But what if it were the case, as Augustine insists, that freedom is a tainted good unless choosing is accompanied by a sense of certainty.”¹⁹¹ Without a Divine gift of certainty and Grace to mediate the choice between need and desire, and between the claims of passion and the rational conscience, mere mortals remain alone with the burdens and responsibilities of the first freedom. Human actions and decisions are, unfortunately, “bound to be blind, contingent, haunted by remorse and second

thoughts."¹⁹² Ignatieff insists that utopian schemes in Western political thought, such as the fantasies of More, Rousseau and Marx, have imagined an unproblematic union of freedom and happiness in the body politic. They often proceed by wrapping the individual will in the comforts of eternal fraternity and the reassurances of absolute doctrines.

Unfortunately, just as an unrestrained individualism leaves unresolved the human anguish of having to choose, the opposite course seems equally problematic for the author. Ignatieff asks rhetorically, "what is left of freedom if choice is invariably guided by the collective wisdom of the brothers, the citizens, the comrades?"¹⁹³ As he maintains, the romantics easily forget how ambitious plots to mould society in the image of ideals often leave unexamined the incommensurability of "ultimate ends." Applied together in practice, the abstract demands of freedom, equality, and happiness are more likely to conflict than complement one another without any tragic trade-offs. To promise a political community of individuals who are both free and happy is to flirt with an impossibility and a daunting absolutism. As the author concludes from his reading of St. Augustine, "there is no social arrangement that can guarantee anything more than a first freedom, with no necessary connection to happiness, a freedom estranged from the possibility of certainty, a lonely freedom. Individuals must choose, and they cannot be sure they have chosen wisely."¹⁹⁴ There is no winning formula, only the trials and errors of human struggle.

His acknowledgment of backsliding, as a condition of political change and human development, approaches Michael Walzer's conception of Exodus politics as an alternative to messianic and apocalyptic views of progress and perfection. To borrow

Walzer's concept, Ignatieff values an orientation that accepts the plurality of choices and the responsibilities of freedom in the long march through the wilderness. He associates this embrace of uncertainty with a liberal philosophy.

At the core of liberalism as a philosophical orientation, according to Ignatieff, is a willingness to let uncertainties inhabit the conscience with inner calmness and resolution. The diversity of human needs is undeniable for Ignatieff: "Some need religious consolation, while others do not; some need citizenship, while others seem content with a purely private existence; some pursue riches, while others pursue knowledge, power, sex, even danger. Who is to say which is the truer path to human fulfilment?"¹⁹⁵ Faced with a diversity of conflicting ends, a liberal politics draws a line between the public and private realm—between those collective needs that a state can satisfy, and the rest that remain a matter of personal fulfilment and individual choice. As Ignatieff illustrates the concept of negative freedom, a political community that stands for justice, and believes in protecting private citizens against harm by others, is the ideal-type of free society. A regime that stands for more than justice risks undermining the above ideal—once it jeopardises the freedom of individuals by enacting some vision of a path for everyone to follow. The latter vision promises Augustine's second freedom, but only at the unfortunate cost of the first liberty. He viewed negative liberty (freedom from) as a political promise that was more tenable and less intrusive than a heavy-handed management of positive liberties (freedom to), which tended to direct rather than enable possibilities and choices. Even so, both forms of freedom demanded sacrifices and implied uncertainties.¹⁹⁶ Ignatieff's dialectical criticism of values—his desire to weigh contending sides with equal scepticism, in theory, if not in practice—exemplifies his intellectual style.

Isaiah Berlin serves as a role model and source of inspiration for Ignatieff. As a project that began in 1987 and ended with its publication after Berlin's passing in 1997, the modestly titled *Isaiah Berlin: a life*¹⁹⁷ is revealing as an artefact from Ignatieff's scholarly career. It marks a sustained reflection on the life of the mind and the role of the intellectual. Many of the values, which Ignatieff later espoused in his discourse, found expression in his portrait of the British philosopher.

The image of a sceptical-realist—of a figure who is serious but playfully ironic, independent but worldly, principled but free—framed his presentation. As Ignatieff defines Berlin's world-view,

the sense of Berlin's position was that a liberal does not believe in a hierarchy of inner selves (higher, lower, true, false) or believe that there can ever be a political solution to the experience of inner human division. Human beings are what they are, and a liberal politics deals only with what human beings say they want. Their preferences can be argued with and persuasion is possible, but coercion—in the name of what they might prefer, if they could only see it more clearly—is always illegitimate.¹⁹⁸

From Berlin's philosophical work, Ignatieff distilled an underlying political psychology. To possess a liberal outlook was to see the ironic divisions in politics-- to recognise not only the inescapable conflict between human ends, but also the reality of competing values and the necessity of political compromise. What Ignatieff described as Berlin's awareness of the "tragedy of human choice" centres on an ethic of responsibility. The solutions to political problems are rarely straightforward. Because human goals are divided and often incommensurable, serious political choice almost always entails loss and sacrifice. One must choose often without the comforts of certainty—whether the choice is between private and public claims, between the individual and the collective,

between reason and emotion, or between needs and desires. No amount of classical republicanism or utopian socialism could emancipate politics from its inner tensions.¹⁹⁹

The biography of Isaiah Berlin celebrates the value-orientation of innerworldly detachment, by constructing and praising the idea of a free-floating thinker. The book combines historical analysis with an approach to non-fiction that enlivens its subject through the poetic devices of creative writing—all while searching for a general and permanent meaning to pull together the material. Berlin is Ignatieff's protagonist in many respects. Berlin represents the resolute thinker who sowed a middle-ground between the positions of far left and far right. He was the sceptic who nagged the conscience of both sides, who stood apart from the dreamers in the university libraries, and censured the fanatics who promised political paradise. Ignatieff borrowed a metaphor to describe Isaiah's intellectual sensibility: "Most of his friends saw him as an arch-fox—nimble, cunning, quick-witted, darting from subject to subject, eluding pursuit. Yet he was also the type of fox who longs to be a hedgehog—to know one thing, to feel one thing more truly than anything else."²⁰⁰ According to Ignatieff, Berlin was always following a nomadic path between attachment and detachment, between worldly scepticism and otherworldly contemplation.

A fox-like posture was always "betwixt and between" —always incorporating untidy clauses and inconvenient truths, which exposed the tragedy and the irony of conflicting political values. As Ignatieff profiled him, Berlin preferred the logic of the "both/and" over the binary, "either/or," even if the former approach made his philosophy appear inconsistent, as Ignatieff writes: "in convictions he was a social democrat, but he was more comfortable socially among Conservatives. He tried to have it both ways and,

inevitably, this opened him to charges of being two-faced. But there too he was a fox who longed to be a hedgehog."²⁰¹ As Ignatieff portrayed critics on the left, Berlin's rhetoric on personal freedom, responsibility and the tragedy of liberal choice came uncomfortably close to the laissez-faire individualism of a middle-class ideology. On the right, his toleration of idiosyncrasies irritated those who expected perfect Forms and unwavering convictions. On both sides of the political spectrum, his moral scepticism --his reservations about a unified conception of the Good in politics, which could be entirely free of contradiction—proved challenging for those who dogmatically defended an ethic of ultimate ends.²⁰²

Through the above portrait, Ignatieff dressed the innerworldly character of a sophisticated thinker in many respects. Often with broad strokes, he sketched in Isaiah Berlin (1998) the ideal intellectual—someone who was sufficiently grounded to appreciate the divided ends of human endeavours, but sufficiently detached to wrestle with contending positions without completely satisfying anyone. It was a posture that Ignatieff often internalised within his own engagements, whenever he sought to strengthen a disadvantaged position—whenever he entertained the other side—if only for the sake of public debate and critical reflection.

On strengthening the other side: From human rights to lesser evils.

When the stronger case happened to be a facile explanation, an excuse that masked as common sense, or a morality that pitted right against wrong in a non-contradictory fashion, Ignatieff would rather pursue the other side. It was the side that extended empathy in more than one direction. It was the side that reasoned through the

assumptions of antithetical positions, and laid bare the underlying psychology of opposing views. Ignatieff attempted to understand the inner logic of beliefs and positions that differed from his own. In the process, his intellectual honesty had the effect of presenting problems as tragically janus-faced—as always on the verge of collapsing under the weight of conflicting ends and unredeemable choices. To strengthen the weaker case was to offer for public consumption a challenging interpretation of the world without the muscle of moral consolation and absolute truth. It was an orientation that followed the discursive strategies and social function of Dahrendorf’s fool—a figure who either consciously or unconsciously undermines the stability of knowledge claims, if only to advance alternative interpretations and arguments.²⁰³

Sometimes strengthening the case was simply a reminder to look deeper—to avoid writing-off a situation with conventional theories. When Ignatieff tackled international problems, a combination of sceptical-realism and pathos formed his usual gaze. *Blood and Belonging*²⁰⁴ journeyed into the abyss of ethnic nationalism and racial hatred. With the retreat of the Cold War and the collapse of empires, argues Ignatieff, a renewed emphasis on tribal differences and ancestral claims to self-determination swept regions of the world as they recomposed their political communities. For the most part, the fragmented inheritance of the post-Soviet era did not deliver liberal democracy and civic nationalism magically from the wreckage, but opened the field for more bloodshed. Ignatieff lamented the rise of a moral, cultural and political doctrine, which not only discriminated by the sentimental bonds of kinship, race, and creed, but also legitimated violence and ethnic cleansing in its name. Unlike the liberal dream of an inclusive and secular citizenship, the claims of ethnic and religious nationalism trumped all other forms

of identification. It was a belonging that demanded the supreme sacrifice of neighbours, families, friends, careers, dreams and human lives to erect walls between an "us" and a "them"—to worship the *volk* through exclusion and suspicion of the other.²⁰⁵

Yet, Ignatieff rejected the familiar arguments that treated violence in failed states as the inevitable reincarnation of deep-seated grievances between divided peoples. The author writes, "we are making excuses for ourselves when we dismiss the Balkans as a sub-rational zone of intractable fanaticism. And we are ending the search for explanation just when it should begin if we assert that local ethnic hatreds were so rooted in history that they were bound to explode into nationalist violence."²⁰⁶ Ignatieff strengthened the case for believing differently. He argued to the contrary: how the transformation of neighbours into enemies was more about forgetting yesterday's friendships than about remembering a dormant history. It was about erasing decades of shared memories, collective joys and sorrows, which predated the claims of warring nationalists. It was about inventing an immemorial past—an origins story that replaced fact with fiction, and traded the present for an impossible future. Whether this clever inversion holds true, in practice and in all cases, is less important to sophisticated thinking than the question of its appeal and persuasiveness as an "interesting" idea.

Sometimes his arguments made concessions. Rather than simply condemn the brutality and barbarism of ethnic cleansing, Ignatieff acknowledged its deep logic. In one of several passages in *Blood and Belonging*, which revealed his talent for antithetical reasoning and for entertaining the other side, Ignatieff imagined an ideal-typical warlord who "offers a solution. He tells his people: if we cannot trust our neighbours, we must rid ourselves of them. If we cannot live together in a single state, we must create clean states

of our own. [...]Cleansing is the warlord's coldly rational solution to the war of all against all."²⁰⁷ For a dispossessed and frightened people in a Hobbesian state of war, argues the writer, the expulsion of perceived enemies contained an inner logic that seemed tragically sensible —especially when the alternatives meant annihilation by another faction.

Ignatieff claimed that he could be a cosmopolitan thinker and a liberal internationalist without denying how ethnic belonging and apartheid in zones of danger, unfortunately, answered a legitimate need for certainty and security. It provided protection, by meeting violence with violence.

He makes his case, rhetorically, by pitting a call for realism against a caricatured version of Western idealism and morality:

Civilian victims in the area are rightly indifferent to our scruples and our strictures about ethnic cantonment. For the West failed to save Sarajevo, where Muslim, Croat and Serb lived together in peace for centuries. It is asking the impossible to believe that ordinary people will trickle back to the multi-ethnic villages they have left behind, simply in order to vindicate our liberal principles.²⁰⁸

The plural pronoun "our," in the above passage, indexes the collective guilt in the foreigner's gaze. The author doubts whether well-meaning politicians, ambassadors, aid workers, sympathetic donors and relief organisations can fully mend the overwhelming sense of loss in the faces of refugees and torn communities. No amount of good will and pure intentions from abroad can fully repair what Ignatieff claimed to witness on the ground. He presented problems, not complete solutions. In doing so, his posture as an intellectual generally avoided the messianic and otherworldly promise of a perfect state. He largely eschewed the idea of a final answer that could permanently arrest and resolve human conflicts and daily setbacks.

*Warrior's Honour*²⁰⁹ does well to illustrate how Ignatieff internalised Berlin's philosophy of "tragic choice" to rationalise the unforgiving landscapes of the international scene. In one section of the book, he remarks how even the compassionate aims of the Red Cross must reconcile divided goals. Even the doctrine of neutrality, at the core of its ethical principles, bears the dark stains of blood. Although impartiality in zones of war might be courageous, it leaves unresolved the problem of negative responsibility—of ownership for the costs of not acting and not choosing to intervene. The Red Cross lives and dies by a simple, noble but—albeit—conflicted mission to reach the victims on all sides, and teach warriors to follow the rules of the Geneva convention, he argues. Whether the victims are aggressors or innocents, whether they fight for a just or unjust cause, is unimportant. What matters is the provision of humanitarian relief to dress their wounds, and secure essentials in the wake of disasters. Ignatieff concedes the advantages of neutrality—how the Red Cross not only provides unmatched relief as unarmed intermediaries in the many armed conflicts of the world, but can also negotiate entry into hostile territories without having the stigma of hidden motives.²¹⁰

Yet, Ignatieff unpacked a contradiction between the principle of impartiality and humanitarian ideals: "the modern human rights tradition sees war as a moral violation, and, between the war maker and his victim, human rights activists cannot remain neutral."²¹¹ The Red Cross might secure band-aids and fresh water for all, while it begs combatants to spare civilians and medical personnel. However, promising victims the right to live in peace and dignity would require an intervention to stop the killing. It would require the sacrifice of impartiality as a core principle, and perhaps the loss of an international reputation for non-interference. The author admits, "even within the Red

Cross, the conflict between these moralities [neutrality and human rights] remains unresolved. There are those who insist that the Red Cross's ultimate responsibility is to attack the causes of war, while others believe it is only there to tame the beast."²¹² Therein lies Ignatieff's awareness of tragic choice and the reality of loss in the face of irreconcilable ends: how to protect human rights and remain neutral in war without compromising the principles of one or the other.

The author presents both sides without discerning an untainted Good to clear the conscience. He lets the reader sort through the pathos of uncomfortable imagery, as he describes members of the Red Cross in Rwanda who could only watch through the thick windows of blast-proof bunkers, and wait until guerrilla fighters finished burning their enemies alive. He chronicles the raids on unarmed hospital tents. He explains how militiamen would follow behind the medical caravans, and target unsuspecting victims as they emerged peacefully from their hiding spots. He conveys the daily rituals of temporary relief amid unending suffering, as medics treated patients before returning the victims to the fields of slaughter.²¹³ The intellectual ponders the human costs of maintaining the status quo.

In the process of highlighting the incommensurability of ends, however, he directs criticism at two alternative approaches: (1) a value-orientation that focuses too narrowly on technical solutions in the distribution of aid and the maintenance of security, and (2) an orientation that focuses too abstractly on moral absolutes. Neither the otherworldly detachment of Julien Benda,²¹⁴ nor Popper's²¹⁵ innerworldly attachment to piecemeal reforms, adequately captures Michael Ignatieff's value preferences and discursive location. He instead strengthens the case for sweeping actions in *this world*, but makes

the argument circuitously from the sidelines, through rhetorical appeals to general principles. Ignatieff follows closer to Arthur Melzer's²¹⁶ view of an independent intellectual who believes in advancing political goals and the historical process indirectly, by changing minds and swaying public opinion, and by shuttling between a view of the whole and a view of the particular.

Although he claimed a concrete and realistic view of conflict on the ground as a field journalist and witness, his arguments subscribed to broad ideals such as freedom, security, peace and justice—even if he presented such values as incommensurable. Observations in Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan paved the foundation for Ignatieff's defence of aggressive intervention to protect human rights in unstable regions. A humanitarian discourse will remain largely ineffectual in practice, according to the author, unless such activism receives consistent and forthright support from influential powers, which back words with action, and make real sacrifices. As he maintains, "where all order in a state has disintegrated and its people delivered up to a war of all against all, or where a state is engaging in gross, repeated, and systematic violence against its own citizens, the only effective way to protect human rights is direct intervention, ranging from sanctions to the use of military force."²¹⁷ That the logic of aggressive humanitarian intervention, on the one hand, contradicts an equally valued prohibition against the invasion of sovereign states, on the other, only illustrates for Ignatieff the irony of conflicting ends within the Western political tradition.

As he argues, the rights of states and the rights of citizens each make different demands on the conscience of the international community. Whether the mission is humanitarian or otherwise, one must tragically choose the course without knowing if one

has chosen wisely. While an otherworldly scholar might dream of fully reconciling the competing claims of liberty and equality, of freedom and security, of individual and collective self-determination, Ignatieff's innerworldly posture evades the promised land of a tidy synthesis. In his account of the contrast between ethical universals and practical realities, he echoes the insights of Max Weber on the vocation of politics: "Human rights is nothing other than a politics, one that must reconcile moral ends to concrete situations and must be prepared to make painful compromises not only between means and ends, but between ends themselves."²¹⁸ While he concedes the double-edged sword of enforcing human rights by military means, he asks for critical reflection on the difference between casually endorsing cherished ideals, and acting on their principles. He complains that the former often waits for clean hands, while the latter faces the unpredictable, moral burden of accomplishing the task.

*Virtual War*²¹⁹ reveals another example of efforts to invert what Ignatieff saw as familiar assumptions, in the West, about the destructiveness of military interventions and the neo-colonial adventures of foreign powers in zones of danger. The costs of defending human rights with brute force seemed uncomfortably high, in 1999, when a coalition under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) bombed Kosovo in response to Milosevic's policies of ethnic cleansing. Yugoslav forces unleashed the beast of international concern when they began removing ethnic-Albanians from the region. Faced with countless media reports of victims fleeing the area in the thousands, just as carpets of American missiles rained from the skies, there was perhaps a strong case for condemning NATO's mission as coldly misguided. As Ignatieff describes public opinion at the time, there were perhaps good reasons to call the mission a vain effort to meet

human rights abuses with a blitzkrieg of unmatched destruction --to meet violence with more violence. As warheads blasted through infrastructure, and as civilian casualties increased over the 78-day campaign, the means seemed grossly disproportionate. The coalition went too far as an intervening power.²²⁰

Ignatieff takes the above position in another direction, however. He blamed not so much the ambitious use of force, but the lack of commitment, sacrifice and willpower on the part of Western states. He complained not about NATO going too far, but rather its failure to go far enough. The strikes against Kosovo in 1999 represented a strategy of half-measures on the part of foreign powers. In the absence of strong support at home for the deployment of ground troops, laments Ignatieff, “America and its NATO allies fought a virtual war because they were neither ready nor willing to fight a real one.”²²¹ Means and ends conflicted, almost as much as the goals of risk-adverse strategies competed with humanitarian ideals. He describes the tragic trade-off between values:

The alliance's moral preferences were clear: preserving the lives of their all-volunteer service professionals was a higher priority than saving innocent foreign civilians. This was the moral calculus of war throughout the ages, but in a television age it has a political cost: would the public stand rising civilian casualties if the bombing was not having any discernible effect.²²²

The stream of media images gave the impression that civilians were fleeing the wrath of tomahawk cruise missiles, when in fact—as Ignatieff maintained—the mass exodus to the borders was forcefully orchestrated by Milosevic and his Yugoslav army. It would have happened irrespective of the bombing. However, Ignatieff believed that members of NATO could have done more to stop the ethnic cleansing, had they positioned troops in

the field to counter the forceful expulsion of ethnic-Albanians from their homes. For the intellectual, hindsight puts the cold irony of the situation in perspective.

As an argument that publicly sides with what he claimed as a neglected alternative—his defence of aggressive intervention and the necessity of human sacrifice – Ignatieff disrupts the alleged “bad faith” in the popular case for demanding bloodless wars and moral impunity. He attributes blame for the failures of Kosovo, not by isolating a specific cause with relative certainty, but by loosely highlighting the general contradictions—how an ambitious humanitarian goal met the resistance of half-measures and conflicted strategies in practice.

Nevertheless, as much as Ignatieff values toleration of idiosyncrasies, and as much as he concedes the tragedy of liberal choice, a longing persists for rational consistency. Although he celebrates the virtues of sceptical-realism, his interpretative methods are indebted to the hypothetical-deductive methods of Max Weber. The intellectual deploys Weberian ideal-types whenever he imagines how agents could have acted, if their choices had aligned perfectly with values in a non-contradictory fashion. That the human world of conflicting goals and unpredictable outcomes usually betrays this hypothetical picture of realised ideals is often the revelation that fuels Ignatieff’s scepticism as a critic. He asks for consistency in theory, if only to show how ironically inconsistent actions and beliefs often are in practice. He imagines what the response to Kosovo could have been, if only to show where and how it failed.

In a series of commissioned essays for the New York Times, between 2001 and 2004,²²³ Ignatieff takes the above method and his dialectical criticism of ends and means to the extreme. In “Nation-building light,” he asks his readers to first concede the

imperialist nature of the war on terror and the mission in Afghanistan: "This may be of a shock to Americans, who don't like to think of their country as an empire. But what else can you call America's legions of soldiers, spooks and Special Forces straddling the globe."²²⁴ He indexes an ideal-type of empire, which has the military power to reorder the world, the moral imperative to export its system of values, the administrative capacity for indirect rule of faraway lands, and a forceful presence in local cultures, politics and societies to keep the multitude in awe.

Ignatieff recognises how anti-colonialists and liberal-democratic traditions in the West may censure the prospect of violating sovereign states, toppling regimes, and implementing structures of foreign rule. Even so, Ignatieff argues strongly for international intervention when the alternatives of inaction mean chaos and large-scale crimes against humanity:

Imperialism doesn't stop being necessary just because it becomes politically incorrect. Nations sometimes fail, and when they do, only outside help—imperial power—can get them back on their feet. Nation-building is the kind of imperialism you get in a human rights era, a time when great powers believe simultaneously in the right of small nations to govern themselves and in their own right to rule the world.²²⁵

His justification for backing humanitarian relief with military force is premised on Weber's definition of the state as an institutional order that monopolises the legitimate use of violence within a given jurisdiction. Failed states in need of imperial rescue, according to Ignatieff, have effectively lost this monopoly within their territories. Once the means of violence have fallen discriminately under the grip of factional interests, the result is usually a state of war and terror.

Ignatieff's translation of Weber's political philosophy inverts and reframes the logic of disorder and unrest in places such as Afghanistan and the Balkans. Ignatieff rationalises the meaning of political chaos and despotism by treating it negatively—as the absence rather than the presence of something. Without the power and will to secure the liberal ideal of negative liberty, by controlling the means of violence, the Western fantasy of transforming failed states into liberal democracies through humanitarian intervention seems doomed to failure, for the author. Efforts to provide essentials, create schools, install infrastructure, implement free elections, and rebuild public institutions appear unsustainable, according to Ignatieff, without the permanent presence of forces—whether foreign or domestic—to police violence on the ground.²²⁶

*Empire Lite*²²⁷ cemented the above point in a collection of essays. The problem with nation-building and the wholesale export of humanitarian ideals, argues Ignatieff, is not so much the imperialist undertones of its goals, but the irony of meeting lofty ends with ignoble efforts: "we say we believe in self-determination, and we confiscate all power into our own hands; we say we respect local cultures and traditions, and yet we are often as contemptuous, behind the local's backs as the imperialists of old. Finally, we say we are going to stay the course, when we are always looking for the exit."²²⁸ As he views the unfortunate result, well-meaning humanitarians and interventionists may not only betray the nations they adopt as causes, but also betray the principles that a human rights culture pretends to defend.

Ignatieff's call for consistency on the direction of foreign policy is one area where the intellectual deviates slightly from the ideal-type of innerworldly detachment, to embrace an otherworldly ethic of ultimate ends. What seems intolerable for Ignatieff is

the reality of the situation—how the choices and the means of powerful agents usually fail a perfect vision of nation-building. What seems intolerable is the bad faith that masks these contradictions. That self-delusion in politics might run as deep as the other, idiosyncrasies in human affairs—however unavoidable—seems unacceptable to Ignatieff. Here, the idealism and rationalism of the critic assume the foreground—as a yearning to somehow rectify the blindness of the public and the powers.

His support for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 is an example where the intellectual departed from a mere exploration of alternatives, and speculative analysis of strategic failures in the past, to endorse specific courses of action in the present. As he wrote in a famous essay for the New York Times, "The Burden,"²²⁹ the United States faces an imperial responsibility as the last, remaining superpower on the international scene. Should an American empire with liberal-democratic values and the resources to change regimes assume the burden—a negative responsibility—to rescue the world when it can? Ignatieff answers in the affirmative:

The disagreeable reality for those who believe in human rights is that there are some occasions—and Iraq may be one of them—when war is the only real remedy for regimes that live by terror. This does not mean the choice is morally unproblematic. The choice is one between two evils, between containing and leaving a tyrant in place and the targeted use of force, which will kill people but free a nation from its grip.²³⁰

That he presents the choice between two evils, rather than between an untainted Good and an unquestionable evil, is once again an extension of his professed pragmatism.

The passage takes Berlin's philosophy of tragic choice beyond a posture of scholarly detachment, which simply highlights problems and explores conflicting ends

for the sake of public discussion, but instead aligns intellectual support for a solution. Although Ignatieff still acknowledges the reality of setbacks and backsliding in human pursuits, he sheds some of the innerworldliness in Michael Walzer's ideal-type of Exodus politics. Ignatieff presents the emancipation of the Iraqi people, not so much with the narrative of a long "march through the wilderness"—of an unending struggle for freedom and deliverance with countless adjustments—but as a "targeted" attempt by an outsider *to force the end*: the abrupt arrival of a "better place," free from terror and tyranny. When he admits that violence "will kill people, but free a nation from its grip,"²³¹ Ignatieff deploys the future tense but without a *conditional* modifier—without an indication of uncertainty. Within the rhetorical space of the article, foreign intervention and sanctioned violence represents not only the means to a political end, but also implies a guarantee. The use of violence in an invasion "will kill people" but it will also secure the promised land: "a nation [free] from its grip."

Ignatieff eventually conceded what he saw as partial blindness in the above defence, which failed to anticipate the casualties in Iraq after the initial invasion and the removal of Saddam Hussein. He revisited his position in the "Burden" a year later in the New York Times. In "The Year of Living Dangerously," he now questioned his original faith in the ability of the American regime to secure peace and freedom in the region. With Iraq, the ends could not justify the means, because the means fundamentally betrayed the ends: "Now I realise that intentions do shape consequences. An administration that cared more genuinely about human rights would have understood that you can't have human rights without order and that you can't have order once victory is won if planning for an invasion is divorced from planning for an occupation."²³² The

author manoeuvres his argument in ways that enable him to confess errors in judgement without necessarily compromising his longstanding defence of intervention.

Much like Machiavelli's advice in the *Prince*, Ignatieff made a rhetorical appeal in "the Burden" for taking risks— for choosing, as he later wrote, "the least bad of the available options,"²³³ instead of surrendering the choice entirely to the beast of Fortune. Although he admits that hope and illusion blindfolded his original support for the mission, his position remained relatively the same in the aftermath and in the wake of declining public support for the war. For Ignatieff, the mistake was not the decision to invade, but the decision to orchestrate a poorly co-ordinated invasion, which betrayed the promise to leave the country in a better condition.

The rhetoric in "The Burden" assumed the ethos of Gramsci's organic intellectual in some respects. It served to mobilise public opinion around a political cause, by offering arguments in support of the use of force by an intervening power in the international arena. It attempted to build consensus, rally the collective will, and draw attention to specific, policy options.

By contrast, "Lesser Evils"²³⁴ offers an extreme illustration of Ignatieff's embrace of the sophistical model of innerworldly detachment. Unlike his approach in "The Burden," the author evaded clear alignment with political solutions. To provoke public debate on political ethics in a war on terror, "Lesser Evils" openly explored the grounds for adhering steadfastly to absolutes within the humanistic tradition. If the values of liberty, equality, peace and security are undermining each other in the fight against terrorism, real sacrifices seem almost unavoidable to Ignatieff. If defeating terror requires

that free states exercise their monopoly over violence to keep clandestine threats at bay, the intellectual asks for reflection on the tolerable limits of such compromises.

The essay escaped comfortable answers. It mainly posed a question: How will free societies cope, if ever coercion, secrecy, deception, suspension of rights, and torture become the lesser evils, which prevent a greater evil of outright chaos and terror? As he confesses, "putting the problem in this way is not popular,"²³⁵ for most commentators would rather retreat to the safety of their moralistic boxes than walk near the abyss of slippery slopes: "But thinking about lesser evils is unavoidable. Sticking too firmly to the rule of law simply allows terrorists too much leeway to exploit our freedoms. Abandoning the rule of law altogether betrays our most valued positions. To defeat evil we may have to traffic in evils."²³⁶ The question for Ignatieff was no longer whether America should consider lesser evils. He claimed that the country has already taken the darker path—from indefinite detentions and targeted assassinations to pre-emptive strikes. The challenge ahead centred on balancing the extremes: how to negotiate a compromise between self-restraint and an "'anything goes' brigade."²³⁷ Ignatieff pondered the tragic choice—the trade-offs between the protection of civil liberties at the price of security on the one hand, and measures of counter-terrorism on the other, which may appear effective in emergencies, but undermine human rights and the freedoms they claim to defend.²³⁸

The discourse tacitly embraced the Habermassian ideal of rational-critical dialogue. It asked only for consideration and an open mind—a willingness to weigh alternatives, compare ends with means, and tentatively debate the consequences of an action. However, rarely was the discourse on lesser evils about prescribing a winning

course, celebrating absolutes, and acting without first examining convictions and their implications. As Ignatieff's intellectual style met the drama of a modern campaign, the question remains how such an orientation towards innerworldly detachment and sophisticated rhetoric navigates the political spectacle of public speeches and media appearances during an election and leadership contest.

CHAPTER 3: OTHERWORLDLY ATTACHMENT: IGNATIEFF THE POLITICIAN

The previous chapter located Ignatieff's style and orientation as an independent intellectual, by analysing his work against the ideal-types and sub-types of otherworldly and innerworldly detachment. For the most part, given the values that he espoused as writer, Ignatieff tended towards the latter posture. As he entered the political arena in Canada, first by winning a seat in Ottawa for the Liberals in January 2006, and then by running in the leadership race through to December 2006, his message in this period revealed another character. Ignatieff began to surrender his sophisticated outlook, his sceptical realism, and his talent for juggling an uncomfortable middle ground between extremes. What emerged more often was an otherworldly attachment to party and country. The ends of political communication and the aims of intellectual engagement were in tension, as Ignatieff sought to reconcile the competing halves of his new identity.

This chapter presents an analysis of Ignatieff's speeches and press coverage, between early 2005 and the end of 2006. The period of interest begins with his keynote address at the Liberal Policy convention in March 2005, spans not only his first campaign as the Liberal nominee for a riding in the winter election of 2005-2006, but also his run for the leadership of the Liberal party, and concludes with his defeat at the Montreal convention in December 2006.

Drawing on the conceptual framework in the first chapter (see Figure 1.3), the interpretation offered here distils four principle shifts in Ignatieff's discourse. Some of these movements can be expressed negatively—as the discursive rejection of alternative ideal-types of engagement along column A (Figure 1.3). First, Ignatieff dissociated his

political ethos from the values of piecemeal politics, approaches that focus on technique, and strategies that stress caution and compromise in the elaboration of concrete means and tangible goals. In many respects, he rallied against the value-orientations in the upper-right quadrant 1B of Figure 1.3 where an ethic of responsibility ideally keeps the striving for ultimate ends in check. Second, the intellectual began to move away from orientations in the lower row, once the performance shifted from criticism of the powers and avoidance of sectional interests, to the elaboration of targeted messages and symbols for the consumption of the party and his supporters. This alignment and identification with group interests approximates, to some extent, the strategy of Gramsci's organic intellectual. However, he deviated from this ideal-type when he focused attention on himself and his personal ambitions. Third, Ignatieff suppressed his former identification with the values of the free-floating thinker whose conflicted posture of "attached-detachment" in the public sphere fits ideally within quadrant 2B. Finally, Ignatieff's fourth transformation follows a discursive embrace of revolutionary, vanguard politics in which the messianic undertones of his rhetoric oriented toward a posture of otherworldly attachment in quadrant 1A.

Despite evidence of the above adjustments, columnists and reporters frequently contested these attempts at self-reinvention. Representations of the intellectual as a "political dilettante" and an ineffectual demagogue persisted in press coverage. Such mediated constructions marked a significant reactionary trend in the political communications that shaped Ignatieff's transition—namely suspicion on the part of commentators who questioned his capacity to shed his past and adapt. What emerged was the image of a figure whose divisiveness as an intellectual, and idealism as a candidate,

failed to resonate with the electorate. This media-derived portrait merits consideration as a component of Ignatieff's public identity—as the anti-thesis that contests his own self-presentation as a leader.

Rejecting piecemeal politics and *intellectualising* public policy.

One example of a discursive turn towards otherworldly attachment occurs through Ignatieff's tacit rejection of what Karl Popper calls piecemeal politics. In other words, some of the public speeches direct criticism at the prevalence of small-scale reforms, the procedural restraints of organisations, and the gradual pace of methods in public policy, which lack a fully formed blueprint to guide political action. Against the piecemeal approach, the Utopian alternative remains fixed on the horizon—fixed on a vision of ideal conditions—while it orchestrates the means of securing ultimate aims. Piecemeal politics avoids the need for a definitive, master plan to steer progressive change. Politicians who follow piecemeal methods may or may not have an *a priori* vision in mind, or “hope that mankind will one day realise an ideal state, and achieve happiness and perfection on earth.”²³⁹ Rather, they remain content with an ongoing process of negotiation, with the accommodation of diverse interests, comparatively simple adjustments to existing institutions, and modest trials. Piecemeal methods pursue relatively contained experiments in which “failure” entails minimal risk and damage to the larger society.²⁴⁰ Ignatieff occasionally reacted against what he saw as the mediocrity in such techniques. Through this resistance, he intellectualised public policy as a project that ought to strive consistently for higher principles.

Some of Ignatieff's earliest trials with a new political discourse came in a series of keynote addresses throughout 2005, which foreshadowed his campaign for the leadership in 2006. The challenge for the orator in politics was an exercise in translation: how to repackage and represent what he valued as a critical writer for the consumption of prospective supporters. If Ignatieff incorporated perspectives from his intellectual work, the discussion usually centred on ambitious calls for action rather than on the solemn contemplation of divided goals. There was more emphasis on the solutions than on the problems. However idealistic or pragmatic the proposals may have seemed, Ignatieff now supplied answers in place of questions.

Early in his transition to politics, there were still occasions when Ignatieff could play the sophist, and attempt to strengthen the case for a weakened cause. In an invited speech for the Constitutional Cases conference at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto, on 15 April 2005, he made the case for re-opening the debate on Canadian unity and the renewal of federalism. He rehearsed arguments from *Blood on Belonging* when he acknowledged how Quebec can still be a nation within Canada without the need for a separate nation-state. So long as the two orders of government respect the division of powers, and co-operate to secure majority and minority interests, the system should work. As he asked rhetorically, "why go to the trouble of independence, when existing institutions do the job?"²⁴¹ Even so, he acknowledged the challenge for federalists: how the persuasiveness of claims for Quebec sovereignty, and apathy in the rest of Canada, often leave the impression of a lost cause for Canada.

He noted the level of fatigue that overcomes cynics when they hear wearisome arguments and familiar promises for constitutional reform. He remarks, "what is

dangerous about the case for separation—it could be called the case from exhaustion—is that it rings true for many Canadians across the country, for those who feel too many compromises have already been made."²⁴² From repatriation to the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords, and from the notwithstanding clause to referenda on separation, what he called the spectre of *national division* haunted the future of the country as a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual order of provinces, regions and peoples. There might be a stronger case for surrendering rather than combating the forces that pull the federation apart. As he admits in a sarcastic tone, "Let us cut the Gordian knot. Let us free ourselves from the interminable travails of constitution making—five regions, aboriginal peoples, two language groups [...] Let's live apart, rather than face the interminable trouble of constitutional renewal."²⁴³ However, to simply give up was inexcusable for Ignatieff: "if we are tired of the arguments, we are tired of the country, and if we are tired of the country, we are done for."²⁴⁴ Abstract descriptions of the Canadian union as a "noble experiment," a "perpetual argument," and a "constant act of self-justification" reinforced the image of a war waged in the mind against the odds—against the temptation of an easy return: the sad undoing of the Gordian knot to unravel a Hobbesian state of nature. As an invented phrase, the nightmarish image of a "balkanized Canada" referenced what Ignatieff seemed to fear most as a witness of atrocities in places such as Kosovo, Bosnia, Somalia and Croatia. Indirect allusions to extreme scenarios enlisted emotional support for continuing a heroic fight.

The metaphor of an unending dialogue and debate over the future of Canada often served as the lens through which Ignatieff intellectualised politics in his pre-campaign speeches. If the spectre of national and regional division was the problem, his solution

was an appeal for "rebuttals" and "competing accounts" to keep defeatists and separatists at bay. As he urges the crowd of constitutional experts, "in preparation for what seems certain to be a battle of wills—and ideas—let us marshal our arguments once again."²⁴⁵ If the stronger case for Quebec sovereignty takes the notion of two solitudes and a legacy of mutual incomprehension as premises, according to Ignatieff, then the comparatively disadvantaged side in the debate needs counterclaims. He declared, "we need to articulate a competing truth: that our democratic experiment has also been a history of political co-operation in the defence of freedom and self-government."²⁴⁶ The speech turned the federalist cause into an abstract exercise in sophistry: how to make one case prevail over the other through an appeal to reason and competing interpretations of facts and myths. Yet, how the results of this exercise might translate into specific programs of constitutional reform usually escaped the bounds of Ignatieff's oratory.

He lectured his audience on the importance of "good ideas" and the "larger vision," against what he portrayed as the comparatively more obscure and tedious approaches to policy formation, which tended to alienate rather than engage the public. What one might call the inner-worldly attachment in the orientation of meticulous analysts and task-orientated technicians, in the public service, seemed to fail Ignatieff's ideal. As he professed, "the besetting sin of our constitutional discourse in Canada has been the mistaken belief that just because the devil is in the details, it is only details that matter."²⁴⁷ Canada not only needs compelling and accessible ideas, as he implores, but also truths to capture the lived reality of ordinary citizens. He questions whether the "more ingenious and highly technical constitutional pipe-work"²⁴⁸ will necessarily arouse the passions and the collective will to secure allegiance.

Against the pragmatic and the piecemeal approach, Ignatieff calls for bold and far-sighted direction. Here, Ignatieff seemed to convey an otherworldly attachment to politics when he extolled the virtues of higher ends over banal means; when he focused on the general over the particular; and when he tackled systemic challenges with the allure of broader visions. Although he acknowledged how "interesting ideas are not necessarily true,"²⁴⁹ and conceded the dangers of impractical musings in politics, his faith in ideas as the sure antidote for complacency remained strong.

Sometimes proposals in his speeches were condensed versions of arguments from his books and essays, which Ignatieff not only reworked for the Canadian context, but also transformed into wishful proclamations. In a public lecture at McGill on "The Challenges Ahead," which took place in October 2005 before the winter election, he echoed conclusions from *The Rights Revolution*²⁵⁰ in his appeal for focused leadership. Through broad summaries of key events in the development of Canada, he played the historian who outlined the Hegelian *telos* of a country in continual transformation as it perfected itself overtime: "from nation-building as forced assimilation, we have embarked on nation building as inclusion. The results have been impressive."²⁵¹ Managing diversity amid a revolution of inclusion and an evolving culture of rights signalled the contemporary challenge as he maintained. The assessment mirrored his previous writings on the politics of rights: "Canadians are struggling to adapt to a citizenship where majorities may prevail in elections but they cannot dictate the policy agenda, where all communities are equal, and all are at the table, no longer sharing the same myths, the same stories, the same origins."²⁵² Rather than probe deeply the inextricable reality of cleavages, competing conceptions of the Good, and contending

paths to human fulfilment—an approach that often marked his critical work—Ignatieff now pushed the ideal of reconciliation. He was no longer simply presenting problems. He yearned for a way forward.

Yet, what he offered as direction amounted to an amorphous plea for truth, clarity and determination. His response to the challenge of unity amid diversity appealed to general values—such as a virtuous call for more intellect in politics—rather than specific suggestions. The fundamentals seemed more important than the details. A concern for intentions seemed more important than questions over process. Impressions mattered more than content. As he remarked, Canada matters in the international arena "less for its specific policies—though they matter—than for our example."²⁵³ As Ignatieff insisted, a narrow focus on legislative patchwork was bound to be less inspiring than articulations of a bigger frame and a larger sense of purpose. "That larger meaning is Canada, our beloved home,"²⁵⁴ he vaguely but joyfully concluded. Nation-building meant applying the mind and being honest: "The foundation task is truth. We must tell the truth to each other. We cannot build a national culture out of difference on the basis of political correctness and embarrassed silence."²⁵⁵ Balancing diversity with common citizenship meant taking a stand. It meant countering assumptions of an impending, national defeat. He mused that the survival of multiculturalism matters not only to Canada, but also to the world, as a demonstration—as proof to dispel the myth that pluralism is unworkable: "We need to be clear [...] We need to show that a politics of inclusion is not a politics of chaos, that a respect for difference can go hand in hand with rules of civility and boundaries of tolerance."²⁵⁶ Building Canada meant defending values through logic and civic dialogue. Almost everything else was detail, as he noted.

By November 2005, Ignatieff had returned home, joined the Liberal party, and won the nomination as a candidate for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Nevertheless, his speeches still introduced perspectives from his critical writings into his invited talks at policy conventions and party meetings. There were recycled arguments from *Empire Lite*²⁵⁷ and "Nation-building Lite,"²⁵⁸ for example, which he translated into calls for stronger, focused programs on the international scene. Perceptions of a plague of mediocrity and half-measures in foreign policy—a phenomena that his books and essays often associated mainly with the United States, Britain, the United Nations and NATO in general—now defined his diagnosis of Canada in particular. Piecemeal efforts and thinly spread commitments abroad were the problem. He states, "we have no coherent system of triage: we do not have a way to distinguish the vital and essential from the merely important or fashionable. We do a little development—not enough; we do a little governance promotion; not enough to be serious."²⁵⁹ His solution was the dream of a perfect arrangement. Vaguely put, the solution was more effort, more focus, less quietism and less complacency.

What mattered was a positive message. If apathy and exhaustion have turned the struggle for federalism into a stalemate, and if resignation and disorganisation is the challenge in foreign policy, then Ignatieff's answer was the open-ended promise of rectification: to enliven Canadian politics somehow with uplifting deliberations. In an address to the Saskatchewan Liberal party, in November 2005, he repeatedly stressed the significance of "having ideas" as the essential ingredient. "To re-establish ourselves as a truly national party, we need ideas," he recited; "Parties without ideas die from the neck down."²⁶⁰ Ignatieff lamented a perceived poverty of imagination in contemporary

politics, when parties become nothing more than election machines and when the goal is to buy votes rather than empower an electorate. "Ideas are our lifeblood," he exclaimed, "The mistake we made in Quebec after 1995 was that we stopped making the case for Canada with ideas. Instead we started making it with money."²⁶¹ He alluded to the sponsorship scandal in Quebec where the previous federal government, under Prime Minister Chrétien, allegedly mismanaged funds in an elaborate program to market the federalist cause.

As he implied, innovative thinking and motivational discourse would restore confidence not only in the party, but also in politics itself. The real opponents were not the Conservatives and the New Democratic Party, he insisted. Cynicism and disillusion were the chief obstacles. An infusion of fresh reasoning was the way forward. Politics and political communication needed intellect. The answer was to offer citizens "arguments that persuade and ideas that inspire. The arguments that inspire are not about this policy or that policy—though policy matters. Our key argument is that politics itself should be inspiring: it is the never ending art of bringing us together as a people."²⁶² A return to basics was his remedy. Liberals needed to remember why they love politics: "the excitement, the sense of being part of something larger than ourselves."²⁶³ What mattered more than the details of action—the particulars of "this policy or that policy" as he called it—was passion, spirit, enlightenment, and a wider view of the horizon.

As a voice for the Liberal party, Ignatieff's attachment to politics was more otherworldly than innerworldly. Whether the dream defended civic belonging at home or humanitarian influence abroad, and whether the message asked for renewed energy in the party or rekindled trust in public office, the expression of ideals assumed the foreground.

A concern for *techne* and practice, as a sign of inner-worldly attachment, seemed less evident. The discussion tended to deny the routines and exigencies of policy making and the legislative process. It avoided the reality of daily adjustments and gradual change—the ‘unexciting’ but arguably necessary compromises in a politics of piecemeal reforms and small-scale experiments. In this sense, it rejected the modest scale and pace of Popper’s ideal-typical alternative to utopianism.

In the rhetorical space of his speeches, the celebration of “ideas” and the “larger frame” usually lacked concrete referents. The case for intellect was often self-referential and sometimes circular. Ignatieff could ask for innovation, in the abstract, without necessarily mentioning anything in particular—other than a call for inspirational arguments and emancipatory dialogue. To stress the general importance of ideas in politics was to make an uncontroversial gesture. It was a relatively safe declaration that accomplished—in language—the identification of intellect with the promise of ingenuity and resourcefulness in politics. The discourse praised originality often, ironically, through platitudes about the importance of arguments and innovative thinking.

To employ Edelman’s theory of political discourse, such dramaturgy usually masked an underlying conformity in the allocation of values. What mattered in the political spectacle was often the performance more than the substance—the symbolic image of original leadership rather than actual eccentricity in thought and conduct.²⁶⁴ To assert the value of “ideas” in general—as an empty signifier for anything novel, far-sighted and uplifting—was almost to indulge in a truism. The phrase, “we need ideas,” was sufficiently uninteresting to escape contention, for to disagree would be to suggest that ideas are unnecessary. Unlike his critical essays and books, which rarely embellished

in tautological explanations for why "ideas" matter, Ignatieff flirted with this triviality in his speeches.

Even if Ignatieff merely intended to render his views accessible to an audience, by speaking in generalities and by concentrating more on values than on the nuances and contradictions in everyday experience, the question arises nevertheless: whether Ignatieff may have surrendered *distance* as a counterbalance in his message. As Weber has argued, passion alone rarely makes a person in politics, however genuinely expressed the esteem is for public life. Distance is equally decisive as a quality, if only to keep devotion to a cause in perspective and grounded within workable measures. As this theorist warns, "'lack of distance' per se is the deadly sin of every politician. It is one of those qualities the breeding of which will condemn the progeny of our intellectuals to political incapacity."²⁶⁵ Weber presents the challenge as a reconciliation of extremes: how to balance a warm concern for ultimate ends with a cool sense of proportion; how to be imaginative without being impractical; how to be realistic without being crude or dull; how to be engaging without being pretentious; how to be principled without being stubborn.

As an essay for a scholarly audience, "Politics as a Vocation" offers cautionary advice to the learned person who ventures into public office. What Weber calls the "romanticism of the intellectually interesting" usually runs into emptiness when fantasies lose their purchase on reality. Sterile excitement becomes a chronic malady for the otherworldly, attached thinker who lets the idolatry of dreams consume the quest for power. As Weber remarks,

politics is made with the head, not with other parts of the body or soul. And yet devotion to politics, if it is not to be frivolous intellectual play but rather genuinely human conduct, can be born and nourished from passion alone. However, that firm taming of the soul [is what] distinguishes the passionate politician and differentiates him from the 'sterilely excited' and mere political dilettante.²⁶⁶

While the former focuses ambition on the practical attainment of ends, the latter becomes easily distracted and enamoured with the allure of ends in themselves.

To be sure, Ignatieff valued Max Weber's call for an ideal-typical balance of passion, proportion and responsibility in political leadership. In an invited speech to senior managers in the Canadian public service, Ignatieff explicitly referenced the German sociologist. He defined Weber's concept of an ethics of ultimate ends as an ambitious striving against the odds—what "the French students in the streets had in mind when they chanted 'Soyons réalistes, demandons l'impossible.'"²⁶⁷ Ignatieff presented this striving for ideals as a dignified task for bureaucracies: "a public servant's job is to reconcile the impossible and the real—the electoral promises of politicians and the resource constraints and constitutional limitations of government."²⁶⁸ The above scheme implied a division of labour in politics. Leaders supply the dream of unrealised potential, while the technicians and bureaucrats grapple with the problems of execution: how to make the impossible a reality. However, such a utopian arrangement reconciles passionate devotion to a cause with a sense of proportion, not by taming the soul of the individual as Weber had suggested, but rather by dividing responsibilities among agents. The innerworldly, attached bureaucrat keeps the otherworldly politician in check. The visionary (as leader) saves the bureaucrat (as follower) from the turmoil of political

indecision. As Ignatieff insists, "leaders must lead, and they often have to do so utterly in the dark,"²⁶⁹ for there is no gift of Grace in politics.

Even if his account of inspired public policy bordered on Weber's concept of "a romanticism of the intellectually interesting," Ignatieff sometimes incorporated a pragmatic ethos in his discourse. He acknowledged how the reconciliation of ultimate ends and responsibility is often fraught with tragic choice: "we have to choose, with insufficient evidence, time and insight, just as we are, here and now, and whatever we do, we are bound to lose something."²⁷⁰ The choices are often between lesser evils, as he maintained, even though "the public's expectations—fed by the media—are unforgiving: give us leadership, they clamour, provided none of us pays any price."²⁷¹ An ethic of responsibility was rarely a prescription to avoid risks in the formulation of policy, however. To the contrary, Ignatieff embraced the process of trial and error: "We have to keep trying. Fail. Fail again," he exclaimed in his conclusion: "Fail better, as Samuel Beckett once had his characters say."²⁷² Ignatieff applauded what he saw as visionary experimentation throughout the history of Canadian politics. He cited universal healthcare, the ongoing negotiations for aboriginal self-determination, the repatriation of the constitution, and the draft the Chart of Rights and Freedoms, as examples of creative risks and sources of inspiration.

For Ignatieff, an ethic of responsibility represented not so much an ethic of caution and deference, but an effort to remain consistent. Accordingly, he associated "irresponsible leadership" with initiatives that permit a disconnect between rhetoric and reality, the word and the deed: "good public policy is not a politics of propaganda and national self-delusion. It is an attempt to match our national self-image with our

capabilities as a people."²⁷³ The challenge was to balance ultimate ends with a responsibility to the immediate world.

He questioned whether Canada has achieved this balance. He simultaneously praised and censured his own party in a diatribe on the problem of broken promises:

the present [Liberal] government is struggling to close the gap between pretending to be a good international citizen and failing to fund our foreign aid commitments; pretending to be a peace-keeper and failing to fund our defence establishment; pretending to be green and failing to fund our investment in environmental sustainability.²⁷⁴

Such generalisations and rationalisations of political reality mimicked, in many respects, the analytical approach of his books and essays. Once again, Ignatieff asked for consistency in theory—in the ideal-typical sense—if only to underscore how inconsistent words and deeds seem in practice.

However, what often escaped his political discourse was the same retrospective character that marked the analysis of policy in his former writings. His address to Canadian public servants focused on the importance of taking risks—the need to choose even if the choice was tragic. Policy makers needed the strength and conviction to "fail again and fail better," as he insisted. Yet, Ignatieff rarely dwelled on the details of past failures. He rarely revisited the lessons, and explored political error to the same extent as his writings on the mistakes and oversights in humanitarian missions to Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Iraq and other zones of danger. Rather, Ignatieff promoted possibilities and opportunities: what politics needed to move optimistically forward rather than what it may have lost or overlooked.

To be sure, Ignatieff claimed the opposite as his strategy. Instead of dramaturgy and oversimplification in political communication, he wanted rational-critical dialogue. He wanted what Habermas called an ideal speech situation. Change would occur through enlightenment: "renewal means listening to Canadians, appealing to them in the language of reason, with arguments not spin, convictions not platitudes, complexity not sound-bites."²⁷⁵ He professed his disdain for pedantry in office, for the rise of publicity over substance, and for strategies that undermine principles to win votes. Ignatieff proudly announced in October 2006, "I want to lead a party that has the courage to run on a platform that has not been brokered into mediocrity, pulverized into pabulum [sic] by the pollsters."²⁷⁶ For the candidate, genuine leadership ought to escape the trappings of the game, the ploys, the delusions and the one dimensional view. Genuine leadership finds a common language in which to engage the citizenry. Politics was about dialogue. Leadership was about facilitating a discussion, even when the deliberations appeared sensitive and difficult: "Canadians are tired of talk. They know the choices ahead are difficult, but they want leaders prepared to talk about tough choices."²⁷⁷ His vision of leadership was about the conversation, the debate, about speaking out, taking a stand, facing facts and realities together. "We cannot build a great nation until we build on foundations of truth,"²⁷⁸ the candidate confidently asserted as he repeated the phrase, "live in truth," throughout the conclusion of a speech on citizenship. The perfect form of political leadership and authority, for Ignatieff, would treat the pursuit of answers and the pursuit of power as complementary projects.

Becoming an organic, intellectual spokesperson in politics.

In the ideal-typical sense, Gramsci's *organic intellectuals* provide cohesion to the mass of individuals who form political, social or cultural constituencies. To be politically and historically relevant, such formations require more than spontaneous loyalty within their ranks, as Gramsci has argued, for party members become "a force in so far as there is somebody to centralise, organise and discipline them. In the absence of this cohesive force, they would scatter into an impotent diaspora and vanish into nothing."²⁷⁹ Organic intellectuals in politics apply their creative spirit to this end. They elaborate the purpose of the group, cement ties, and nurse a collective consciousness. Gramsci derives from Machiavelli's *Prince* the contours of this ideal type of engagement in which "the active politician is a creator, an initiator; but he neither creates from nothing nor does he move in the turbid void of his own desires and dreams."²⁸⁰ Rather, the *organic* spokesperson locates those emerging trends and relations in the larger society with the potential for progressive action, and then strengthens their sense of direction, coordinates their growth, and mobilises forces to victory. The leader does not necessarily construct new formations from scratch, but seizes opportunities within the existing flux of cultural understandings, political developments and social tensions.

This posture reflects a category of innerworldly attachment (see B1 in Fig. 1.3), because it proceeds from what Gramsci calls the "effective reality" of praxis in contradistinction to the ultimate reality of *episteme*. The orientation moves beyond speculation on normative ends and beyond the imagination of utopian alternatives, as Gramsci's *pure cleric* or *traditional* intellectual approaches the task. Rather, it renders what "ought to be" in concrete terms, not as an impractical fantasy, but as a tangible

possibility in *this* world—as a concrete program of action to arouse and organise the collective will of a following. The Machiavellian task, according to Gramsci, is then to “know the lines of least resistance, or the most rational lines along which to proceed if one wishes to secure the obedience of the led or ruled.”²⁸¹ Doing so requires practical talents and an organisational capacity, not metaphysical musings or abstract maxims. It requires a plan of immediate operations, acknowledgement of where force seems necessary and where building consent will suffice. Mobilisation may require the mastery of persuasive techniques, the manoeuvring of emotional stimuli, appeals to familiar imagery, and above all the identification of a language that resonates with a mass following.

Ignatieff assumed the function of Gramsci’s spokesperson to some extent. His speech at the biennial policy conference in March 2005, on “Liberal values in the 21st century,” arrived months before his nomination and election as the Liberal representative for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Although he identified as “a human rights teacher” rather than as a prospective candidate at the time, the delivery signalled his alignment with the party and country. He spoke as an insider rather than an outsider, even though he claimed the position of an exile on his return journey: “In the United States, where I work, liberals are in the wilderness. In Canada, liberals are in government. Down there, being a liberal is a burden. Up here, it’s a badge of honour. No wonder I’m happy to be home.”²⁸² He addressed the crowd in the first person plural. What Michael Billig has defined as an expression of “banal nationalism” occurred through tacit, patriotic appeals where the pronouns, “us,” “our” and “we,” implied a collective will.²⁸³ He invoked the *imagined community* as Benedict Anderson²⁸⁴ has called this powerful, cultural abstraction. He

spoke for Canada and the Liberal collective, and presented his voice as the voice of the whole: "our party represents the nation, ocean to ocean [...] We are the coalition—between regions, languages, peoples—that holds our nation together."²⁸⁵ He engaged spectators as an extension of his audience, as someone who reassured the multitude in the room.

When he incorporated ideas from his previous writings, he often branded his arguments in the language of perceived Canadian values. To advance the case for aggressive intervention on the international scene, for example, Ignatieff referenced the opening line of the British North America Act as a symbolic resource. As he reminded delegates, Canadians "are the people of peace, order and good government."²⁸⁶ Exporting these principles, as he confidently asserted, "should be the core principle of a disciplined foreign policy that concentrates on what we do best and shares the Canadian dream with the rest of the world."²⁸⁷ The assignment of a purpose and vision for "the people" approximated, in part, the ideal-type of Machiavellian leader whom Gramsci envisions in his *Prison Notebooks*.

Ignatieff rallied his audience as a statesman who spoke for the multitude, as he shuttled between the singular and the plural, the *I* and the *we*. "So this is my Canada and these are my Canadians. We are a serious people," announced Ignatieff as he focused the discussion on himself: "I've tried to be a serious person. Being serious means sticking to your convictions."²⁸⁸ He reiterated his support for the ongoing missions in Iraq and Afghanistan as examples of his effort to be serious and principled. Ignatieff admired his own sense of determination. He congratulated himself for taking a stand on human rights. Standing with the powerless and the disenfranchised meant advocating for "the

responsibility to protect"—for the *just* use of force to save civilian populations from genocide and ethnic cleansing. He called attention to his affiliation with the United Nations: "I'm proud that Lloyd Axworthy named me to the International Commission on Sovereignty and Intervention."²⁸⁹ He not only extolled a commitment to Canada, but also equated accomplishments as a teacher and writer with a *directive* capacity to lead.

Selling a political platform was about matching the assumed priorities of an audience, in the abstract, with his own espoused ambitions. For example, in an address to the Canadian Club of Calgary, the roseate image of Alberta as a community of rugged individuals would help the candidate draw connections --and attention—to his own career as a self-proclaimed, independent thinker. As he lamented the unfortunate reputation of Liberals in the province, "too often we've been hostile to the qualities that Albertans love: entrepreneurship, freedom to take risks, and the freedom that comes from taking responsibility for yourself and your family."²⁹⁰ Ignatieff claimed an easy fit within these traditions and, by implication, an ability to appreciate the province as a leader who was unlike the stereotype of a hostile and indifferent Liberal from Central Canada. He proudly reminded delegates how his life as an intellectual was also adventurous and entrepreneurial. He underscored what he saw as complementary values: "I spent 16 years as a free-lance writer, broadcaster and war correspondent. I know what it is like to gamble, to take risks, to live without a safety net and to reap the rewards that come when you bet the store on a good idea."²⁹¹ If Albertans are known for taking risks, as Ignatieff implied, then he shares something in common with the Western Canadian ethos, as a self-declared man of ambition and a man of the people. "Stranger things have happened," joked Ignatieff: "if Stephen Harper can be competitive in Quebec, why can't Michael

Ignatieff be competitive in Alberta?"²⁹² Even if the abstract connection between his intellectualism and so-called Albertan qualities taxed the imagination, the suggestion of "common ground" meant—for Ignatieff—the possibility of success in the province.

When he addressed delegates from the East Coast, for example, he framed his support for an extended mission in Afghanistan with a flattering appeal: "Atlantic Canadians know better than most what a great military tradition we have. We are a serious people. You ask us to do something difficult we do it. That's what being Canadian is."²⁹³ To defend the mission abroad was to defend Canadian values. "Responsibility to protect is a great Canadian idea," he implored: "we should have the guts to stand by it, when the going gets tough."²⁹⁴ By extension, to stay the course was to be courageous, to support a just cause, and to fulfil a destiny as a "serious people." As he now seemed to present the reality of warfare, the choices were uncomplicated. The choices were clear when the discussion remained plain, remote and moralistic—as a choice between fighting honourably and leaving in disgrace, between being serious and betraying alleged Canadian virtues. The question of values revealed a figurative black box. One could stress the importance of honouring Canadian sensibilities and Canadian ideas in the abstract, without dwelling on the content and the substance of specific claims and demands: how they might reveal internal conflict and contradiction. The strategy sacrificed nuance and doubt for uncomplicated appeals to patriotism where the difference between right and wrong, honour and disgrace, friends and enemies appeared straightforward.

The performance on the podium concentrated on cheerful imagery and the classic dichotomy of an "us" against "them." Differences were exaggerated and amplified.

Differences were not black or white per se, but colour-coded nevertheless. As he reminded the crowd in French when he launched his campaign, "les valeurs sociales et progressistes des Québécois et Québécoises ne sont pas bleues. Elles sont rouges et le seront toujours!"²⁹⁵ *The socially progressive values of Quebecers are not blue. They are red and will be forever!* He repeated the metaphor later in English when he censured the Conservatives in power. "Progressive values are red, not blue" he insisted as he turned attention on the danger in thinking otherwise: "Harper claims that his values are your values. Beware, Quebecers! Beware of a government that fosters freedom by limiting it."²⁹⁶ Whether the enemy was the Bloc Québécois, the Parti Québécois or the Conservative Party, the colour "blue" in each of their logos served as convenient symbols for the antagonist in general. As a poetic device to describe fundamental differences between values, the comparison of colours loosely captured what Ignatieff claimed to oppose. He was red and not blue. The party was red. Canada was red. Quebec was red, and not blue. The spokesperson attempted to unite a collective consciousness around an interchangeable motif.

To be sure, Ignatieff deviated somewhat from the ideal-type of organic intellectual when he focused attention more on himself than on concrete strategies for advancing the party he purported to represent. The turn to vanity on the political stage is what Max Weber has described as the "all-too-human" desire to occupy personally the foreground wherever possible in public life. Among the intelligentsia, vanity appears widespread but relatively harmless in the profession. Excessive pride and flamboyance may enter scholarly work, and colour the careers of academic personalities, but without necessarily disrupting the pursuit of knowledge. An inflated ego may even drive the

ambitions of some thinkers in their quest for novel ideas and original syntheses. Yet, as Weber suggests, the situation is different when vanity enters politics—given how the exercise of power, and not just flirtation with “romantically interesting ideas,”²⁹⁷ become the principle means of political engagement. As he argues, “the sin against the lofty spirit of [the politician's] vocation, however, begins where this striving for power ceases to be objective and becomes purely personal self-intoxication, instead of exclusively entering the service of ‘the cause.’”²⁹⁸ Weber warns against boastful oratory and vain posturing as a strategy for winning assent. Just as demagoguery counts on the effect of an appeal, vanity counts on flattering self-presentations. A focus on performances strongly tempts the politician to play an actor in the spotlight who, according to Weber, may ultimately “strive for the glamorous semblance of power rather than actual power.”²⁹⁹ The danger arises when the means of generating esteem, excitement and noise on the podium, become ends in themselves.

Indeed, Ignatieff often assumed the foreground, and played his own protagonist in his communications. When he spoke at the University of Ottawa in March 2006, after he won a seat in the Winter election and before he officially launched his leadership campaign, Ignatieff opened with personal musings about his image and identity. He jokingly announced, “ever since I entered Parliament in January, people have been asking me: Why have you gone into politics? As in: Are you nuts? No, I’m not nuts. This is my country, after all.”³⁰⁰ Almost as if his connection to the country needed confirmation, he quickly condensed childhood memories of visits across Canada, from Richmond in Quebec, to Esterhazy in Saskatchewan. When he recalled the accomplishments of his father, who immigrated to Montreal from Russia in 1928, and built a career in the public

service, Ignatieff glowingly added, "Now it's my turn."³⁰¹ When he mentioned the contributions of his mother in London during the Second World War, her contribution to the French Resistance and her friendship with a brave Canadian parachutist, he prefaced such memories with praise of kin and country: "My family taught me to think of Canadians as a serious people. Steadfast, tough, courageous."³⁰² The thrust of the message was autobiographical. It was about Ignatieff, his heritage and the continuation of a legacy.

The focus centred on personal connections, and bordered on what Gramsci has called the "language of rhetorical heroism" — an abstract and remote identification with the righteousness of a group and its leadership, rather than a grounded elaboration of the avenues for concrete action. Gramsci describes the outcome of such rhetoric as a degenerative version of the ideal, organic function. The spokesperson neither seizes opportunities within emerging movements, nor speaks as a fully-aligned extension of the group, but instead transposes individual whims onto a fictional, collective "other." Displays of leadership become little more than obscure performances for the sake of a performance. "Vanguards' without armies to back them up, 'commandos' without infantry or artillery"³⁰³ are caricatured examples of the disconnect between leader and lead. The language of rhetorical heroism turns inward to explore personal ambitions rather than outward to the plane of "effective reality." It places less emphasis on concrete tasks: organising social blocs, mobilising resources, deflecting obstacles and marshalling support. In a word, the commitment to "the people" appears transient, and sheds its innerworldliness.

The candidate pursued a “rhetoric of heroism” in his celebration of intimate ties to the nation-state. Almost as if his extensive time abroad needed justification, and his time at home needed emphasis, he pressed to show connections and accomplishments. He answered complaints about his cosmopolitan lifestyle and lack of political experience in Canada by citing proud moments from his curriculum vitae:

Critics say I've been out of the country a long time. They seem to miss the years spent teaching at UBC, at the Banff Centre for the Fine Arts, the documentary series I made for the CBC, the television shows I hosted for TV Ontario, the Massey Lectures I gave on the CBC radio, the books and articles I've devoted to Canadian problems [...] But yes, I've been a war reporter, human rights teacher, journalist and I've seen a lot of the world.³⁰⁴

The emphasis turned on affiliations and contributions to the Canadian public sphere.

Moreover, even as he conveyed an alignment with the homeland, he admired his own remoteness as a nomadic, unattached figure. Ignatieff regarded his figurative exile from the Canadian polity as an asset: “sometimes you only see your country clearly from far away.”³⁰⁵ Exile brought the gift of perspective. Yet, what he presented as “distance” and “clarity” neither captured the inner-worldly detachment of a sceptical realist nor a Gramscian commitment to “effective reality,” but expressed a feeling—an attachment to the experience of venturing on an odyssey, and returning home. In his speech, there was another meaning for distance and clarity. To “see the country clearly from far away” was not to *represent some unseen world* as a dispassionate interpreter or an expert planner. Instead, it was about celebrating Canada and Canadians abroad.

“I saw my country clearly in eastern Croatia in 1992,”³⁰⁶ proclaimed Ignatieff, as he described how a Canadian peacekeeper rescued him from a band of intoxicated

warlords who confronted the journalist near a UN checkpoint. "I saw my country clearly," Ignatieff repeated, as he recalled how a volunteer and former policewoman from Saskatoon, whom he met in Yugoslavia, bravely escorted civilians across minefields in the region. "I saw my country clearly," Ignatieff cheered again, as he conveyed the eagerness on the faces of "young Canadians" who attended his classes at Harvard. As he added, his life in higher education was not only about teaching concepts and relaying knowledge, "but about teaching hope and self-belief, the key engines of productivity."³⁰⁷ The intellectual claimed to embody this emancipatory spirit. Recollections of having "been there," on the ground, decorated his political speeches with emotionally-laden imagery.

The performance concentrated less on identifying the "lines of least resistance" in the advancement of agendas, and more on locating values, ideals and the Good with greater clarity. To this end, Ignatieff departed from the functionalism of organic spokespersonship. He adopted a speaking-style that displayed an otherworldly excitement over the qualities and strengths of the "imagined community" rather than a plan to organise the "imagined community" into a strategic force.

Taming the 'free-floating' posture.

Against Gramsci's organic spokesperson, who latches onto the collective spirit of homogenous groups, the "free-floating thinker" suggests an alternative ideal-type for comparison. Ignatieff approaches the latter to some degree, especially when he struggled with his unstable location on the political spectrum. Dick Pels³⁰⁸ defines the "cross-over intellectual" as an outgrowth of the free-floating, independent critic. "Cross-over"

intellectuals will incorporate and connect positions that defy the entrenched expectations of partisan politics. By comparison, the fully aligned individual might provide ideologically consistent and ready-made answers, for example, to the question of the roles, limits and responsibilities of government in international, economic, civic, moral and private life. Both supporters and opponents anticipate such ritualised, “stock” responses as familiar extensions of an established discourse on policy alternatives.

What Pels calls intellectual *strangers* in the house of power not only avoid full identification with the formative rules and procedural games of institutional politics, but may also “cross over” the tacit boundaries of left, centre and right. The posture appears *apolitical* to this end—not so much through disinterested detachment, but through unapologetic playfulness or naiveté. The spokesperson may appropriate the causes of others, not always to advance the parochial interests of the “represented” group, but to pursue broader ideas and constituencies such as those of *Society, Culture, Reason or Justice*. In doing so, the free-floating thinker may adopt and incorporate radical causes from both ends of the political spectrum without necessarily subscribing to the beliefs of any particular camp.³⁰⁹

On the one hand, Ignatieff claimed this freedom to “cross-over” the boundaries of conventional partisanship, even as he transitioned into politics. For example, he attempted to refute popular assumptions among his critics who viewed his *support for invading Iraq* as proof of alignment with *George W. Bush and his regime*. As a witness of ethnic cleansing—of the violence that Iraqi soldiers inflicted against the Kurds and Shia population in 1992 under Saddam Hussein—the writer claimed a simple mandate as a writer: to raise awareness as a journalist and advocate for human rights. Much like the

dissenting Emile Zola on an independent crusade for Justice, as the voice of a citizen, Ignatieff professed a moral obligation to defend peace and security in unstable regions of the world. As he reminded his audience before he officially launched his leadership campaign, "I decided then and there that I'd stand with them [Iraqi civilians] whatever happened. I've stuck with them ever since."³¹⁰ He claimed to honour this conviction when he argued, in the "Burden,"³¹¹ for the emancipation of the nation from tyranny.

His ambivalence toward partisan affiliations resurfaced in televised leadership debates. A rival in the race, Bob Rae, asked Ignatieff if he still believed that the invasion was just. For Rae, the matter was an unambiguous choice between right and wrong, truth and error: "The fact of the matter is Mr. Chrétien made the right decision, [U.S. President George] Bush made the wrong decision. I have not yet heard you say that Mr. Bush made the wrong decision."³¹² Without answering Rae's invitation completely, Ignatieff conceded that the American Administration handled the mission poorly, and "made every mistake in Iraq and then some."³¹³ Just as he revisited his support for the war in "The Year of Living Dangerously," he stressed the humanitarian grounds for condoning intervention. While he believed that developed nations such as Canada shouldered a "responsibility to protect" human rights in zones of danger, he disagreed with the means and philosophy of the current U.S. Administration. There was a difference, he insisted: "I don't stand with George Bush. I stand with the independence and freedom of the Kurdish and Shia people."³¹⁴ The position was moral and, in some sense, *apolitical* with respect to strict partisan identification. In mediated statements for the press and in televised debates, Ignatieff tried to disconnect his intellectual record from perceptions of alignment with the values of the American president and Republican supporters. He defended the abstract

ideas of Justice, Freedom and Security in Iraq as causes that transcended any specific alignment with a regime, system or party.

On the other hand, Ignatieff occasionally surrendered this *apolitical* detachment, which enables “cross-over” positions in critical discourse. For example, the candidate loosened his prior stance on Iraq when Stephane Dion, another contender in the leadership race, questioned whether Ignatieff could fully extricate his intellectual arguments from the appearance of alignment with American foreign policy. The competitor invoked further comparisons to the American president. “You [Ignatieff] had the same reasoning as Bush,” Dion complained, while he suggested that Ignatieff’s basis for justifying pre-emptive war in the essay, “The Burden,” was “not so much the Kurds,”³¹⁵ but a misguided belief that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction.

Michael Ignatieff countered Dion with an emotional plea: “You make the implication I am incautious about the use of military force [...] I have been to Bosnia. I have been to places where people have died as a result of military force.”³¹⁶ Missing from the exchange with Dion was an occasion for clarification. Missing was an effort by Ignatieff to engage the allegations, and restate what he considered reasonable criteria for deploying military instruments as a solution. Instead, for rhetorical effect, the politician conveyed personal observations of war and conflict during his travels as a foreign correspondent. Under the pressure in the spotlight, deflections, distractions and appeals to red herrings were sometimes the default strategies. In doing so, he began to shed the kind of independence in the Habermassian ideal-type of rational-critical dialogue—freedom from the pressure to conform and to appease the powers.

Ignatieff fended charges of obfuscating instead of clarifying his most controversial messages. His views on torture fuelled a political spectacle in which almost any discussion of the idea usually implied guilt by association. In response to an article in the *National Post*, which pulled select passages from "Lesser Evils"³¹⁷ to underscore his reputation as an unorthodox thinker, Ignatieff complained in a letter to the editor:

Diane Francis says I support torture because I believe authorities interrogating terrorists should be allowed to engage in disinformation and disorientation techniques. To call these practices torture is to distort the plain meaning of words. I am on record as being opposed both on moral and strategic grounds, to any infliction of physical and psychological pain on interrogation subjects.³¹⁸

He asked his critics to digest carefully his entire book, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror*,³¹⁹ before judging his words out of context.

When hecklers interrupted a speech that preceded the launch of his leadership campaign, Ignatieff struggled somewhat on the podium. With their backs to the candidate, protesters held signs to ridicule the writer with slogans such as "Canadians don't support torture, Ignatieff does," "Ignatieff apologist for imperialism," "Ignatieff intellectually whitewashing torture."³²⁰ The small group of students from the University of Ottawa wore orange jump-suits and black hoods—outfits that mirrored the dress of suspected terrorists in American custody.

Ironically, the protest arrived just as Ignatieff strained to personalise his speech. He recalled a close friend of his mother—a Canadian combatant who died under torture in a concentration camp at Buchenwald in Germany, during the Second World War. Ignatieff reacted to the students in prison garb with what amounted to a non sequitur. "Do you seriously think a son of that person could endorse torture or abuse of human

rights,"³²¹ he asked rhetorically. The candidate matched the hasty generalisations on the part of his accusers, not with a nuanced rebuttal on the ethics of counter-terror, but with a distraction. One emotional appeal met another. Requests for clarification met a stock answer. The accusations were false, he maintained: "I made it clear in repeated statements that I don't believe in forms of stress or duress interrogation that cause physical or psychological harm [...] Next question!"³²² Yet, closure on the matter rarely seemed permanent.

Ignatieff invoked the connection to Buchenwald, again, in an organised debate with Bob Rae—another contender in the leadership race. Rae reopened the controversy by rehashing a line from his essay on "Lesser Evils"³²³ : "to defeat evil, we may have to traffic in evils."³²⁴ The opponent then listed indefinite detentions, coercive questioning, pre-emptive war and targeted assassination as examples of Ignatieff idea of "trafficking in evils." Although Rae reportedly avoided references to "torture" when he dredged up the passage to provoke a reaction, Ignatieff anticipated the familiar accusation nevertheless. The candidate scolded Rae, "You know better than that. You've known me for 40 years [...] Listen well to me, my friend. My mother, whom you knew, was engaged to marry a man who was killed under torture in Buchenwald. So you can be very sure that as prime minister, as leader of the party, I am against torture."³²⁵ Under pressure, Ignatieff rebuked attacks with the pathos of personal recollections. He presented a narrative of victim-hood, which avoided the issue perhaps more than it redressed perceptions of his work.

The incident with Rae proved compromising, as Ignatieff surrendered control over his original message during the exchange. He appealed to reputations, family and

friendships as an arbitrary defence in place of reassertions on the purpose of his book and essay: how *Lesser Evils* explored the balance of rights and security. It presented problems, not reassuring solutions. It asked a difficult question: how to win an indefinite and abstract war on terror without losing the values that make civil society possible, which include the prohibition of torture. If forms of permissible duress are already a commonplace in the interrogation room, argued Ignatieff, the challenge lay in regulating and reviewing the exercise to prevent abuse. Concealing the reality from public view, and denying an open forum on the limits of coercive techniques would do more harm than good. As with any war, however pure the intentions of proponents and detractors might be, the decisions were a lonely gamble with darkness. The sceptical-realist denied an easy escape. The writer was not condoning the suspension of rights, but merely reflecting critically on the worst scenario: how to cope, if ever absolute prohibitions and cherished protections became untenable or unenforceable in emergencies. The author wanted to confront the reality of loss—the lingering abyss of uncertainty, which haunts counter-measures that meet violence with more violence, terror with more terror, and pain with more pain.³²⁶

His political oratory entailed some sacrifice of the above interpretative flexibility—the freedom that Habermas associated with critique in an independent public sphere. There were fewer occasions to adopt the antithetical mindset, and fewer occasions for innerworldly detachment as an intellectual. There were fewer chances to adopt the position of the other—to empathise with the opposing view, and convey wider horizons of meaning, if possible. In a word, there were few articulations of a ‘free-floating’ posture. Rather, the new ethos stressed alignment in the form of sermons and diatribes

where the partisan divide between friends and enemies, supporters and detractors, ran deep. The differences seemed clear. As much as he admired difficult choices, evidence of struggle rarely factored in presenting the choices, weighing the alternatives, wrestling with consequences, and choosing sides in the end. The choices seemed clear; and the values seemed clear-cut. As he concluded a speech from October 2006 in Toronto: "the difference between Conservatives and Liberals is that Conservatives talk about 'me' and Liberals talk about 'we.' And that's it: a politics of selfishness versus a politics of community. A politics of self-interest against a politics of common purpose."³²⁷ The expression, "that's it," stressed finality. The partisan choice appeared nakedly plain, already crystallised and resolved. It implied a battle of opposites without a mean or middle-ground, and without overlap or compromises. The choice was Liberal from the perspective of a Liberal candidate. Yet, the rhetoric appeared to lack the same internalisation of "tragic liberal choice"—a central idea, which had anchored his message in works such as *Isaiah Berlin* and *The Needs of Strangers*.

Although he stressed the importance of the big picture throughout his campaign, his version of the larger image now centred on platitudes about strengths and opportunities within his own party. Praise became the default position. While he valued an intellectual approach that weighed contending sides in theory, the result differed in his political practice. He began to undermine arguments that he once defended, and deviated further from the Habermassian ideal of critical detachment. Exchanges with the media and with competitors in the race usually amplified this slide away from a "free-floating" posture.

To be sure, when journalists recalled his early support for the invasion of Iraq in a *New York Times* article, "The Burden,"³²⁸ sometimes Ignatieff handled the media with astuteness—with Lippmann's variety of disinterested rationalism. In a press briefing on the launch of his leadership bid, several reporters asked him if he would have supported the invasion of Iraq in 2003, had he been Prime Minister of Canada. What provoked the question was a perceived conflict between Ignatieff's argument for intervention, and the decision of the Liberal government to abstain from the mission. Ignatieff's replied with a playful criticism of an informal fallacy. He dismissed the possibility altogether: "my dear friend, it's impossible to answer a retrospective hypothetical."³²⁹ To speculate on "what might have been" was to engage a futile exercise, which ascribed alternative outcomes to actions that were unavailable at the time.

The response attempted to diffuse the question, by reframing the exchange as deductively invalid rather than politically relevant. The explicit appeal to logical rules illustrates the same ambivalence toward public life that Pels³³⁰ identified with *the intellectual stranger* in the house of power. The free-floating thinker aspires to move beyond the mundane rituals and stock answers of the firmly aligned spokesperson. Even so, his original ambivalence toward political alignment—his claim to be both committed and independent, both an insider and an outsider as a journalist and intellectual on the ground—began to fade on the podium.

Ignatieff had already considered the "retrospective hypothetical" on Iraq. He entertained the prospect of changing his mind, and appeasing his critics. In earlier interviews with reporters before his election to the House of Commons, Ignatieff described his position on the conflict as a personal view. He insisted, "the decisions you

make as a private individual and the ones you make as an elected official are very different."³³¹ His responsibilities had changed now that he was a representative. The expectations from constituents were greater now that he addressed the public as electorates rather than merely as readers. He repeated in August 2006, "I was not responsible to the Canadian public when I made my positions clear in 2002-2003. If I was prime minister or in the Commons (at that time), I would have had a whole set of different obligations to the public of Canada. I would have been answerable to them for my decisions in ways I was not as a private citizen."³³² That Ignatieff associated his prior engagements as an independent writer with a private rather than a public role marked a departure in some respects. As a rhetorical move, the comment seemed to diminish the significance of his published claims, which nevertheless circulated widely in the public sphere, and enlisted support for public causes.

He stressed a new accountability to the public—not as a critic, but as a delegate and trustee of the people. Although the position of the Canadian government deviated from his own when the war in Iraq began in 2003, he claimed to understand the situation of the former prime minister. Abstaining from the conflict was a prudent and principled course, Ignatieff concluded:

[Mr. Chrétien] felt very strongly that the evidence did not warrant—the evidence about WMDs [Weapons of Mass Destruction]—did not warrant military action. He had information that I didn't have, and that's important. And secondly, he felt that the country was against it, and if he took the country in, it would divide the country. And those are the kinds of responsible decisions a Prime Minister has to make."³³³

He rationalised the need for caution, given how, in Canada's history, most controversies over foreign engagements have allegedly raised the spectre of national discord. The foreign and domestic agendas made competing demands on Mr. Chrétien. With values and priorities in conflict, and with the reality of public dissension, avoiding the mission seemed wise for Canada. Ignatieff reassured his audience that a reservoir of support at home was essential to justify the commitment of troops abroad.

The rhetorical effort not only distanced his intellectual record from his new life as a politician, but also treated *intellectual life* and *political life* as air-tight compartments, which respectively insulated his career as a writer from responsibility to meet public pressures. Yet, Ignatieff now identified with the demands of the second compartment—political life—by depreciating the significance of prior positions when they appeared to “cross-over” conventional lines of partisanship and the contours of a perceived, “Canadian” and Liberal interest.

Hinting at revolutionary and messianic politics.

Ignatieff hardly adopted a fully formed, Messianic view of politics in the extreme case—as Michael Walzer³³⁴ has presented the ideal-type. However, portions of his public speeches suggested a departure in this direction. He not only asserted the attainability of a “promised land”—in the sense of a revolutionary arrangement for Canada and its role in the world—but also presented this ultimate end as a guarantee. The message was not just a wish projected into the future, but also an assurance of eventual triumph.

In his speech on “The Challenges Ahead,” Ignatieff proposed to “build—in concert with others—a rule bound multilateral order that seeks to reduce the inequalities

in the global order, between those who are in zones of danger, and those who are in zones of safety.”³³⁵ As Ignatieff imagined the ideal, Canada would lead new alliances, and succeed where other powers failed in their mission to make the world right. Although he acknowledged the level of public scepticism about imperialist ambitions to reorder the world, he advertised the humanitarian "responsibility to protect" as a manifest destiny for Canada. "We must remain a light unto the nations,"³³⁶ proclaimed Ignatieff in his call for a robust, Canadian military. He envisioned an international presence that not only promotes Canadian versions of multiculturalism and democratic federalism for struggling, multi-ethnic states around the globe, but also enters zones of danger to defend an essential but often-unmet human right: the need for security. He extolled Canada as a model of unity amid diversity, which combined decentralised power with a culture of common citizenship: "so we cannot fail, and we will not fail."³³⁷ For Ignatieff, the Canadian constitutional approach was evidence, in itself, of a sustainable, democratic and peaceful alternative to ethnic violence and division as the solution for resolving differences.

Ignatieff called for stronger direction and a model of engagement that stressed confidence and openness to adventure. Just as Ignatieff once applauded the principled figure who daringly "separates the wheat from the chaff,"³³⁸ he sketched the virtues of political leadership with similarly broad strokes. As he remarked, "I'm in politics to speak up for a Canada that takes risks, that stands up for what's right."³³⁹ Ignatieff longed to gamble in politics, to "fail and fail better" as he implied, just as the critic gambles with an argument. Yet, taking risks was no longer about highlighting the shortcomings and

delusions in public policy, as an independent critic. Rather, it was about imagining political utopias. It was about righting systemic wrongs, by translating ideas into actions.

What was largely absent from the discussion was not only a plan for implementation and disclosure of the sacrifices in his scheme, but also acknowledgement of a central lesson from his work on *Virtual War*³⁴⁰ and *Warrior's Honour*³⁴¹: how no amount of hubris and pure intentions will necessarily resolve the problem of incommensurable goals in foreign engagements, or any commitment. Even if the leader or activist wills the right ends, the means might be fallible; and the outcomes are usually fraught with uncertainty. As an intellectual with an aim to analyse and revisit events, to identify challenges and mistakes, and to present interpretations for a readership, Ignatieff claimed to appreciate complexity and unsettling discoveries. As a writer, he insulated his message—to some extent—from the requirement to propose sure strategies. In *Virtual War*, he opened with a disclaimer: "The aim of this book [Virtual War], like that of my two previous ones [Blood and Belonging and Warrior's Honour], is modest. I have no policy prescriptions for politicians, and no advice for generals. I am writing for citizens."³⁴² As a candidate for office and an orator on the podium, however, Ignatieff pursued grander declarations. Catch-phrases on "what we need" and "what must be done" peppered his speeches.

The revolutionary "promise" of rectification through foreign engagements lacked the human scale—the acknowledgement of backsliding, concessions and tragic choices—which in Michael Walzer's³⁴³ typology is associated with innerworldly alternatives to Messianism. Perhaps the closest embrace of "otherworldly attachment," as an ideal-typical posture in his political communications, occurred when Ignatieff entertained the

prospect of sweeping change. As he suggested, opportunities to remake the world were now within grasp, given the abundance of intellectual and financial resources in developed countries such as Canada. What the international community needed most was an emancipatory politics. What Canada needed most was the willpower and commitment to deliver. Ignatieff gushed, "for the first time in history, we now have a real claim to being able to solve problems that have dogged human life for millennia: hunger, disease and environmental destruction. We have the science. We have the money. What we lack is focus and determination."³⁴⁴ The messianic undertones of the message signalled a radical optimism that rarely seemed as pronounced in his published work.

As he presented the situation, the task ahead was wrapped in hope rather than doubt, wrapped in the certainty of eventual triumph rather than in a concern for tragic choice. Largely absent from the discourse was his appreciation of incommensurability. Largely absent was a concern for divided goals: how the values of ambition and prudence may be in conflict, for example, when a call for bold action and a call for responsibility make opposing demands on the soul.

The discourse risked turning ideals into a fixation. As Jacques Barzun³⁴⁵ has warned, intellect poses a challenge for politics—especially when the conceptual schemes arrest the passions, excite the conscience, and turn matter-of-fact devotion to a cause into an all-consuming flight into fantasy. Being oblivious to the reality of loss and sacrifice in wishful schemes to improve the lot of humankind is the special blindness of the sterilely excited dreamer, according to Barzun: "with or without logic, ideas form systems, and systems absorb lives."³⁴⁶ Whether the idea was constitutional reform, an airtight federalism that respects jurisdictions, or the spread of "peace, order and good

government" around the world, the concept of "a Canada that takes risks" was the perfect *Form* in Ignatieff's foreground of possibilities.

The new-found enthusiasm in Ignatieff's voice seemed to overshadow the value of sceptical realism, which he extolled in *Isaiah Berlin* and *The Needs of Strangers*. The approach moved beyond passive contemplation of lesser evils—on the impossibility of knowing an "untainted Good" in a political world of uncertainty and loss. Rather, the message stressed resiliency in the face of unredeemable choice. It was about failing and failing better, as he implied. It was about failing with pride and vanity intact, but ultimately succeeding in the final analysis. However, rarely was his conception of political choice and adventurous policy about losing something permanently.

By the time he launched his campaign for the Liberal leadership in spring 2006, Ignatieff advertised his otherworldly ambition through slogans and catch phrases. Between April and December 2006, the number of protracted speeches for audiences on university campuses would drop, as Ignatieff recycled his material into digestible snippets for mass consumption on the campaign trail. Variations on recurring phrases such as "a spine of common citizenship,"³⁴⁷ "peace, order and good government,"³⁴⁸ "leadership that challenges and inspires,"³⁴⁹ "we are a serious people,"³⁵⁰ and "we need ideas"³⁵¹ anchored his communications through rehearsed imagery, and branded his performance on the podium.

He announced his bid for the leadership with anticipation: "I am fighting to revive faith—not just in the Liberal party—but in politics itself."³⁵² Ignatieff preached to the assembly with reassurances. "Politics is about unchaining hope," he proclaimed: "hope is the belief that what you are doing makes sense. What I am doing today makes sense. So I

have hope. All my life I have been inspired by Canada. Now it's my turn to inspire my fellow citizens."³⁵³ Hope was the gift of a statesman and a gift that Ignatieff claimed as his mantra. Hope was an omnibus term for everything and anything good and righteous. The interchangeable, poetic device padded Ignatieff's rhetoric with messages that lacked specificity. The candidate could vaguely remark how "hope and opportunity are not equally shared in Canada. There are regions of our country where hope is in short supply."³⁵⁴ References to hope fuelled metaphors that enlivened and simplified political reality.

On environmental questions, the term *hope* would help Ignatieff summarise the difference between his platform and the position of the Conservative party. Hope was more than a feeling. Hope promised certainty. As an allusive concept, hope could represent what his opponent conveniently lacked: "Mr. Harper will try to sell you an environmental policy that makes you feel good. Canadians are tired of that shell game. We need hope. Hope that our environment will be saved."³⁵⁵ The promise of salvation came wrapped in a single word.

Repetitions of the word adorned the message with patriotic appeals. As he concluded in the final month before the convention, Liberal leadership is "about being courageous in the solutions we propose. It is also about inspiring hope. Hope in ourselves and hope in all Canadians."³⁵⁶ He reminded the crowd, "there is hope and opportunity in this room," while he cheerfully praised the resourcefulness of the people: "Canadians must never doubt the greatness of the human mind, must never doubt the greatness of the Canadian mind. Our economic future depends on it."³⁵⁷ The people served as an abstraction in his narrative of political and social emancipation. To borrow Edward Shil's

conception of intellectual romanticism, Ignatieff started to idolise an essential *volk*—by claiming “the direct and full experience of the ultimate value of individual creativity of the spirit of the community (folk or national or local).”³⁵⁸ With such an abstract call for “hope” as an essential need in political life, and with such repeated use of the word as an all-encompassing image in his message, Ignatieff’s discourse appeared more otherworldly than innerworldly, more receptive to the heroism and saintliness of ultimate ends than to criticism of means.

The candidate now seemed to extol the second, elusive form of freedom, which Ignatieff outlined in the *Needs of Strangers*:³⁵⁹ the freedom that comes with certainty, with knowledge that one is right and has chosen rightly. When the political discourse concentrated on “hope” and “greatness,” there seemed to be less room for an awareness of St. Augustine’s first, lonely freedom—less room for the recognition of tragic choice, which his earlier writings often treated as inescapable. The discursive account of political life no longer centred on the trail of uncertainties in the long struggle and march through the wilderness—Walzer’s narrative of an ideal-typical, gradual revolution. Rather it approximated the sermons of a messianic leader who longs for the shortcut in a political exodus from problem to solution, from error to deliverance, but without recognition of the complications that characterise the journey in-between.

Wishful imagery in his campaign rhetoric made broad appeals for arresting change—for an ultimate end to ongoing struggles. Quebec was the major battleground, as he suggested when he launched his campaign in the province. On the question of federalism and the prospect of separation, he reassured his audience almost with the resolution of a prophet. Canada would prevail. Ignatieff would prevail. “I can bring

closure to old quarrels. I can lead our party into the future," he promised as he shared an enthusiasm for immediate renewal: "I love my country. But I am impatient to see it achieve its full potential."³⁶⁰ He longed for immediate change and immediate resolutions. He once again stressed the larger frame, the view from afar, and the gaze of the cosmopolitan. In the grander scheme, according to Ignatieff, the alleged internal fights, the petty differences, the bickering and the quarrelling only waste precious time when "the world is asking only one thing of Canada and Quebec: that they be serious, productive and capable."³⁶¹ The larger view was also the simpler scheme in his discourse, which presented solutions in the language of values, sentiments and visions.

Representations of the intellectual in press coverage

In "Politics as a Vocation," Max Weber once distinguished between (1) an advocate who can win support for weak and unpopular causes, "because technically he makes a strong case for them;" and (2) a politician who may inadvertently "turn a cause that is good in every sense into a weak cause through 'technically weak' pleading."³⁶² While the former approximates the sophisticated ideal in many respects, Weber associates the latter with the folly of amateur demagoguery. The orator persuades through flattery, and confirms what a following already believes and wants to know. The campaign address is, for Weber, a perfect illustration of this orientation in action. The party leader rallies and praises a crowd of supporters, just as the demagogue would convey and embrace an imagined, popular will. The approach enlivens a case with celebratory prose and flamboyant oratory, but may dilute and over-sweeten the appeal in the process. Especially when the effort seems strained, and counts more on effect than on the

implications of claims, a political dilettante who plays the demagogue faces the danger of taking lightly the weight of words.

If he experimented with demagogic speech in his political communications, however, the performance failed to win acclaim from the media. Attempts to appease his audience and refashion his image proved difficult in the spotlight of the press. In the editorial pages, some critics found the transition to politics and his new role unconvincing. With news of the leadership bid, for example, a column in the *Toronto Star* warned, "Ignatieff's thinking, writing and long absence from Canada are contentious and it's far from clear he will make an emotional connection first with the party, then the country."³⁶³ Meanwhile, Don Martin derided Ignatieff's appearances on the podium, for being excessively rehearsed and overworked. The columnist jokingly shared lines from a memorised speech in which Ignatieff had overestimated the size of the crowd. "Look at the number of people in this room [...] Feel your strength [...] The sight of you would wipe the smirk of Harper's face," Ignatieff reportedly exclaimed to a sparsely attended rally with no more than 75 local supporters.³⁶⁴

Susan Riley, who covered the leadership race in regular columns for the *Ottawa Citizen*, remarked how Ignatieff "assembled the trappings of a front-runner: Demographically calculated endorsements, well-staged rallies, comprehensive but vague appeal to values and a display of everyman geniality. (The two thumbs up, conspiratorial smile, use of repetition for emphasis, and camera-awareness)."³⁶⁵ Yet, she questioned the authenticity of his performance on the podium, given how easily Ignatieff seemed to adopt the voice of his audience as a rhetorical strategy. Riley questioned his attachment to Canada, and wondered "how often he posed as an American" in his essays for

publications in the United States. Citing "The Burden" and "Lesser Evils," she censured the alleged frequency of "Ignatieff's use of the word 'we'—as in 'we Americans.' He also referred to 'our founding fathers. i.e. Thomas Jefferson and George Washington. For whatever reason, he edited out his own nationality.'"³⁶⁶ Here, the focus on semantics framed the intellectual politician as an outsider, despite his explicit embrace of the Liberal Party in his speeches.

From the beginning, the response to his political communication shuttled between admiration and concern—between mythologies of the candidate as a charismatic figure on the one hand, and reservations about his fit as a politician on the other. More than a month before Ignatieff officially won the nomination in the riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, for example, Diane Francis from the *National Post* portrayed his re-entry as a welcome antidote for "disenchanted Liberals" and a "leadership-starved Canada." Yet, she added that his albeit "refreshing heterodoxy" as an intellectual "likely disqualifies Ignatieff from the parochial and stultified Canadian political scene."³⁶⁷ A column in the *Ottawa Citizen* captured similar sentiments: "[Ignatieff] is a formidable guy on paper and seems like a good man in person. But you can't be a candidate without being a politician, either a good one or a bad one, and he is not a politician yet because he still comes off like he's talking to a roomful of people who've paid \$20,000 US a year to hear what he has to say about the world."³⁶⁸ The complaint persisted in another column by Susan Riley. The party needs "a salesperson, not a philosopher," she cynically jeered: "the newly minted Liberal MP risks becoming a new windbag for a new time, handicapped as he is by a lifetime in academia and a thick portfolio of published work. He needs to know that the electorate, if not Liberals, is visioned-out after Paul Martin and hungry for

substance, not alliterative slogans."³⁶⁹ This opinion writer preferred a personality contest instead.

It would take the voice of a scholar, such as Professor Andrew Cohen from Carleton University, to appreciate the philosopher king in Ignatieff. Cohen applauded the writer among other "people of substance" for courageously entering public life, while he lamented how too often "able people sit on the sidelines, chagrined by the posturing, the shallowness and the incivility of national politics."³⁷⁰ Indeed, the candidate was rarely immune to the trivialisation of intellect in headlines such as "Big Brains Join Race,"³⁷¹ "Heavyweights come out for Liberals,"³⁷² and "IQ-ing up for Liberal race: Not since Trudeau has a contest boasted so much cerebral cortex."³⁷³ The press reduced scholarly experience to either a novelty or an obstacle.

The representation of Michael Ignatieff conveyed neither the image of a visionary emancipator (otherworldly attachment), nor the profile of Gramsci's skillful organiser (innerworldly attachment), nor Melzer and Said's version of the critic who raises the consciousness of the masses (innerworldly detachment). Rather the portrait vilified Ignatieff and his intellectual record for appearing too remote and disconnected from the audience he claimed to represent. It presented otherworldliness as a constraint rather than a strength.

Recurring criticisms of his time away from Canada, his reputation as an interventionist and his philosophy of lesser evils, were sometimes unforgiving in their treatment of the aspiring politician. Some journalists and commentators interpreted his early campaign speeches as a pre-emptive strategy to "unload baggage." If Ignatieff appeared to reverse his intellectual stance as some observers contended, however,

purging away the past proved challenging. The editorial pages often represented Ignatieff as someone who failed to unload his baggage.

Complaints about his absence dwelled on gaffes and perceived lapses in his understanding of the country. For example, in an op-ed article for the *Gazette*, Professor William Watson voiced reservations about Ignatieff's figurative exile from the Canadian scene:

Maybe decades away does give him greater wisdom about our affairs. But I doubt it. Take his idea of putting Quebec's nationhood in the constitution. Maybe you really did have to go through the late 1980s and early 1990s to understand what a swamp such politics are. Can it really be that, with his Google-Earth view, Michael Ignatieff has seen from afar that the swamp is actually rather small and there is dry land all around? In this case, the satellite view is probably deceiving.³⁷⁴

For this critic, Ignatieff's otherworldliness was blinding. The misattribution of a quote in a campaign speech prompted Watson's concern over the candidate's grasp of the Canadian constitutional predicament. According to the editorialist and McGill academic, Ignatieff's image of "a trip to the dentist"—as an analogy for the recurring "national question" in Canada—was not the playful invention of the *Gazette*, as the candidate claimed. Rather, it first appeared in a speech by Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau who used the simile in the 1990s to sell separation as the solution to an unworkable federalism. What Watson called a "brainless misattribution" was the manifestation of a larger problem: not his intelligence, but his carelessness with the finer details.

Ian MacDonald echoed Watson's concern when he concluded, on the eve of the December convention, "Michael Ignatieff doesn't need to prove he's the smartest guy in the room. We already know that, and it can be very annoying. But he does need to

demonstrate he knows his country and understands how it works.”³⁷⁵ The need to appear popular, make connections, and adopt the procedural rules of the game trumped the Habermasian ideal of independent, rational-critical dialogue. In the evaluations of critics, displays of intellectual sophistication and originality rarely received praise as evidence of inspiring leadership.

Ennui over Ignatieff's perceived inexperience and naivety as a politician marked columns by Don Martin, who voiced similar grievances about the otherworldliness of the intellectual. The opinion writer described Ignatieff's plan to re-open the constitutional dialogue, and consider "nationhood" status for Quebec, as borderline insanity. "Have the Liberal's lost their minds," Martin asked: "how can an open-ended concept [such as a nation] morph into anything but a never-ending debate? That giant sucking sound that accompanies most bad ideas is dragging the entire race into Ignatieff's murky whirlpool.”³⁷⁶ The columnist derided what he saw as ineffectual and tiresome discourse on the campaign trail. As Martin editorialised the final remarks at a leadership debate earlier in October, "[Ignatieff] opened an 'all of us are dreamers' speech in gee-whiz form. 'I think this is one of the best afternoons to be a Liberal I can ever remember,' he gushed. I guess that's because he's had so few in the past 25 years while he lived outside Canada.”³⁷⁷ The critic found the "entertainment value" of the strained performance to be unimpressive. He regarded Ignatieff's identification with Canada and the party as forced and artificial. The novice was trying too hard.

What emerged in such responses to Ignatieff was suspicion over the authenticity of his transformation, not simply criticism of his idealistic conjectures, but also doubt over his motives. Edward Shils has observed how intellectuals in some instances “could

yield to the customary temptations of the vain and egocentric, demagoguery, flattery, and opportunism. They could, in short, conform to their own prevailing image of normal political life.”³⁷⁸ Reactions in the media not only portrayed Ignatieff through this lens, but also stressed his inability to effectively “conform”—to successfully shed an eccentric, otherworldly orientation at odds with the “prevailing image of normal political life.”

The image of an apologist persisted as dissenting voices made headlines. Lloyd Axworthy, an ex-officio delegate and former Minister of Foreign Affairs under Chrétien, made his preferences clear in early October before the convention. Axworthy would vote for anyone but Ignatieff, and warned that such a polarising figure would endanger the party.³⁷⁹ With the candidate's ambivalence on pre-emptive war, and with his endorsement of Harper's motion to extend the mission in Afghanistan, Ignatieff appeared on the periphery of mainstream liberalism in Canada. As Axworthy lamented the situation,

Mr. Ignatieff has shown horrible, bad political judgment on that issue [military intervention]. And he wasn't just a supporter of the war in Iraq, he was an outspoken apologist and advocate for it. It would make it impossible for a Liberal Party to provide an alternative to the Conservative government if he was leader.”³⁸⁰

The uncertain and shifting location of the figure on the political spectrum was problematic. The former minister feared that a victory for the controversial candidate at the upcoming convention would most likely rob the party of a defining wedge against the political right in the next general election. To borrow Dick Pels' conception of the free-floating thinker,³⁸¹ what troubled Axworthy was the potential of Ignatieff's ideas to “cross-over” and confuse the ideological cleavages that traditionally divided parties along the political spectrum, thus confusing voters.

Passages from a critical book on the intellectual-politician, entitled *Ignatieff's World*, by Robert Smith,³⁸² attracted the attention of the *Globe and Mail* columnist, John Ibbitson.³⁸³ The message mirrored Axworthy's warning: Ignatieff's style and political orientation was suspect. Smith described the former scholar from Harvard as writing "as a courtier in the antechambers of power, periodically adjusting his pronouncements to keep within hailing distance of Blair's Downing Street and Bush's White House."³⁸⁴ Interpretative flexibility masked what Smith saw as opportunism. The slim, critical volume mapped a transition in Ignatieff's thinking—an alleged shift away from his moderate roots as a civil libertarian towards an increasingly aggressive embrace of imperialism and the fantasy of a new world order. Moreover, Smith questioned the rigour of Ignatieff's analytical work on international affairs: "Out in the field, he can draw compelling word pictures of men and women in distress [. . .] but he seldom offers any detailed explanation of the politics that put them into that distress or of what will, realistically, get them out of it, if anything can."³⁸⁵ There was little toleration for a sophisticated thinker who presented problems rather than solutions.

Other columnists expressed similar apprehensions. With news of more bloodshed and insurgency in Iraq, Jeffrey Simpson derided what he saw as the blindness and insensitivity of the intellectual.

The gore and chaos [in Iraq] can only serve to underscore Mr. Ignatieff's eloquent and insistent support for that invasion—the interventionist liberal finding common intellectual cause with neo-conservative ideologues in the Bush administration. That error of judgment, plus assorted flip-flops and glib comments during the campaign, have shaken the confidence of many Liberals in Mr. Ignatieff.³⁸⁶

The above comment issued an *ad homonym* attack on the style and questionable sympathies of the politician. Ignatieff's alleged reactionary responses approximated a rejection of what Ralf Dahrendorf³⁸⁷ regards as the social function of the fool and court jester. Commentators such as Simpson questioned the value of an approach that lacked consistency—an approach that transgressed partisan boundaries, and enabled a “cross-over” between perceived liberal and neo-conservative values.

Barbara Yaffe sarcastically censured what she saw as ambivalence in his discourse: "In four televised leadership debates to date, Ignatieff's viewpoint on Iraq has been indecipherable. He backed George W. Bush's military foray but doesn't really support what's happening over there. Huh?"³⁸⁸ For this critic, clarity was missing in the debate. Clarity meant consistency, not further elaboration on seemingly irreconcilable views, but fewer reversals and restatements. Joey Slinger turned the assumed confusion on Iraq into a joke about an underlying poverty of intellect in Ignatieff's work: "He doesn't think too clearly. Not thinking too clearly is a drawback if you're a professional thinker, which he used to be, although maybe it's why he's trying to get into another line of work."³⁸⁹ Fallibility was inexcusable. For Don Martin, intellectual detachment hindered the politician: "you can only wince when [Ignatieff] declares, 'I'm somebody who says what I think,' knowing that's the cue he's about to change his mind."³⁹⁰ In the public spotlight, tentative thoughts and self-reflexive musings rarely received a warm reception. Indeed, commentators presented such faith in the independence of rational-critical dialogue—faith in intellectuals who “say what they think” and routinely change their mind—as distracting rather than enabling in politics.

As much as the writer claimed a new sensibility and a new responsibility to the public, critics in the press and competitors in the race usually clung to the past. What captured the newspapers was the sensationalism of a clash—with headlines such as "Iraq haunts Ignatieff still," "Would-be grit leader defends stand on Iraq," "Ignatieff strains to explain hawkish writing on Iraq," "Ignatieff roughed up for supporting Iraq invasion," "Ignatieff battling opposition to war," "Rivals pounce on Ignatieff," and "White-knuckle contest shaping up."³⁹¹ The prospect of forgiving, forgetting and moving forward offered limited purchase on events.

Some critics gravitated toward seemingly incriminating snippets from his intellectual writings. Both Laurie Taylor and John Ivison,³⁹² who wrote respectively before and after Ignatieff's election to the commons, isolated the same quote as evidence of the candidate's ambivalence toward torture: "defeating terror requires violence. It may also require coercion, secrecy, deception, even violation of rights."³⁹³ Meanwhile, Joey Slinger, Andy Lamey and Haroon Siddiqui³⁹⁴ revisited another, widely publicised and heavily scrutinised passage from a prior essay on Lesser Evils: "Permissible duress might include forms of sleep deprivation that do not result in lasting harm to mental or physical health, together with disinformation and disorientation (like keeping prisoners in hoods) that would produce stress."³⁹⁵ Mocking the infamous "lite" adjective from the titles of Ignatieff's work on *Empire Lite* and "Nation-building Lite," Slinger described the doctrine of "permissible duress" as akin to "Torture Lite" and "Abu Ghraib Lite"—a reference to the humiliating abuse of Iraqi prisoners at a United States detention camp.³⁹⁶ "Bush Lite" represented another caricatured spin on Ignatieff's worldview.³⁹⁷

During the 2005 election campaign over December, Haroon Siddiqui published and later retracted a column that directly accused the candidate from Etobicoke-Lakeshore of condoning "the use of torture and other violations of human rights and basic democratic standards."³⁹⁸ Weeks later, after Siddiqui accused Ignatieff again in another column for being "on record as supporting torture lite,"³⁹⁹ the director of Human Rights Watch intervened. In a letter to the editor, Kenneth Roth⁴⁰⁰ reminded the *Toronto Star* about a recently published chapter by Ignatieff in a co-edited book, *Torture: Does it Make Us Safer?*,⁴⁰¹ which eschews endorsement of the practice. A complete ban on coercive interrogations, argued Ignatieff, offered the only check against a slippery slope to violating human rights, given the difficulty of regulating such measures institutionally. Whether Ignatieff's latest contribution signalled a reversal or simply restatement of his complicated position in "Lesser Evils" and *The Lesser Evil* was unclear to the press. Even though the candidate believed that he was "on record" as an opponent of torture, the mere suggestion of "permissible duress" would excite the imagination of his critics nevertheless.

To be sure, other editorials tried to rescue the intellectual from the circus of allegations and hasty generalisations. For example, in his column for the *Ottawa Citizen*, Dan Gardener concluded that Ignatieff was the unfortunate victim of his own intellectual strengths—his interest in tough issues, his ability to see complexity without losing the wider view, and his willingness to explore contrary views with equal consideration. Gardner writes, "the sad truth is that the very writings that demonstrate Mr. Ignatieff's admirable qualities provide a near-inexhaustible supply of statements that can be wrenched out of context and flung like mud."⁴⁰² That Ignatieff produced sufficiently

uninhibited musings, as a free-floating and independent writer, was his liability. That the intellectual would daringly title an essay in *Prospect Magazine*, "If Torture Works ...", was for Gardener "an excellent demonstration of why Mr. Ignatieff is unlikely to ever be the leader of the Liberal party, much less prime minister."⁴⁰³ However clever or incongruent his arguments might have been, Ignatieff's sophistical talents were a potential hindrance. His intellectual past risked feeding rather than fending off a media spectacle that devoured controversy, and censured idiosyncrasies. It was a political culture that favoured clean hands over muddy profiles, but expected dirt nevertheless.

Words such as "Iraq" and "Torture" elicited responses, aroused assumptions and implied meanings that resonated regardless of the specific contexts of their deployment. To borrow a concept from Murray Edelman, they served as *condensation symbols* in a political spectacle.⁴⁰⁴ The mere association of Ignatieff with the image of "Bush" or "pre-emptive war" could provoke reaction, and carry weight in the discussion —irrespective of the questionable truth-content of the assertion. Therein lies the reality of the political spectacle, according to Murray Edelman. Arguments seem more likely to persuade audiences, not so much by their appeal to logic, reason or doubt as the intellectual expects from dialogue in the public sphere, but rather by the power of language to stir hopes, reflect fears, and offer consoling answers: "what is accepted as a 'good reason' need not tell much about the cogency of its argument but is a sensitive index to the problems, aspirations, and social situation of its audience."⁴⁰⁵ The full realisation of Habermas' ideal-speech situation—the dream of emancipating discourse from economic, governmental, commercial and military hierarchies—will most likely remain an unattainable fantasy, according to this theorist. Edelman doubts whether Habermas' view

of "political language in the world we inhabit can become something more than a sequence of strategies and rationalisations." ⁴⁰⁶

The editorials on Ignatieff followed the logic of the political spectacle. Observers in the media expected an ideal figure who offered satisfaction rather than provoked doubts, who offered 'good reasons' that could rally support in a contest of personalities, winners and losers. Columnists generally represented his performance as awkward and inappropriate.

The Finale at the Convention

Words mattered in a contest that thrived on speeches. By December 2006, Ignatieff was selling optimism. "If we become the party of hope in the land of hope, there is no power on earth that can defeat us," ⁴⁰⁷ proclaimed the candidate in his final address on the eve of the televised convention in Montreal. With arms stretched confidently over the podium, and with eyes shaded under stage lights, Ignatieff assumed the posture of a statesman who preached the virtues of his party and country. Supporters energetically shouted on cue the repeated phrase, "Tous ensemble," as the candidate recited slogans from his platform about social justice, sustainable development, national unity and international leadership. "I say tonight what I have said throughout this campaign. We must be the party of hope. [...] And hope begins with opportunity. Opportunity for low income families, for aboriginal Canadians, for immigrants, opportunity for our farmers. [French: the possibility of men and women to live without poverty and violence]. If hope begins with opportunity, opportunity has to begin with education." ⁴⁰⁸ Even he rallied an

audience full of red and white placards, the content was sufficiently familiar and general to appear uncontroversial.

While the message came from a seasoned scholar and journalist with a talent for clear writing, Ignatieff's polished delivery lacked the edge that observers expected from a star candidate. Commentators would later remark that the 58-year old contender delivered a "safe performance" in Montreal—a display without substance. Invited panellists on the CBC described the address as a premature victory speech rather than a final plea to undecided delegates. The frontrunner appeared too confident. Ahead of his opponents, Ignatieff seemed content with the rituals and clichés of a standard address that avoided contention but offered nothing new. As columnist Andrew Coyne told the midnight panel, "his whole strategy to me seemed to be an inevitability strategy. He would get far enough in front so that all the careerists and opportunists would kind of pile in behind him because he was the winning lunch ticket."⁴⁰⁹ However, when the first ballot placed Ignatieff at 29 percent, Bob Rae at 20 percent, and Stephane Dion in third place after Gerard Kennedy, doubts arose over Ignatieff's chances. Former MP John Manley told the CBC, "if they [the delegates] simply look at the numbers, I think the calculation they are going to do is that Stephane Dion has done extremely well and that Michael Ignatieff is dead in the water."⁴¹⁰ National affairs writer Chantelle Hébert added, "Ignatieff may be now in full damage control mode,"⁴¹¹ if only because he failed to attract more ex officio votes from members of the Liberal caucus. As Rex Murphy conceded, Ignatieff's "eminence and intellectual quality" might be his greatest strength. Yet, as the critic argued, without new support from high-ranking party officials, any illusions of grandeur and majesty would quickly fade.⁴¹²

By the second ballot, political analysts were monitoring the floor for signs of "momentum" and "growth potential"—two catch-all terms that they associated with the qualities of a winner on the last day of the convention. As allegiances shifted and as candidates dropped from the contest, Ignatieff's support needed to grow. Ignatieff needed momentum. Yet, by December, "growth" was about numbers and victories in percentages. Growth was a choreographed handshake from a new supporter. Growth was about casting a wider net over constituents. In the final hours of the race, growth was no longer about refining thoughts, presenting new problems, or challenging received wisdom. It was no longer about taking risks, staking claims, defending convictions or recovering from mistakes. Growth was no longer about the trials and errors of an intellectual as he adjusted to public life. Ignatieff cheerfully lectured a reporter, "what you have to understand about this process is the power in this room. It's not in my hands; and it's not in the hands of the other candidates. It's actually in the hands of the delegates where it belongs."⁴¹³ Growth was about reaching out, and expanding an existing base. Growth was about votes. It was about winning on the final ballot.

After ten months in the spotlight, Michael Ignatieff finished behind Stephane Dion who won in the last round. With Gerard Kennedy's support after the second ballot, and with Bob Rae's exit after the third ballot, Dion absorbed almost 55 percent of the vote. Ignatieff lost.

CONCLUSION: EVALUATIONS AND CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Some evaluative remarks and critical reflections seem in order. Ignatieff's encounter with power, in his campaigns for the federal election and the Liberal leadership in 2006, begs the question: whether the value-orientations of an intellectual such as Ignatieff are better suited for a career on the periphery than at the centre of the political system. If the ideal qualities of political leadership are, as Weber would argue, "passion, a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion,"⁴¹⁴ Ignatieff was perhaps better equipped to balance these competing traits as a relatively unattached writer than as a campaigning politician.

While he claimed to be serious, passionate, and principled as a critic in the public sphere, the issue of responsibility presented new challenges for Ignatieff in politics. Responsibility was no longer exclusively a duty to intervene—whether as the voice of conscience, reason, doubt or opposition. It was also about publicly assuming accountability for the outcomes of following through on ideas. Suddenly Ignatieff faced a political spectacle that was more likely to measure ideas by their perceived implications for policy, their impressions on audiences and their fit within the party, than by their truth-value, their cogency or their cleverness on the page. The question lingers: whether intellectuals can be mirror holders and office holders simultaneously without compromising their original value-orientations and their discursive approach to communication.

Arguably, a politically *detached* intellectual can make criticisms, and qualify arguments after the fact, with relative ease and in the absence of real responsibility for the outcomes. Before entering politics, Ignatieff could strengthen a weakened, unpopular

case with relative impunity as a modern sophist. In an open society, the independent critic—someone with Melzer’s paradoxical posture of “attached-detachment” and the playfulness of Dahrendorf’s court jester—is ideally free and flexible to flirt outside the bounds of convention. The independent voice has room to doubt, for example, the prospect of unproblematic and non-contradictory conceptions of the Good in public policy. There is room to articulate the alternative of “lesser evils,” and room to question the Truth without incurring any costs other than perhaps the charge of appearing controversial.

The uncomfortable middle-ground, in an ethic of lesser evils, is where Ignatieff unravelled the burdens of political compromise and tragic choice in his later work, before entering Canadian politics. A cynical reading of his intellectual contributions could conclude that he pursued his interpretative flexibility and his pragmatic scepticism too far. His doubts about an untainted Good in politics, especially when they appeared ironically against a call for bold measures in the name of high principles, seemed to produce a complex and conflicted orientation. Perhaps the metaphor, which he used to describe Isaiah Berlin, applied equally to Michael Ignatieff: he was the fox who longed to be a hedgehog. He was an innerworldly sceptic who longed for an otherworldly consistency between his ideal-types and reality. He espoused an ethic of responsibility—a belief that the choices between good and evil were rarely clear in politics, but required flexible thinking and prudent measures. Yet, he elevated this posture, in turn, to an ethic of ultimate ends. The moral ambivalence of the middle ground represented the new absolute in his rhetoric. His encounter with power in 2006 seemed to amplify the

idealism in his discursive style, while it undermined his prior claim to sceptical pragmatism.

The case of Michael Ignatieff also raises the problem of the relationship between intellectual culture and civil society. In a cynical portrait of the profession, Paul Johnson calls for critical reflection on the ambitions and motives of intellectuals who aspire to influence the direction of their societies:

A dozen people picked at random on the street are at least as likely to offer sensible views on moral and political matters as a cross section of the intelligentsia. But I would go further. One of the principle lessons of our tragic century, which has seen so many innocent lives sacrificed to improve the lot of humanity is—beware, intellectuals. Not merely should they be kept well away from the levers of power, they should also be objects of particular suspicion when they seek to offer collective advice."⁴¹⁵

Although one could accuse Johnson of legitimating a populist and philistine attitude,⁴¹⁶ the author captures a familiar assumption about the alienation of critical intellectuals—their distance from the concerns of ordinary people and common sense. For Johnson, this disconnect not only persists, but also seems potentially dangerous, when intellectuals take everyday problems as their causes—in other words, when they shift from an otherworldly to an innerworldly posture of detachment, and bring idealistic visions to bear on human realities. Johnson's complaint approximates a longing—in some respects—for the kind of critical public that Habermas⁴¹⁷ celebrates as an early accomplishment of the bourgeoisie. One could argue that Johnson's appeal to the lay judgement of the masses espouses a similar, democratic ideal: Habermas' utopia of private persons making use of their reason, independent of the elites and the authorities.

Yet, this assessment perhaps only fits if one defines intellectuals, such as Michael Ignatieff, as estranged, impractical and elitist authorities rather than as facilitators and catalysts of ongoing dialogue in the public sphere. After all, the ideal-type of inner-worldliness—which this thesis has associated with Ignatieff’s discourse prior to politics—implies participation and engagement rather than a flight from the responsibilities of everyday life to the realm of pure fantasy and Platonic forms.

A generous reading of Ignatieff, and of the sophisticated model of engaged but detached intellectualism, might excuse his Janus-faced posture, his internalisation of tragic choice, and his openness to the unstable interplay of contending sides. As Steve Fuller has argued, *intellectuals are in the business of exaggeration*. The sophisticated thinker exaggerates reason beyond its self-imposed limits, if only to make a point—however erroneous and weak the point might seem against the stronger side:

one side in a case may have had more financial and rhetorical resources than the other. Justice depends on these two opposing tendencies cancelling—not reinforcing—each other. Thus one must always presume that the better-evidenced side merely appears better. Given the opportunity, the other side might well have balanced the ledger or even turned out superior.⁴¹⁸

One measure of an open society, as Fuller has paraphrased Karl Popper, is the ability to take messages from the “creative exegesis” of its sceptical thinkers without literally or figuratively killing the messenger, either directly through coercion from without, or indirectly through self-censorship from within.⁴¹⁹

Given the outcome of Ignatieff’s transition in the campaign, the question arises whether the political spectacle in some sense suppressed the “creative exegesis” of his intellectual contributions. Even as Ignatieff rebutted accusations from hecklers, other

contenders and the media, the depth of the debate rarely reached beyond a stalemate during the leadership contest. It was a battle of ultimate ends without compromises and without an area "in-between" where talk of lesser evils and tragic choice could appear remotely moderate and pragmatic. Was the writer an apologist for violating human rights: yes or no? Critics affirmed what Ignatieff denied altogether. Avenues for rational critical dialogue seemed constrained—especially when, to use Orwell's expression, political language is able "to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind."⁴²⁰ Both Ignatieff and his critics in the press seemed to accuse each side of harbouring this fault—of distorting and reducing the meaning of ideas and intentions.

Ideally, Ignatieff needed to play the political spectacle. He needed to ascribe causes and consequences, define protagonists and antagonists, and highlight the gains and losses of political players in highly ritualised performances. He needed to rehearse the fiction of a world with answers—a world where dramatic recitations and recognisable gestures supply the illusion of certainty. He needed to surrender his innerworldly detachment as a sophisticated thinker, and attach himself to the imagined will of the party. While he might have succeeded partially at this self-reinvention, his newfound otherworldliness produced the image of a political charlatan in representations of Ignatieff on the editorial pages. Conflicts between his intellectual orientation and his approach to the political spectacle intensified as the critical writer churned together electoral promises, party slogans, and flattering imagery for the consumption of his audience.

As Lewis Coser has argued, regardless of one's orientation to public life, "the general tension between the intellectuals' preoccupation with general and abstract values and the routine institutions of society assert[s] itself."⁴²¹ Just as the visionary may loath the compromises, adjustments and routines in everyday politics, office-holders and the laity will often deride the impracticality and idealism of intellectuals. As Jeffrey Goldfarb has observed in his comparative analysis of American intellectuals, finding a home in the political landscape is challenging for this reason: "Intellectuals who became politicians tended to become enamoured with their own ideas and to lose sight of the concerns of their constituents. They viewed politics abstractly, missing its concreteness."⁴²² For Goldfarb, these tendencies might explain why intellectuals often lose when they run for office in free elections. By virtue of their special claim to knowledge—their desire to reach beyond the immediate, and uncover Truth amid falsehood—intellectuals value a hierarchy of understanding, which democratic prejudices and procedures tend to undermine. The result is a tension between the value orientations of two worlds. That critical intellectuals appear marginalised in established democracies is neither surprising nor alarming for Goldfarb.⁴²³

His eventual failure at the polls in December 2006, indeed, raises the prospect that Ignatieff was more *at home* on the margins than at the centre of power—more *at home* as an interpreter than as a legislator. His political speeches may have decorated "good public policy" as a passionate, but responsible and consistent devotion to a cause. Yet, as James Q. Wilson has remarked, "intellectuals are probably at their best—that is, do things they are best suited to do—when they tell people in power that something they tried did not work as they expected."⁴²⁴ That the results of detached, critical work might be unpopular

with constituents --or confront the powers with embarrassing questions—is usually expected. Wilson suggests that intellectuals usually “are their best” when they evaluate the outcomes of policies, *post hoc*, rather than when they aggressively devise *ad hoc* solutions to match an abstract theory of the ideal society.

Intellectuals are at their best, according to Wilson, when they avoid pandering to the muses with reassuring projections and visionary schemes that purport to solve national problems. They are at their best when they open an unending dialogue, "by which assumptions are questioned, early findings re-examined, and new avenues of inquiry identified."⁴²⁵ They are at their best when they measure intentions and outcomes against an empirical world of prior cases to uncover what happened and what went wrong. Whether the fruits of intellect produce anything definitive, or offer anything more concrete than critical insight, is rarely certain—let alone essential to the profession.⁴²⁶

Given Wilson's criteria, Ignatieff was probably "at his best" when he played the sophist, and presented alternative conceptions of the challenges and their implications. Whether the problem was the reality of conflicting needs, desires and entitlements in a political culture of "rights talk"—whether the problem was the baffling logic of ethnic nationalism; whether the problem was Western hubris and the dream of virtually bloodless warfare; whether the problem was a choice between lesser evils and moral absolutes in counter-terrorism, or the problem of poorly planned interventions abroad—Ignatieff was probably "at his best" when he laid bare the complications.

The leadership campaign seemed to thrust the candidate into a discursive mode that appeared incompatible with his prior claim to independence in the sphere of ideas. What emerged instead was an encounter with a political spectacle in which reassuring

displays and utopian promises trumped the need for critically detached interventions. The essayist and journalist, who once claimed “to winnow the wheat from the chaff”⁴²⁷ as a sceptical voice on the ground, faded into the background, while, in the foreground, Ignatieff gestured to the spotlight on the podium.

NOTES

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- ² Michael Ignatieff and Istvan Hont, *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge Cambridgeshire; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- ³ Michael Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1984).
- ⁴ Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (Toronto: Penguin, 2000).
- ⁵ Michael Ignatieff, *The Russian Album* (London: Markham Ont.: Penguin Books, 1988).
- ⁶ Michael Ignatieff, *Scar Tissue* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 1994).
- ⁷ "Michael Ignatieff," in *Contemporary Authors Online* (Gale Group Databases, 2007).
- ⁸ Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*, Noonday Press ed. (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), 235.
- ⁹ Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 20.
- ¹⁰ Edward Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Powers, and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 5.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3-22.
- ¹² James Joll, *Three Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), x.
- ¹³ Michael Ignatieff, "Just Say 'No,'" *Maclean's*, 6 Dec. 2004.
- ¹⁴ Responses to Ignatieff's run for the Liberal Leadership are discussed in Chapter 3. On the absence from Canada, noteworthy columns might include: Michael Bliss, "Canada under Attack," *National Post*, 25 Nov. 2006, Andrew Cohen, "Coming Home," *Ottawa Citizen*, 5 Sep. 2006, Lysiane Gagnon, "Mr. Ignatieff Is Canadian Enough for Me," *Globe and Mail*, 19 June 2006..
- ¹⁵ Murray J. Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
- ¹⁶ Lawrence Jacobs and Robert Shapiro, *Politicians Don't Pander* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 296.
- ¹⁷ Giasson and Thierry Giasson, "Canada's Democratic Malaise: Are the Media to Blame?" in *Strengthening Canadian Democracy*, ed. Paul Howe, Richard Johnston, and Andre Blaise (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2005).
- ¹⁸ Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion—Our Social Skin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- ¹⁹ Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, 104.
- ²⁰ Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of the Intelligentsia: An Inquiry into Its Past and Present Role," in *Essays on the Sociology of Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).
- ²¹ Murray J. Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 89.
- ²² Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, 52.
- ²³ Edelman give a number of examples: "Lenin adopted a 'New Economic Policy' restoring capitalist enterprise when he had to. Mao postponed indefinitely the promises in his earlier writings to change the disadvantaged status of women, and he sanctioned repression when threatened. [Woodrow] Wilson did display a rather rigid adherence to his academic views about the advantages of parliamentary government and the decisive role of the executive, but his rigidity in failing to take account of congressional opposition led to his defeat on [...] the Versailles Treaty, and his loss of influence as a political leader." See *Ibid.*, 52-53.
- ²⁴ Contentious passages from his chapter on Ukraine might include the following: "Ukrainian independence conjures up images of embroidered peasant shirts, the nasal whine of ethnic instruments, phony cossacks in cloaks and boots, nasty anti-Semites" (p. 106). "My difficulty in taking Ukraine seriously goes deeper than just my cosmopolitan suspicion of nationalists everywhere. Somewhere inside, I'm also what Ukrainians call a Great Russian, and there is a trace of old Russian disdain for these 'little Russian'" (p. 108). Within the larger context of the book, however, such admissions could also be read as evidence of self-

reflexivity—a willingness to lay bear rooted prejudices and stereotypes. See Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (London: BBC Books and Chatto & Windus, 1993; reprint, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 103-42.

²⁵ For a critical commentary on the event, see Denis Smith, *Ignatieff's World: A Liberal Leader for the 21st Century?* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 2006), 15-16.

²⁶ Michael Ignatieff, "The Burden," *The New York Times Magazine*, 5 Jan. 2003.

²⁷ Michael Ignatieff, "Lesser Evils," *The New York Times Magazine*, 2 May 2004.

²⁸ These incidents are discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis.

²⁹ In August 2006, he initially told reporters that the bombing and casualties in Qana, Lebanon, were tragic but inevitable given Hezbollah's decision to house military equipment near civilians. He later attempted to redress his position on the French language program *Tout le monde en parle*: "It was a mistake. I showed a lack of compassion. It was a mistake and when you make a mistake like that, you have to admit it [...] I was a professor of human rights, and I am also a professor of the laws of war, and what happened in Qana was a war crime, and I should have said that. That's clear." qtd. in Hamilton Graeme, "Israel's Attack on Qana a 'War Crime': Ignatieff: Remarks Made on Quebec Television," *National Post*, 11 Oct. 2006.

³⁰ For examples of usage by the press, see James Cowan, "'the Eggheads' Square Off," *Ibid.*, 4 Dec, Daniel Leblanc, "The Master of Proving People Wrong," *The Globe and Mail* 2006, Jeffrey Simpson, "Ignatieff's Unbearable Lightness of Absence," *The Globe and Mail*, 8 Apr. 2006, Les Whittington, "Chretien-Era Veteran Vaults Past Ignatieff to Win Party Leadership after a Roller-Coaster Convention," *Toronto Star*, 3 Dec. 2006.

³¹ Linda Diebel, "Pollster Predicts Cliff-Hanger Support for Dion Most Likely to Grow; 23% Say Anyone but Ignatieff Pollster Sees a Cliff-Hanger.," *Toronto Star*, 4 Nov. 2006.

³² e.g. Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals (La Trahison Des Clercs)* (New York: Norton & Company, 1928), Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 2004), Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*.

³³ e.g. Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1945; reprint, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), Jacques Barzun, *The House of Intellect* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959; reprint, New York: Perennial Classics, 2002), 150-79, Lewis Samuel Feuer, *Marx and the Intellectuals: A Set of Post-Ideological Essays* (1969).

³⁴ William Scott, "Varieties of Jacobinism," *The Historical Journal* 33, no. 3 (1990).

³⁵ Robert J. Brym, *Intellectuals and Politics*, Controversies in Sociology; 9 (London Allen & Unwin, 1980.: 1980), 45-48. Also see Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978)..

³⁶ Lewis A. Coser, *Men of Ideas: A Sociologist's View* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 157-70.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 171-88.

³⁸ James Allen Smith, *The Idea Brokers* (Toronto: Collier Macmillan Canada, 1991), 74-79.

³⁹ Robert Nisbet, "Project Camelot: An Autopsy," in *On Intellectuals: Theoretical Studies and Case Studies*, ed. Philip Reiff (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1969).

⁴⁰ Ralf Dahrendorf, "The Intellectual and Society: The Social Function of the Fool in the Twentieth Century," in *On Intellectuals*, ed. Philip Rieff (Garden City, NY: Anchor Doubleday, 1970).

⁴¹ Jeffrey C. Goldfarb, *Civility & Subversion* (New York: Cambridge, 1998).

⁴² For a variety of sociological types of intellectual roles, such as the tradition of scientism, romanticism, the apocalyptic tradition, populism and the tradition of anti-intellectualism, see Edward Shils, "The Intellectuals and the Powers: Some Perspective for Comparative Analysis," in *On Intellectuals*, ed. Philip Rieff (Garden City, NY: Anchor Doubleday, 1970), 43-48.

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- ⁴⁴ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harvest, 1955), 155-56, Mannheim, "The Problem of the Intelligentsia: An Inquiry into Its Past and Present Role," 101-20.
- ⁴⁵ Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946). For a critical appraisal of "value freedom" and the intellectual, see also Alan Scott, "Between Autonomy and Responsibility: Max Weber on Scholars, Academics and Intellectuals," in *Intellectuals in Politics: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie*, ed. Jeremy Jennings and Anthony Kemp-Welch (London: Routledge, 1997).
- ⁴⁶ Max Weber and Edward Shils, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1949).
- ⁴⁷ Ahmad Sadri, *Max Weber's Sociology of Intellectuals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
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- ⁵⁰ Gramsci, "The Intellectuals," 9.
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- ⁵⁴ Arthur M. Melzer, "What Is an Intellectual," in *The Public Intellectual: Between Philosophy and Politics*, ed. Arthur M. Melzer, Jerry. Weinberger, and M. Richard Zinman (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 10.
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- ⁵⁶ Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (New York: Norton, 1962).
- ⁵⁷ Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: New York Review Books, 2001).
- ⁵⁸ Benda, *Treason of the Intellectuals*, Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*.
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- ⁶¹ Harold Stearns, *America and the Young Intellectual* (New York: George H. Doran, 1921), Dick Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger* (London: Routledge, 2001), Dahrendorf, "The Intellectual and Society: The Social Function of the Fool in the Twentieth Century.", Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*.
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- ⁶⁵ Regis Debray, *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities*, trans. David Macey (London: Verso Editions, 1981), Josef Joffe, "The Decline of the Public Intellectual and the Rise of the Pundit," in *The Public Intellectual: Between Philosophy and Politics*, ed. Arthur M. Melzer, Jerry. Weinberger, and M. Richard Zinman (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

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⁷² Weber and Shils, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, 175.

⁷³ Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, "The Man and His Work," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 45-74.

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⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Weber and Shils, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, 75.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

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⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

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⁸³ Sadri, *Max Weber's Sociology of Intellectuals*, 105-24.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁸⁵ Melzer uses *this-worldly* rather than *innerworldly*, but makes the same comparison to *otherworldly* thinkers. e.g. "what is certain is that it does not stem from the radical, almost *otherworldly* transcendence of the practical sphere that is at the core of the classical philosophical ideal. The intellectual tends to regard that ideal as a fairy tale. His own stance is somehow an emphatically *this-worldly* detachment" Melzer, "What Is an Intellectual," 6.

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- ¹¹⁷ Ibid., 50-51.
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- ¹²⁵ Ibid., 212.
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- ¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.
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