



Emergence and Empire: Innis, Complexity, and the Trajectory of History

John Bonnett

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Harold Innis was one of the most profound thinkers that Canada ever produced. Such was his influence on the field of communication that Marshall McLuhan once declared his own work was a mere footnote to Innis. But over the past sixty years scholars have had a hard time explaining his brilliance, in large measure because Innis's dense, elliptical writing style has hindered easy explication and interpretation. But behind the dense verbiage lies a profound philosophy of history. In *Emergence and Empire*, John Bonnett offers a fresh take on Innis's work by demonstrating that his purpose was to understand the impact of self-organizing, emergent change on economies and societies. Innis's interest in emergent change induced him to craft an original and bold philosophy of history informed by concepts as diverse as information, Kantian idealism, and business cycle theory. Bonnett provides a close reading of Innis's oeuvre that connects works of communication and economic history to present a fuller understanding of Innis's influences and influence. *Emergence and Empire* presents a portrait of an original and prescient thinker who anticipated the importance of developments such as information visualization and whose understanding of change is remarkably similar to that which is promoted by the science of complexity today.



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