

THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEWS

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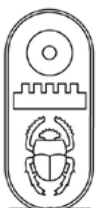
We live in a world where channels of information are becoming more and more numerous, more and more rapid, and more and more powerful. Thanks to these channels, the links between different areas, countries, and continents have improved dramatically and are, indeed, limitless. It is now possible to hear about an event that has just happened on the other side of the world, within just a few minutes of the event's occurrence. This is obviously indicative of great progress and shows that, thanks to technology, humankind is exercising a degree of mastery over time and space. However – as with everything that humanity has created through science – what ought to be useful, can unfortunately be detrimental. It all depends on the use to which it is put.

As we all know, human intelligence can be used to do bad as well as to do good. For example, there are currently scientists engaged in projects aimed at humanity's well-being, while others spend their time developing weapons to destroy and kill. Such is the twofold disposition



of humankind. According to which ideals people pursue and the way in which we apply our free will, we either work in the service of peace and harmony, or make ourselves the agent of war and strife. In other words, we are “angels” or “demons” in very many spheres – and to a certain extent, the news comes into this category.

Everyone should agree that the news has a big effect on mindsets and behaviors. Unfortunately, those who are delivering it – or making it – too often tend to set themselves at the level people expect. By so doing, they feed desires and needs that are not always constructive. Within the press, some newspapers and magazines specialize in portraying events where they know they are going to garner public opinion to their side, using particularly well-selected photographs or other media in order to shock, if need be. While the level of consciousness attained by humanity is higher than in the past, many people feel more attracted by the tragic elements of





current affairs than they do by happy and positive events.

What goes for the press is also the case for broadcasting in general, the Internet, and all other forms of media. For example, the current affairs on TV show the same tendency to bring to the fore news that appeals more to “voyeurism” than to the nobler part of the human being. In other words, it is inclined to cover events employing images generally portraying misery, violence, crime, and so on, in addition to all sorts of catastrophes. Experience unfortunately shows that this type of news has a large audience, which in turn explains why it is so exploited.

It is not one of my intentions, as part of these reflections, to analyze the psychological reasons that cause people to experience a certain attraction to dramatic situations and the misfortune of others. Instead, my goal is to draw attention to the danger represented by news, which overly emphasizes the tragic events of daily life. Whether we are conscious of it or not, being confronted on a daily basis with

current affairs that focus our attention on commentary or images of violence, hatred, strife – and generally on scenes portraying the unhappiness in the world – constitutes a real mental poisoning, with all its resulting negative consequences: depression, anxiety, pessimism, unhappiness, and so forth.

It is certainly normal to keep people informed about what is happening in the world, for we need information, and it points out what is nasty and reprehensible in human behavior.

It also enables people to think about matters that go beyond our concern with ourselves alone, and it develops our compassion. This being the case, the key role of the news should be the raising of consciousnesses. Accordingly, rather than focusing on society’s defects and the weaknesses of humankind, the news should encourage people to become better, and to resist that which is instrumental to war, racism, crime, fanaticism, and the passions that are degrading to the human race. When a catastrophe occurs somewhere,

rather than seeking a “scoop at any price,” with shocking images and reports, the media’s purpose in their presentation of the news should be to increase compassion and assistance for those affected.

By giving priority to what is sensational, that is, to events that cause a sensation upon humankind’s most instinctual nature, the news is moving away from the laudable mission it could have. By bringing to the fore the most dramatic or sleazy current affairs in the way that it does, it produces a collective visualization that puts into motion energies of the same sort. When millions of people are concentrating at the same time on depressing or degrading news, they generate negative thought-forms that subtly create and maintain the misfortune or the pain. These thought-forms also explain why more and more people feel anxious, as they are undergoing the influence of the negative energies generated in this way.

When those in charge understand that it is better to highlight the positive events rather than the negative ones which are part of the daily news, they will give society the chance of raising itself up, enabling it

to create a better future for itself. This is not to say that we should hide from the dramatic events of life. Instead, it means that it is not necessary to say everything and show everything about human weakness and the misfortunes of humankind, especially when the information provides nothing that is of any use to those who hear about it.

Each person should strive to transmute the pessimism that currently predominates into an optimism based on a coherent-yet-confident analysis of events. Whenever, therefore, we have the chance to speak with others about the news, no matter whether that pertains to the local, national, or international outlets, we should always endeavor to highlight those aspects that show – beyond how it may appear – that the world is evolving towards ideals more and more humanistic in nature. At the same time, we should pause and send out positive thought-forms to all those who are suffering either physically or psychologically. Whether we are aware of it or not, the power of thought is great. Consequently, we must use it in a useful and constructive manner.

