

Relating to Reality (And its importance to psychological soundness.)

It is impossible to overstate the importance of habitually relating to reality, and not to something fabricated, invented and produced, if we are to be psychologically sound. How obvious that seems when we state it simply, yet how rarely do most of us get the chance to put it into living action. Speak to just about anybody these days about anything at all and you will find that a good portion of what they believe about the world, their impressions and views, have been given to them by movies and TV programmes, more or less unconsciously. If you take the trouble to point this out to them they will tell you that the problem is really only one of critical selection – they, of course, choose their content wisely and believe only that which is “true”, at least for the most part! If you insist that all conversation from that point forward contain no further allusions to mass media material you will in effect have ended the conversation, try this and see.

How utterly naive we are about what constitutes a lie! A TV show or a movie or a newspaper article, or even a book, about a place or a person or an experience say, no matter how attractively or compellingly written/produced, is NOT the same thing as the actual place, person or experience it seeks to describe to you, even when the aim of those producing it is a good or honourable one, which it almost never is, especially where the mass media and Hollywood are concerned. Living experience is one thing, the mere *portrayal* of that, however artistic, is necessarily another. It is an abstraction. At best it has a value analogous to a road sign pointing the way to Melbourne, for example. At worst the sign is pointing the wrong way. But in any case the road sign *isn't* Melbourne, obviously, it is something entirely different, and anyone who takes it for Melbourne will never actually *experience* Melbourne. Now substitute “Life” for “Melbourne” and you begin to have a inkling of how serious the problem is we are now facing, psychologically, because of the unprecedented influence of mass media forms of communication.

It always amuses me to hear people speaking of journalistic/artistic integrity as if it is simply a matter of *deciding* to tell the truth. Actually the average journalist or film-maker or television producer/presenter doesn't *know* the truth. They don't have to. In fact, knowing the truth would be cumbersome to them for the most part, as a good deal of self deception about what they do is essential to doing it credibly in the first place. The best way to appear sincere is to really *believe* in what you are doing. At least consciously. To be consciously aware of the truth about anything therefore, except the superficial or the trivial, is way beyond the scope of, and actually antagonistic to, their job requirements, viz. to reflect the values of their employers/patrons to the public in such a way as to make them acceptable or credible, and to believe wholeheartedly that these *adopted* or *merely convenient* values are in fact really their own, which, sadly, in the end, is really the case - with attendant drop in product quality/appeal. Isn't that what everybody does for money, more or less? Why should journalists or other mass media/Hollywood employees be any different? Only the pay packet differs.

Another chief function of the mass media flunkey is to frighten and traumatise you, which of course they do very well, for obvious reasons (though again they need not be conscious themselves of the reasons their work is so acceptable to the ones who commission it). A frightened person is much more inclined to look upon the excesses of authorities favourably than one who isn't frightened. A traumatised and thus desensitised and brutalised person is likewise easier to manipulate – a blunted awareness is far more inclined to obey, especially if paid well, than question why. Unfortunately, it is also a fact that an unhealed, blunted awareness cannot know the fullness of Life, which no amount of pay will buy. It simply isn't available anywhere at all in the marketplace, search as one might. Neither, truth be told, is the much needed healing. Though you will find sensation and diversion in spades.

That the job of the mass media image and impression makers takes great skill is undeniable -

especially as their reading/viewing/listening public becomes increasingly inured to older, hackneyed forms of values-dressing and shock tactics, and more cynical about the mass media's role as an information/entertainment source in general - but it has nothing at all to do with telling the truth. And by a process of unnatural selection it is precisely those artists and journalists that do the best job of coating what are essentially distasteful values and themes in whatever might take the public's fancy at any particular time, that are promoted and given prominence. Again, just so with them as with everybody else working for money.

Money always demands hypocrisy and pretence. Think honestly about what you do for money and you will perceive that at least part of the time you are required to be something other than what you really are, to lie in some way, however subtly or obviously, to pretend, to do things distasteful to your sense of personal integrity, decency, justice or autonomy (until finally you no longer even notice or mind any more), or to be somewhere and with people that otherwise you would not go near for anything. And perhaps worst of all, to take orders from people for whom you have little or no respect whatsoever (or for whom you ought not to), and for no more noble reason than monetary gain. What could be more degrading? More prostitute?

Thus it was that, traditionally, men serious about knowing what psychological soundness and maturity really feel like - to know what it is to go beyond the spiritual infancy of merely following orders - have detached and removed themselves from that society based on the vulgar values of money and profit and sought more natural places, where the only interactions they might have during the day were with undomesticated animals that do not know how to lie or with like minded men who were at least *trying* to live as authentically as possible. Now compare that to the vast majority of us with our heads firmly entrenched in the mass media machine and the money system.

A lifetime is very short really, even if we live a hundred years. And we tend to think that the prevailing conditions we are born into are the only ones that have ever been. Even if we are told otherwise it remains only an abstraction, another movie in our minds. But the fact is that the prevalence of modern technology communication forms, in terms of overall human history, is so recent and so short-lived, that it really does not merit the significance its current all pervasive ubiquitousness suggests.

Less than a century ago, a young man looked to his elders and peers for role models. These men were, relative to today's mass media and money manipulated breed, much more real in their behaviour, especially among the less affluent classes which constituted, as then as now, the vast majority of the human race. People were closer to nature and the earth and thus to their own initiative, to real life values, not the assigned, twice removed values of the money system. Yet what we admired then is essentially what we admire now, that remains the same, only the sophistication of imitation and deception has changed. Back then I admired those men who seemed to my uncomplicated mind to be psychologically sound – I was aware of their strength, and their uprightness and their gentleness too, their compassion. And I observed the way these men related to their fellow men and how they behaved with women too and I emulated that, and the result was inevitably that more or less, according to my capacity and the sharpness of my perception and awareness, I too would grow to be psychologically sound.

Now compare that to what happens today. A young man's role models are complete fabrications. They are actors on a screen paid enormous sums of money to appear for the handful of minutes or so between the director's call of "action" and "cut" to be psychologically sound. The actor's job is facilitated by skilful direction and script writing, if he needs it. Lighting, camera angles, editing, make-up and special effects also play their part. Then this impression of psychological self sufficiency or heroism is juxtaposed with the most atrocious, vulgar and puerile

behaviour and attitudes from our “hero”. All of his relations, both with his fellow men and with women, simply reflect the values of those financing the film, but with this key difference to real life: that such values can now be made, by the “magic” of cinema, to appear compatible with a mind that is sound, when in fact nothing could be further from the truth. In real life, of course, quite distinct from the nonsense of the celebrity cult of the supermarket shelf magazines, most of these actors (not to mention script writers, directors, producers and presenters), who have adopted the values of their patrons, are a shambles psychologically, propped up by drugs and alcohol and/or flattery. The same is true for much of those employed in the “entertainment” industry.

In fact, all kinds of behaviour can be made on the cinematic or televisual screen to appear compatible with all kinds of psychological states (not just psychological soundness) that would be impossible in real life. And all kinds of impossible circumstances and “relationships” can be made to appear viable and enduring, or desirable, when in real life they would not see out a day or a week, all going well, and would amount only to misery and a living hell in any case. Please see the subtlety of this. The danger. We learn by example – those of us with experience with children may know how incredibly impressionable the human mind (both adult and child) can be to things so subtle as to be more or less inexpressible. Even if the film or program maker is trying to do something of benefit to his viewers he cannot avoid unreality – artifice is the very nature of what he does. It is not enough to merely mean well, there must be the capacity and the *freedom* to see things as they really are if one is to have any hope of pointing the way to others.

Reality implies freedom. Freedom to *be*. And to *see*. It also implies responsibility, since freedom and responsibility always go hand in hand. But it is an *unscripted* responsibility, or it isn't real and it isn't free. Life does not follow a script, it is alive, unlimited. *To act and to be are of an entirely different order to one another.* That which rigidly follows a script or schedule or any kind of guidelines does not belong to life, but is a dead thing. It cannot have the nuances, the subtlety, the spontaneous unexpectedness and inexpressible profundity of unlimited life. *All* professional activity falls into the scripted pseudo-life category. And such relentlessly habitual activity tends inevitably to deaden our mind's ability to move with the swiftness and agility that the present living moment actually requires, and leaves us forever stuck in a state of servile, spiritual infancy.

(And, by the way, as agreeable as it may be to our employers, it matters not if we call our work “volunteer” work and take no pay for it, if in fact we are still taking orders within the money system - what decidedly odd notions we have acquired about what amounts to “voluntary” action!)

If we consider what is our *actual* habit, what constitutes the *actual* content of our daily lives, and we are prepared to see things as they really are, it is impossible to avoid perceiving the scripted and directed quality that largely underlies it. In fact, all notions of glamour, hype and sensation aside, our professional activity is really quite similar to that of an actor – we take directions and we act accordingly. The whole social structure is based on this. And by a process of psychological induction, as it were, this habitual activity affects every aspect of our lives, that is, all our relationships to others and to things. What's more it is becoming increasingly and more overtly the case, as people from all walks of life are being cast by the money system, the corporate and military industrial complex, in elaborately staged “Psy-Op” (a military abbreviation for “psychological operation”) type activity, where the workplace, the street and the neighbourhood all become centre stage for the promotion of false value systems designed to influence and mislead key people, and by induction or default all others, about the nature of reality. All in the name of profit, of course. Yet how can we expect those who are relating to scripted and limited unreality to end up psychologically sound? It is impossible. Please see the dire fact of this.

Happiness and contentment are states of psychological self sufficiency. A man who has these does not pursue the futile ends of greed and acquisition like a mouse in a maze controlled by forces

he is not even aware of half the time. Being in actual possession of *real* value he cannot be deceived or impressed by the mere appearance of it. Critically, if the whole society is more or less employed in what amounts to a gigantic movie set then a scripted substitute for life becomes the norm, and normality a substitute for actual sanity. (If it is mere normality you desire by the way, seek a psychiatrist. No doubt it can be chemically arranged.) Actually, true sanity is an *abnormality*. Which is not to say that every abnormality is sanity of course, most are not, just as normality is not. The answer to two and two is four. It is unique. Yet legion are the false answers.