

GREED-PROPOGANDA

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We know that dehumanization and propaganda belong to creating war.

I have written of this in relation to ideology and colonization.

Military training needs to instill dehumanizing the other, in order to do their job. The trainee soldier becomes part of larger unit, almost like a machine, losing personal identity and attachment, an instrument of violence in a disciplined way. This affects any grief and mourning, which may emerge long afterwards, if at all.

Reference:(chapter 10 .Stephen R Shanfield MD. Grief,Depression & Survival in the Military.from book” Depressive States and their treatment edited Vamik Volkan.94)

”The enemy is dehumanized & transformed into something not quite alive.Something less than human can be killed.”

We know this dehumanization occurred with colonization, the slave trade & continues.

I was reminded of this reading Amitov Ghosh’s recent book, The Nutmeg’s Curse. He describes the annihilation of all the peoples of the Banda Islands in 1621 by the Dutch East India Company in order to possess the nutmeg harvest that grew on those islands. The British East India Company started wars to procure opium, in China and Afghanistan.

The aftermath is still with us.

Lies and re writing history has always happened. Henry 7th got Morton to re write English history. Shakespeare used Morton for his historical plays, so the lies are perpetuated in our consciousness. The Catholic church made the god Pan,into the devil and Mary Magdalene the wife of Jesus into a whore. Such reversals of the truth are alive now. (Social Dreaming last March a vivid portrayal of reversals.)

I would like to tell you about the initiator of propaganda big time in America. His name was Edward Bernays. and his influence on America and the world is extraordinary.

I would like to thank Marilyn Miller, for telling me about him.

I thought this was appropriate to bring to a Bill Blomfield Conference. Bill worked with groups, also facilitating the first Median Groups, which I was involved with here; as well as introducing, with his wife Jocelyn, some of us to Riccoer and offering a space to discuss philosophy and making links to psychoanalytic thinking.

As I recently mentioned to Tina, Bill lent me the book “The Man who was Shakespeare” by Calvin Hoffman. It was good to discuss the

evidence.He was aware of the group affecting the individual and visa versa.

Therefore this conference seems to me an appropriate space to widen our frame and hope to open a window in our minds.

Edward Bernays was Freud’s nephew, born in Vienna in 1891. His father, Freud’s wife’s Martha’s brother and his mother was Freud’s sister. The Bernays emigrated to America, and returned to have holidays in the Alps with the Freuds, which they had done before.

Freud sent his nephew his Introductory lectures as a gift, in return for the gift of Havanna cigars his nephew had sent him. Ernest Bernays used his understanding of Freud’s unconscious as a foundation for his 1928 book Propaganda, on how to manipulate people’s behaviors, without them realising it. Bernays saw that linking products with emotions could cause people to behave irrationally.

The president of a tobacco company asked him how he could increase his sale by getting women to smoke. It was taboo for them to do so at that time. Bernays consulted AA Brill a NY psychoanalyst. Brill told him that cigarettes were a symbol of male power. Freud had said women wanted a penis and felt the lack. This led to a campaign by Bernays, which he called "Torches of Freedom" He got debutantes to walk down 5th Avenue at the Easter parade with this banner and at a given time they took, hidden under their skirts, the cigarettes and lit up. Press was there and it was the beginning of women smoking in public and it increased sales. It was sold as a symbol of liberty.

This was a time when America produced more than they could sell. Bernays was instrumental in changing how the public bought, from needs to desire. The consumer became vital, not just the worker.

The next change was to increase bacon sales for Beechnut company. Americans should eat hearty breakfasts. Freudian group psychology to repeat a stimulus and create a habit, inundate the consumer with advertisements and follow up with more ads and discounts and rewards. Film stars were used to sell cars, symbolizing, sexuality, power, fashion.

President Coolidge asked for Bernays's help with his image, as he was seen as dull. Bernays arranged for him to be visited by 34 film stars and it was in all the newspapers that the president entertained actors & his image changed.

Edward Bernays was rich and famous.

How much Freud was aware of his nephew's use of his psychoanalytic ideas we do not know. He responded to his nephew sending him his book "Crystallising Public Opinion 1923." "I have received your book" as a truly American production it interested me." Freud asked his nephew for help when facing financial ruin in Vienna. His nephew arranged to have his uncle's work published in America, so Freud could get American dollars. Freud was appalled by his nephew's proposal that Freud write popular articles for the Cosmopolitan. Freud disliked America.

Here are some quotes from Bernays:

"if we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, it is now possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without them knowing it."

"Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government, which is the true ruling power of our country."

The engineering of consensus is the very essence of the democratic process, the freedom to persuade and suggest."

"We are dominated by the relatively small numbers of persons who understand the mental processes of social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the moves which control the public mind."

"Small groups of persons can and do make the rest of us think what they please about any given subject.

Propaganda will never die out."

Edward Bernays' influence to make people want things they did and do not need to satisfy a desire to be happy, dominates much of the world today.

These quotes are sobering, as their implementation are alive with us even more now.

Vamik Volkan quoted the Turkish saying "the fish that lives in water does not know what water is."

We are in danger of not being aware of our own embeddedness in the social climate.

The war in 1914 Freud saw his theory of aggressive instincts confirmed, he disliked America and was depressed at the state of the world and group behaviour. He saw more dangerous forces that were submerged being unleashed. These needed to be controlled. Bernays thought there was a need for an elite to manage social control of these animal drives. Edward Bernays had developed techniques

to manage crowds the masses, by “engineering for consent”, enlightened despotism tapping in to fears and desires.”

Edward Bernays was involved with setting up a Committee of Public Information when America joined the war and went to the peace conference in Paris with Woodrow Wilson. He saw how Wilson was received and how propaganda could and would be used to sway the masses in peace. He set up The Council of Public Relations instead of using the word propaganda.

By 1928 it was seen that Bernays had created consumerism as a mainstay of American life and a key to economic progress. There was a constant stimulation of the irrational self, with desire to have things to make him-her happy & to feel good.

Edward Bernays dominated politics and was among the rich and famous, like a magician who made things happen. His view of those around him and the masses was that they were stupid. His children spoke of how he told them they were stupid,

The financial crash in 1929 affected the boom time, not only in America, also in Europe.

Freud's Civilisation and its Discontents saw individual freedom as impossible, he was pessimistic. The Nazis were coming to power, chaos and instability of the market. Goebels, Minister of Propaganda, was interested in Edward Bernays work and used it.

I hope to say something about leadership, before we stop, as how they are able to use their influence for good or ill is crucial. The use of scapegoats in group behaviour comes into this too. This may be developed in our discussion

In 1932 there was a new president in America, who had a new way of dealing with the masses. Roosevelt wanted what was good for the whole country, the people, not just big business. His new deal, was created. He called in Gorge Gallup to arrange small groups to gauge what people wanted, trade unions were set up. Roosevelt believed people could be talked to and could be trusted and could know what they wanted.

This was different to Bernays' view and all he and big business stood for and feared to lose. He and big business were opposed to Roosevelt and fought back with ideological warfare against the new deal. Bernays believed people were stupid and irrational and should be manipulated.

The National Association of Manufacturers campaign was launched. Bernay's campaign behind the scenes corrupting and deceiving the public was no match for the government.

Goebels was impressed and saw this as the way the government should take on the problem. He learnt from Bernays propaganda ideas and implementation.

1939 Bernays was behind the creation a world fair in NY, Democracy and American Business a large white dome created by general motors. Capitalism was seen as capable of doing anything with a vision of successful passive consumerism capturing desires. Bernays believed people were not capable of decision making power and just should be controlled.

This was different from Roosevelt who set up trade unions and had a different view.

The 2nd world war confirmed Freud's view even more, with an increased pessimism and hatred of the crowd.

A Hobbsian view, man's lust for power& self interest.

Bernays then worked for the CIA to manage the masses and control the minds of the people. To suppress the savage barbarism that lurked under the surface.

Politics turned to these consumer rules, responsive to whims of market, as business sold products, politicians can do the same, understand uncs.. ads on tv target worries of swing voters, ultimate goal to be elected.

It was the end of Roosevelt's view of social beings with concern for welfare systems, rather a pandering to desires. New left used what worked for business, 96 Clinton got in Blair followed these ways and also got in 97, copying America. There was no protection from greed of business. A way of controlling not liberating, initiated & developed by Edward Bernays using Freud's ideas of the unconscious. In 1953 there was added fear of the bomb and heightened cold war. Bernays, working for the CIA, & consultant to President Eisenhower, ramped up the fear and propaganda against Russia in the cold war.

The way Bernays used power to get what business wanted had no scruples. It was clear the ends defeated the means.

United Fruits had banana plantations in Guatemala. A new president saw all the profits going to them in America and not to his people and the workers and wanted to change this. He wanted the land to belong to them. Bernays, came in on behalf of United Fruits & made it seem like an attack on American democracy. It was said Abends the president was a Communist threat. Bernays organized the campaign. (They were nothing to do with Russia at all.) CIA organised a coup and it was said they had toppled a Marxist regime. Nixon was shown Marxist literature planted there in the president's palace. The CIA took his work much further and we know of various coups, in South America, I remember Chile, & over the world, including Ukraine, 2014, organized by them for their interest.

Leadership externally and internally needs to be more than this.

JFK was assassinated when he wanted to change the banking system. Vamik Vlokan reminded us, of an example of collapsed time, of how Slobodan Milosovic, reactivated a chosen trauma in the history of Serbia in 1389 Battle of Kosovo & on 600th anniversary of this battle, exhumed the remains of Prince Lazar killed in that battle and took it round the country for a year. He had been killed by Ottoman Muslims. Bosnian and Albanian Muslims became to be seen as extensions of those Muslims in 1389 and created an opportunity for revenge for humiliation 600 years previously, Serbs felt entitled to rape and kill Muslims. In Yugoslavia before they had all lived peacefully together. We can think of other examples. Ireland and over the world where the feelings of the past become condensed in the present, often at times of uncertainties, economic and political anxieties creating scapegoats.

(The story of the destruction of use of hemp products an example of vested interest.)

Gathering this & aware of what has transpired socially over the last 2 years, I thought of Eric Fromm & his book Fear of Freedom published in 1941, at the time of totalitarianism in Europe. I think it is relevant now. The propaganda, lies and censorship has penetrated through technocracy and our digital world. The information and advertisements flood our consciousness more than newspapers and radio of the time of Eric Fromm.

He saw our dependency and lack of security within and need to belong to the group, as a vulnerability in our fear of not being safe and in danger. This is when a "strong" authoritarian outside leader & system can be adhered to. The sado-masochistic vertex relationship feels safer than being alone, without protection, powerless & actually in danger from the totalitarian state.

Fromm believed we need to understand the context of the culture the individual was molded by.

(Once again, the fish does not know what water is that he is swimming in.)

There has been a history of compliance in religions. Luther and Calvin saw man as evil, needing submission to god. Escaping from freedom, we fuse with the outside, belong and feel safe. Danger of what happens to those who do not conform, in any group is real.

To quote Fromm "Modern man lives with the illusion he has what he wants, while actually wants what he is supposed to want."

Exactly what Edward Bernays has created in our social sphere.

I had a neighbour here who was part of Mussolini's Black Shirt youth when young. He said it was the best time of his life, belonging and being part of something he felt proud of and larger than his puny little self. I had a similar conversation with a German man who was in the Hitler youth. He said he was a stronger than my mother. His father had been damaged in the first world war and a passive figure. That was a relief to be away and part of a group, singing songs, being in the countryside. Ayan Hirsi Ali described her relief in being part of the Muslim brotherhood, also as an adolescent. Feeling protected, also by being covered totally, being protected from an arranged marriage and one's own feelings, to be part of an ideology bigger than yourself that you could aspire to.

A patient who was distressed when they heard news of a dictator being ousted and actually stumbled & fell, also adhered to this strong authority inwardly, as she felt weak and powerless.

Another patient was paralyzed with fear in the face of strict inner elders of her religious upbringing. How to reach the imprisoned self?

A child patient told me when I asked why she could not tell me news, that we both knew, said "you would be upset and run out of the room and leave me alone with the monsters."

I think we all think of examples in our daily work. How can we be perceived as strong enough to protect the vulnerable self who is in the thrall of a different kind of protection.

I brought Edward Bernays today as his legacy has multiplied massively in our technocratic age. There is a danger we lose our minds and capacity to discern how polluted the water we are swimming in is. When we are aware of how the masses have been duped, we will be needed to help with the grief that emerges.

I heard Sherri Mitchell, a north American Indigenous elder, tell of the myth of the cannibal giant who ate and destroyed everything. Hannah Arendt wrote that the next totalitarian state will be led by bureaucrats & that the totalitarian state is a monster that devours her children. The cannibal giant maybe more alive among us than we can admit.

Edward Bernays, using Freud's work, sowed social seeds beyond "The Hidden Persuaders", Vance Packard and "Amusing ourselves to death", Neil Postman, creating a way of life that is to be pursued at all costs. This has relevance to our practice and bringing this awareness today I hope triggers further thought and discoveries.