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The Paradox of Propaganda? By Desmond Loo, English Editor

What is propaganda?

Imagine walking inside the Student Union Building at lunchtime during the Clubs Days. You should notice numerous posters of different clubs, with a variety of colors and slogans, on every notice board. It seems to me that they are competing for space to remind students of the supposedly exciting icebreakers, events and benefits the clubs will offer to their members. Then there are these crews of students, differentiated by the designs of their T-shirts, standing in your way in all the doorways and urging you to join their clubs. What's the overall effect? Students sign up and pay their cash. Some lucky ones get to play the widely known game, *Dance Dance Revolution*.

Think about the ads and their catchy pictures and words when you flip over the pages of any newspaper or magazine. Have you noticed that the ads of large, well-known companies always occupy the front pages or some space which most easily catch the readers' attention? Why do these ads cost more than the others? I can't see any difference in the quality of the papers on which they are printed. How about those delicately crafted, story-based TV commercials of prime time? Not to mention the Michael Jordan, heroically portrayed ads at the breaks of an NBA game. Why are these giant companies willing to invest millions of dollars in these commercials? And I would assume web surfers to be tired of closing tens of browser windows (ads again) before they can browse a popular website. There is simply one reason for this - a propagandized effect for creating a "talk of the town".

However, every issue can be viewed from a positive or negative perspective. Don't forget the heart-rending pictures of the victims of the earthquakes in Taiwan and in Turkey, which caught your attention on the TV or the newspaper. Without these sources of media, could we visualize the fearful conditions in the earthquake scenes or feel the difficult times that the families of the victims are going through? By the same token, if we were not told about the dilapidated boats that carried the Chinese refugees to British Columbia, would we sympathize with them to the same degree and deem that heavier punishments of smugglers are necessary? On the other hand, if it were not because of propaganda, we would not be aware of the seriousness of the Y2K problem.

For some people, the growing dominance of propaganda in society is no different from manipulating the consciousness of humans and brainwashing our minds with the perception of business companies, the government and our materialistic society. However, as already mentioned, propaganda could also be a benefactor because it arouses our concern over certain societal issues that we might not be otherwise aware of. Thus, rather than blaming propaganda to be a destructive force in our world, our main focus should be on our own interpretation of the information that comes past us in everyday life. With our own perception and standpoint in mind, we should be conscious of evaluating a piece of information by looking at it from different perspectives. This is what we call independent thinking which would help us make a wise decision that is beneficial to both society and ourselves.

Watch out.

宣傳泛濫?

張焯欣 中文編輯

一對俊美女在電視螢幕出現，兩人帶著憂鬱但纏綿的眼神相互注視。過了不久，這對璧人互相擁吻。男主角以他低沉帶磁性的聲線說了廣告中唯一的對白：「她是我的！」廣告末某香水品牌的商標佔據了整個畫面。可是，這對俊美女的感情故事跟香水有什麼關係呢？美國一統計顯示，廣告內如以動物、嬰兒、或兩性關係為主題均比以卡通人物或歷史人物的成效為高。可是，廣告的主角跟產品質素又有什麼關係呢？

某快餐連鎖店推出買套餐換公仔計劃，居然成了新聞頭條。因為很多人不上學、不上班去排隊，為的是幾隻只值數十元的公仔，更有人為此大打出手。公仔肚內的又不是寶物，難道公仔的名氣就已經使人吃得飽、穿得暖？

回看第二次世界大戰，戰場上血流成河，死傷甚多。很多死者本是年青力壯，可以至少活過半百。奇怪的是，出征時他們都沒有恐懼，只有一個想法：「必勝！支持我國最高統治者的命令。我們是最優等的民族！」甚至連他們的家人也不擔心，揮動旗幟，就像已凱旋歸來一樣。這是從哪裡來的勇氣？

各種神奇力量卻原來只是源於宣傳，一個在科學角度中毫無能量的概念。

宣傳-含有宣揚廣播使大眾明瞭的意思。這個本來平凡的詞匯在歷代的傳媒影響下，已變得不再平凡。它的英文字 (Propaganda) 更意味著煽動情緒、誇大事實、甚至欺騙公眾來達到宣傳者的目的。你又可有留意，各類的宣傳活動是怎樣無孔不入地滲入我們生活的每一個細節，無形間控制了我們每一個細胞呢？

人類自稱為「萬物之靈」，擁有高度的智慧。可是，大部份人都被宣傳-這個抽象的概念支配了一生。歸根究底，還都因為這群「萬物之靈」並沒有獨立分析的能力，人云亦云。直到現在，人們自以為生活在一個自由、民主的空間，可是倒頭來只是被政治家和大商家控制了一生還懵然不知。這跟以前獨裁專制時代有何分別？只顯得獨裁者的技巧高明了罷！這樣是可悲，還是可笑？

九月二十一日的寶島

酣睡之端，惡夢之始。
二千島民，頓化亡魂。
地斷了，房子塌了；血乾了，淚亦乾了。
唯汗水不注地流...
靜聽瓦礫下一絲柔弱而頑強的氣息。

* * * *
台灣大地震，釀成的死傷、心靈之創，彼岸的你很難感受的。但是，我們可用捐款形式，向災民表示關懷及支持。

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families were split between Heaven & Earth
Roads ripped
the Core of many hearts was shocked and saddened
Silence followed by light

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propaganda

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