

Example 1

"Propaganda is the enemy of reason and truth"

This quote appeared in the ANZJP in 2002 from Silove to the Asylum seekers debacle in Australia—It is a very current, stimulating and ethically challenging topic for Australia and the psychiatric profession. We know there has been a lot of arguments from the media, politicians and human rights activists, transcultural and mainstream psychiatry consumers about this issue. The quote in particular wants to highlight the role of the media (propaganda) in the Asylum Seekers issue of how the propaganda of it can raise a dichotomy being at the same time 'the enemy of reason and truth.' In fact the media as we know can be a vital tool these days to show the truth about important topics but can also hide it by being the 'enemy of reason.'

Propaganda has been used as a means to gain power and also money. Mental illnesses have always been among public controversies. There had been debates around etiologies and presentation of mental illness. More people are now aware of mental health issues. This has led to increase in flow of money in the field of mental illness. The parties which have voiced interest try to change opinion of public and therapists by using unfair means of propagation e.g. pharmaceutical companies give gifts and incentives to clinicians to persuade their drugs. They even sponsor studies and show their results to influence the opinion of clinicians and even public. This has led to increased prescription of medications, medicalization and increase in stigma around mentally ill. We can see how it has affected the field and may have drifted us away from truth. Other fields of psychiatry like psychodynamics and psychology has suffered because of this propagation of biological psychiatry. It can be seen how quacks and faith healers mismanage people with mental illness by using publicity about effectiveness of their treatment. But on the other hand this appears to be a statement about the effects of propaganda. Psychoeducation through various governmental organizations—Beyond Blue and also through various Royal College of Psychiatrists, there has seen an increase in awareness of mental illness.

Propaganda was a major issue with the Nazis and without it they would not have been able to succeed in their attempted genocide. Psychiatrists were also involved in some of the heinous activities and hence it is an important issue that we should never let that happen again. Psychiatrists were also affected by the propaganda and hence it was the enemy of truth.

We as psychiatrists can work aside with the media and sensitize the public about topics like mental health and be involved in lobbying the government and help with designing a new policy or act, e.g. for the problem of asylum seekers. It is a difficult issue with many stake holders at play and requires further analysis but surely a start would be to process asylum seekers visa in the country and not imprisoning them in detention centers.

The conclusion there appears to be lot of evidence to support Silove's idea that Propaganda is enemy of reason and truth but I believe if the idea or thought which is being propagated is done through appropriate channels; then it could have reasonable outcomes.

"Propaganda is the enemy of reason and truth"

Example 2

Propaganda can be defined as political rhetoric or the tools of an authority to persuade or convince others of its righteousness. To the authorities, propaganda is used as a way to convince others (usually 'the media') of truth of their policy or agenda.

To admit that propaganda is the enemy of reason and truth makes a strong statement that propaganda is opposite to enlightened concepts and that it means to undermine all that the national or intellectual hold dear.

'Reason' can be defined as the ability to evaluate or analyze the situation, see different points of view, and to be able to come to a conclusion on the basis of all of the evidence available. 'Truth' is synonymous with honesty and it is a moral principle, an ethical principle, and it goes hand in hand with reason, indeed they cannot be separated. It will be argued that reason and truth are high ethical principles, but that propaganda does not have a specific ethical value, that is, it can be positive or negative. *good point if expanded.*

In the last ten years the government of Australia has had a policy of detention for all men, women and children who arrive illegally in Australia (mainly they arrive by boat but also by plane.) This policy appears unbelievable[?] - that children in particular can be locked up for an indefinite period whilst their 'papers are being processed'. Governments of both political persuasions have worked hard to convince the Australian people that this policy is humane, ethical, and effective. They have used propaganda tools from media leads and speeches, to fear-mongering and creating media stories such as the "Children Overboard" affair. These politicians have also used the events of 9/11, the Bali bombing and others to colour the definitions of what human rights are with their propagandist objective.

Psychiatry has had some part to play in the debate. The RANZCP has been an outspoken advocate for the rights of asylum seekers and stood proudly as Professor McGorry, then Australian of the year, defended the rights of asylum seekers warning of the mental health implications of involuntary detention. Certainly, these examples illustrate well that propaganda indeed can be the enemy of reason and truth. *does it? => who says this is right either?*

The populations of Australia and New Zealand are large, diverse and spread over two different land masses. To reach such a mass of people effectively it could be argued that one needs a propaganda type of machination. Such 'positive' propaganda can be seen in media campaigns e.g. conveying mental health information. Of course, one would not apply the term 'propaganda' to these areas in the strictest sense but it could be argued that as many people who know about the plight of asylum seekers also know about depression, its effects and the help that is available. It could also be applied to education about recovery, rehabilitation, carer support etc. What is important is the ethical stance of those who produce the 'propaganda.' Do they honour ideas of reason, truth, and certainty?

In the end, I would like to conclude by saying that propaganda in itself is not good or bad, it is a powerful tool which if used in by the wrong hands can be dangerous. But if properly used it can definitely be helpful in improving the future. As a psychiatrist we are aware of the issues in mental health and it becomes our moral responsibility to improve the quality of care and awareness of these issues not only among general public but also among policy makers to promote the mental well being of our society. A right propaganda can be used as a powerful means for good by improving our understanding and also mental health literacy of the society.

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