Chapter 4

Empathy and ethics: journalistic representation and its consequences

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Peace journalism was first proposed by Johan Galtung, as a development from his landmark essay published with Mari Holmboe Ruge in 1965, 'The structure of foreign news'. It takes the form of a set of recommendations for reporters and editors – 'the policy implications of the [1965] study', (Lynch & Galtung 2010, p10) – that have, over the last decade or more, been taken up by journalism advocates and professional trainers, and have also latterly been critically examined by scholarly researchers. Peace journalism claims to be a fairer and more accurate way of representing conflicts than the predominant strain of reporting, in most media, most of the time, which it identifies as 'war journalism'. PJ is normative and value-explicit: if implemented more widely in professional practice, its advocates say, it would lessen the influence of media in favour of violence and create social capital for peace, which is to be preferred.

To these claims, this chapter will examine whether it is possible to add another: that peace journalism produces more authentic and more healthy representations of human behaviour in conflict, enabling its audiences to respond, and make meanings, with parts of their relational instincts and meaning-making capacities that are habitually suppressed. Emerging evidence is considered, from neuroscience and several other fields, that we are 'soft-wired for empathy' (Rifkin 2009), a facet of human nature that scholarship in general – and science in particular – generally underplays, by focusing wholly on the functioning of the left hemisphere of the brain (McGilchrist 2010). These scientific

propositions about our humanness provide further validation for peace journalism. In this chapter, I consider this evidence and what it adds to the peace journalism critique of mainstream news.

As a psychotherapist working in addiction recovery for the past ten years, I have witnessed at first hand, violent, aggressive, drunk and drugged people transform into caring, compassionate individuals. Change in such cases is predicated on challenging addictive behaviour by putting down drugs and alcohol, but that change is only maintained when they begin to see themselves and the world differently: to put on, in a metaphor favoured in the field, 'a new pair of glasses' ('C' 2003 [1955]). These people learn how to alter their perception of reality and become conscious of their own meaning-making process. Part of that transition is for them to acquire – or the therapist to impart – the concept of reality as multiperspectival: they can have a 'different reality' from someone else, and still stay in relationship with them.

The second, complementary step is to 'switch on' their instinct to empathise with the other. The self-help group Alcoholics Anonymous, whose formation was listed by *Time Magazine* as one of the 80 most important moments in human history (Poniewozick 2003), also heals through empathy, which is a remarkable quality to witness, especially where previously only violence and aggression were evident. It's a vivid illustration of a proposition I shall draw on in this study, that human beings are naturally fitted for, and inclined to, empathy in our relationships with others – a quality that can therefore be quite readily reached and activated even in highly disturbed, apparently maladjusted individuals.

Peace journalism embodies, and equips readers and audiences to apply, that same multiperspectival approach, prompting and enabling us to connect empathically with events we are not personally participating in, and with actors apparently at far remove. We can, if supplied with the right cues and clues, imagine ourselves 'in the shoes' of people in the news, even when we cannot, by definition, be there in person. To 'focus on suffering all over [and] on people peacemakers, giving voice to the voiceless' is, according to Galtung, one of the four main distinguishing features of peace journalism. Another is its 'truth orientation', which

Lynch (2008) has updated to denote forms and tactics of reporting that draw attention to dominant iterations of meaning, and enable us to inspect them from the outside, negotiating our own reading in the process.

Research in the growing field of peace journalism has adopted and elaborated a normative preference for 'nonviolent responses to conflict' (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005, p6). In Johan Galtung's original table setting out the peace journalism schema, the characteristics of peace journalism appear on the right-hand side; those of 'war/violence journalism' (Galtung 1998) on the left. Lynch and Galtung comment:

> The position taken here is not that good reporting on conflict is some kind of compromise with a little from the left hand column and a little from the right. The position taken is in favour of the second column, peace journalism, and against war journalism (Lynch & Galtung 2010, p15).

Elsewhere, Lynch defends this value-explicit stance as 'instrumental'; enabling journalism to deliver on 'internal goals [of] fairness and accuracy' (Lynch 2008, p4). Fairness because, peace journalism scholars argue, media conventions generally predispose the news, in most places, most of the time, to a predominance of war journalism, thus depriving peace of its chance. Accuracy because, while peace initiatives broadly defined, are present in all conflicts, they are usually excluded from the representations of those conflicts furnished by the news. Adopting a deliberate creative strategy, to seek them out and remit them into the public sphere, restores an important missing element.

As well as through scholarly research, the peace journalism field has developed through training and social movement activism, usually with a sense of swimming upstream against the current of established assumptions about the role of journalism, and the capacities and preferences of readers and audiences. Journalists' assumptions about audience preferences, and traditional news factors like 'simplification vs complexity', Kempf writes, 'are more compatible with escalation oriented than with de-escalation oriented coverage' (Kempf 2007, p138). The feeling is often that peace journalism advocacy amounts to a call for something to be imposed on 'normal' journalism; to offer

an 'artificial prescription', in David Loyn's words; one that is 'uniquely unhelpful' (Loyn 2007, p2).

The contribution of this chapter is to add another layer to the claims of peace journalism to be preferred as a set of precepts and methods for representing conflict; and to be regarded as more conducive, not only to the social goal of peace (and as fair and accurate in respect of its subject matter), but also to the needs and instincts of its publics – publics that are human beings, not simply rational beings, but emotional too.

It is inaccurate to represent human responses and motivations, in situations of conflict, without allowing for this. Furthermore, the dominant representations of war journalism, being 'dehumanizing of "them"', abrogate and suppress a key part of our meaning-making and relational capacity.

The influence of war journalism therefore shrinks and distorts the social reality we shape and inhabit. Our reality is constructed through relationships, not separate from relationships. How we behave in relationships, as a result, is determined by the meanings we make. Responses in relationships can be cooperative and empathic, or competitive, suspicious and ultimately violent. With events and people we have not experienced personally, that relationship is necessarily formed and developed through media. This chapter draws together evidence to argue that peace journalism offers a more authentic and beneficial representation of human relations in conflict.

A challenge to realism(s)

'They are our representatives, and where we can't be, they can be'. Stuart Hall is speaking about politicians, in a lecture for the Media Education Foundation. The ability to speak and act on behalf of other people is one of the meanings encapsulated in the word 'representation', he suggests. The other is 'the notion that something was there already and, through the media, has been *re*presented' (Hall 1997).

The stress on the first syllable is from Hall's original. A critical consideration of journalism, especially journalism about conflict, foregrounds yet a third meaning to go with the two proposed (only to be 'subverted') in the lecture, and it argues for the emphasis of the syllables

to be reversed. Reports from battle-zones have concentrated increasingly on re-*present*-ing, dramatising a sense of excitement that we can be 'virtually there', albeit with a characteristically restricted view, down a gun barrel or missile sight. In Operation Desert Storm, the campaign to eject the forces of Saddam Hussein from Kuwait in 1991, pictures from the nose-cones of guided missiles, carrying out 'surgical strikes', played to a video game generation. In the invasion of 2003, embedded camera crews brought point-of-view shots of actual firefights to a 'first-person shooter' computer game generation.

Ottosen shows how 'the political and economic roots of computer games on war are entrenched in the military-industrial complex and the defence industry' (Ottosen 2008, p73), arguing that these play an increasingly important role as a recruiting tool and a means of disseminating war propaganda. Der Derian goes so far as to postulate 'a paradox … that the closer the war game [is] able to technically reproduce the reality of war, the greater the dangers that might arise from confusing one with the other' (Der Derian 2009, p14).

Audiences in the rich countries that engage in what Der Derian says is presented as 'virtuous war', are immersed in images that offer to reproduce the experience of waging it; especially as it is increasingly carried out from within a virtual realm, with remote-controlled drones bombing faraway places at the click of a mouse. War is being made 'present', in 'real' time, thanks to computer games, 24-hour news and the internet: a signifier lifted to a new position of prominence in the culture because it is attended by a feeling of accessible authenticity.

To adapt Der Derian's paradox still further, the virtual representation of war draws on, and reinforces, a realist view of conflict. Lord Palmerston, the 19th-century British Foreign Secretary and exponent of gunboat diplomacy, encapsulated this doctrine in a formula that is usually paraphrased as 'nations have no permanent friends, only permanent interests'. The realist paradigm of international relations constructs interests in conflict as phenomena confined and defined by state borders. Wars start when states declare them, in pursuit of their interests, and peace is what prevails when they cease firing.

Inscribed in this paradigm is the extension, to the imagined community of a nation, of a set of propositions about human nature, formulated by philosophers such as Hobbes and Descartes. The Cartesian dichotomy of mind and body exalted 'reason' above 'passion', which threatened to distort 'logical' thought. In the empiricist school, 'hard evidence', available through sensory contact with the material world, was valued above 'mere sentiment'. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes (1982 [1651]) developed his famous argument that the deterrent effect of a social contract is necessary to forestall a 'war of all, against all' as individuals pursue their narrowly defined, selfish interests. This can be – and, in the realist school, often is – conceived in analogous terms in the context of international relations. The United Nations, Galtung observes, has 'a Security Council (not Peace, or Peace and Security, Council)', based, as it is, on 'a security approach [that] sees some party as a threat to be deterred or eliminated' (Galtung 2007, p14).

One notable omission from this picture is any notion of empathy. Between them, the rationalist and materialist philosophies of 17th-century Europe instilled a cultural bias in favour of assumptions that human beings are essentially self-interested, and that appeals to friendship, emotional responses and fellow-feeling can be relegated (as means of explaining and regulating our behaviour) below what can be seen, measured and 'optimised' in a competitive world. The latter qualities are constructed as more realistic, more authentic to our true nature. This bias remains pervasive, in the mainstream of academic disciplines such as economics and political science, as well as international relations: all, coincidentally or not, fields of scholarship influential on journalism.

Objections to the realist paradigm often originate in the critical discourses that have successfully challenged it in other sections of academia, namely structuralism and post-structuralism. Within the field of journalism, these have supplied conceptual underpinnings for the movement, of ideas, social movement campaigns, professional training and, latterly, academic research interests, known as peace journalism. It has been articulated in calls for a critical self-awareness to be built into the job of reporting. 'Of course reporters should report,

as truthfully as they can', Lynch says, 'the facts they encounter; only ask, as well, how they have come to meet these particular facts, and how the facts have come to meet them' (Lynch 2008, p4). Peace journalism is explicit in its commitment to get beyond 'the way it is' – the evidence immediately at hand to the reporter in the field – to enable readers and audiences to negotiate readings of 'how and why it came to be that way' (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005, p214) – and how it could be different.

However, efforts to promote such insights often call to mind Barbie Zelizer's observation about 'interpretive communities' (Zelizer 2004) that tend to talk past each other, inhabiting, perhaps, what CP Snow identified as the 'two cultures' of intellectual life – the sciences and humanities. David Loyn, the BBC reporter and leading critic of peace journalism, appealed to scientistic concepts of knowledge and evidence in his attempt to disprove its claims (Loyn 2007). Thus it is significant to find a challenge to realism, and validation for empathy, emerging from its own 'home ground' of the natural sciences.

Empathy

In *The empathic civilisation*, Jeremy Rifkin subjects the inherited assumptions from rationalist and empiricist philosophies to critical examination, drawing on evidence from multiple sources, including a discovery by scientists at an Italian laboratory of connections in the brain they called 'mirror neurons'. Purely by accident, researchers found that when a monkey ate a peanut, the same parts of the monkey's brain lit up as when it watched a researcher eat a peanut. Giacomo Rizzolatti says what is most striking is that '[m]irror neurons allow us to grasp the minds of others not through conceptual reasoning but through direct simulation. By feeling not by thinking' (in Rifkin 2009, p83). We learn through mimicry – 'monkey see, monkey do' – and we feel what others are feeling in the same way. These have been dubbed empathy neurons, or 'Gandhi neurons', because their existence appears to validate claims that we humans – as individuals and, by extension, collectively – are capable of setting aside our own narrow self-interest, in order to put ourselves in others' shoes, utilising our emotions.

McGilchrist produces a reading of 'Western civilisation' as having been based on misplaced assumptions about the sovereignty of conscious reasoning, situated in the left hemisphere of the brain, in shaping human responses:

> [I]n the context of intellectual discourse we are always obliged to 'look at' the relationship of cognition to affect from the cognitive point of view … Asking cognition, however, to give a perspective on the relationship between cognition and affect is like asking an astronomer in the pre-Galilean geocentric world whether, in his opinion, the sun moved round the earth or the earth round the sun. To ask the question alone would be enough to label one as mad. (McGilchrist 2010, p186)

Affect and emotions are experienced by the right hemisphere of the brain, which sees the whole and the context. Our awareness is about the interaction of both hemispheres – the left hemisphere sees the detail, is rigid, and is concerned with possession and manipulation. However, right hemisphere representations of reality have, McGilchrist argues, been subjugated by a dominant left hemisphere.

The counterpart of the evermore sophisticated 'simulation' of warfare, Der Derian writes, is 'media dissimulation' (Der Derian 2009, p264) over what Lynch, in reviewing his book, calls 'the grim reality of thousands killed' (Lynch 2009) when the weapons actually land. 'Dehumanization of "them" ' is a standard propaganda tactic, and a staple of war journalism (Galtung 1998), used to inure target populations to campaigns of organised violence, implying that our empathic capacities have to be nullified, in order to enable us to go along with it. In a different setting – the US prison system – Ari Cowan, who devised a prevention and restoration model for intervention to lessen incidents of violence, finds that: 'Central to human ability to commit acts of violence is an "objectification/action" process in which the recipient of violence must be converted conceptually from a human being to an object' (Cowan 2011).

Reverse this conceptual conversion, Cowan has found, by reactivating our empathic connection with one another, and the incidence of violence falls steeply. Realism – in both senses, of the

dominant international relations paradigm and the apparent re-*present*-ing brought about by innovations in war reporting – may not be as 'realistic' as is commonly supposed, since both depend on suppressing a substantial segment of reality in the way we relate to one another as human beings.

Then, we have been taught to mistrust our feeling selves, Rifkin writes, by psychoanalysis, where Freud's postulation of our aggressive 'drive', *thanatos*, required *catharsis* to render it manageable in everyday life. (Perhaps those violent computer games are good for us after all!) However, Freud may have simply missed a vitally important part of being human – the empathy. He mistook the bond between mother and child as satisfying the child's libido, discussing the infant feeding with its mother: 'I cannot discover this oceanic feeling in myself' (in Rifkin 2009, p52). (Perhaps it is purely coincidental that Descartes' mother died when he was a baby, and that Hobbes was born prematurely to a mother terror-stricken by news of the Spanish Armada on the way to invade England, and abandoned by his father at a tender age.)

My work as a psychotherapist has brought me into contact with research on child development, which has emphasised the primary importance of the attachment between child and mother, the formation of which then shapes the way we form relationships for the rest of our lives. When that attachment is not formed, the child can feel a deep sense of abandonment and act that out in later life. Results can include pathologies leading to obsession, addiction and antisocial behaviour. One study in the 1960s assessed babies into adulthood, and found that the more securely attached infants grew up to be more sociable adults, a general rule observed in countless individual cases by care workers such as Camila Batmanghelidjh, who set up Kids Company in London, in 1995.

> [If] you actually look at what neuroscience is telling us about the way children's brains develop', she said in a recent interview, 'it is absolutely evident that the frontal lobe, which is the area responsible for pro-social behaviour and assessing consequences of your action doesn't develop robustly in males until they're 27 and in females until they're 25. (Batmanghelidjh 2010)

She continues:

> Neuroscience is saying the quality of attachment relationship that is provided for you sculpts your ability to control your behaviour, plan and be pro-social. It's saying if children are frightened and terrorised and impoverished nutritionally then there is an impact on the way their brain develops. It doesn't mean that we can't correct their behaviour, but we can't hold them criminally responsible at age ten. No child is born a criminal or a killer, any child who commits a crime, there is a legacy of crimes committed against that child, prior to the time they got to be the perpetrator. (Batmanghelidjh 2010)

Rifkin argues that many fields of research are simultaneously supplying evidence that humans are 'soft-wired for empathy'. For whatever reason, Freud's propositions about what 'really' determines our responses – that human nature is aggressive and sexually driven – are based on observations of pathologies, or at least a 'secondary movement' after our primary movement towards nurture, relationship, empathy and connection was not fulfilled in infancy.

The successful treatment of patients with addictions, referred to above, has been based on treating the addiction as an attachment disorder; in other words, the secondary movement of the person with an addiction is towards a self-destructive behaviour. They are only able to make that primary movement towards relationship, empathy and connection in adulthood, by first attaching to a self-help group or therapist – effectively being 're-parented' – before going on, in many cases, to lead normal healthy lives, based on a reactivated capacity for empathy and care for others. 'AA bridged the gap', Rifkin says:

> between the object relationship theorists and behaviouralists, by acknowledging the critical relational and emotional aspects of social well-being and the important role that empathic engagement plays in recovery, while at the same time creating a twelve-step program that contained elements of behavioural conditioning. (Rifkin 2009, p400)

'Some of the claims of peace journalism', Lynch and McGoldrick write (2010, p95), 'are realist … in the sense of fidelity' to a pre-existing

reality. Through its mission to 'highlight peace initiatives' (Galtung 1998), peace journalism 'connect[s] with visions and creative ideas for peace' (Lynch & McGoldrick 2010, p95) that are invariably present, in any conflict, but usually suppressed in media representations – the mainstream of 'war journalism' – which can therefore be seen as less accurate.

Among the other distinguishing features of peace journalism, in Galtung's original table, is its emphasis on the 'humanization of all sides' through 'empathy and understanding' (Galtung 1998). This, too, is therefore more realistic, both in the sense of depicting human relations and in the sense of prompting and enabling a response to the events and processes being depicted that is more authentic and more conducive to the needs and instincts of readers and audiences. Rifkin's narrative, re-examining dominant conceptual frames transmitted from various disciplines and discursive practices in light of multiple-sourced findings in support of an empathic human nature, may therefore be seen as lending a further authenticity-claim to peace journalism as a representation of conflicts and responses to them.

Lynch and McGoldrick draw attention to 'heroes of nonviolence': some wellknown, but others generally under-appreciated in their influence on our lives, because of 'cultural phenomena' such as the preponderance of depictions of violent heroes on American-made children's television programs (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005, p78). More coverage, not only of the Nelson Mandelas and Mother Teresas of this world, but also less heralded nonviolent change agents – such as those featured in chapter 12 of the present volume by Elissa Tivona – would contribute towards rebalancing a presently distorted picture.

For adult audiences, of course, our allegiances are manipulated in more sophisticated and often more ambivalent ways. In *Silence of the lambs*, serial killer Hannibal Lecter is consulted by FBI agent Clarice Starling because only he 'really' knows what is 'really' going on: his depravity having stripped away the 'illusions' the rest of us find necessary to carry on living. Anthony Hopkins' mesmeric portrayal seeps into us deviously; his is hardly a view of human nature that we would accept as 'the whole story', and yet – by squeezing out empathy

– the conventions of war reporting effectively conceptualise the human beings on the 'other' side – the 'Taliban', to take a current example – in the manner of a serial killer sizing up potential victims.

British psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen has suggested that we may substitute the words 'zero empathy' for 'evil' (Baron-Cohen 2011) and that people who perpetrate acts of violence without conscience – whether they be US soldiers, the Taliban, or Nazis exterminating Jews in the Holocaust – be regarded as having 'zero degrees of empathy'. The point is, we should be assessing anything that causes empathy-erosion – like war journalism – and seeking to reduce it.

Peace journalism, by humanising 'them', fires the mirror neurons and creates the scope for more mimicry and repetition. Among the research data adduced by Rifkin are findings that television viewers' facial expressions even match those of people they are viewing. These, in turn, echo findings from experiments on the psychological phenomenon of merging: asking people to put themselves in someone else's shoes, then write a 'day in the life' of, respectively, a senior, a cheerleader and a university professor (Galinsky et al. 2005). Participants unconsciously mirrored the behaviour and perceptions of their model: the first was observed to walk noticeably more slowly, the second saw herself as more physically attractive, and the third performed better in intelligence tests.

The relation between what we watch and the way we think, feel and behave may not be linear, or direct. But the explosion of evidence, appearing simultaneously in many fields, for believing that we are, in Rifkin's terms, soft-wired for empathy, may further explain the findings of my own earlier study (McGoldrick 2008) based on interviews with subjects about their experience of watching news in general, and about the distinctions in the peace journalism model in particular. In it, I quote Rollo May's study of our modern quest for meaning (May 1991, p134). May characterises Heidegger's theories as having 'made care (*sorge*) the basis of being: without care, our selves shrink up, we lose our capacity to will as well as our selfhood'.

In McGilchrist's account, the capacity for caring is situated in the right hemisphere of the brain, which gives the context, sees the whole, the big picture, while the left supplies language and sequence, being

concerned with manipulation, possession, rivalry and power. Too much news 'gives us a long list of problems with no opportunities for us to *apply* our care', I argued, thus addressing only the left hemisphere. As a result, subjects in my study reported strong, overwhelmingly negative responses: the experience of watching news triggered 'lingering feelings of depression, helplessness, hopelessness and alienation' (McGoldrick 2008, p94). News about conflict, particularly war reporting, which is presented as such a realistic portrayal of such an authentic human experience, may actually be harmful to consumers precisely because it subjugates and misleadingly 'frames out' a substantial portion of human nature.

Indeed, journalism, as a report of 'just the facts' – which could therefore be construed as a Hobbesian practice – comes with the same, familiar in-built bias against empathy. The unrealistic human relations it constructs – and to which it contributes – can be glimpsed in the infamous picture of a starving Sudanese girl, watched over by a waiting vulture, that appeared in *The New York Times* (Carter 1993). The photographer Kevin Carter won a Pulitzer Prize, but unlike his fellow journalists, readers were less interested in the technical quality of the picture and more interested in what happened to the child.

In an editors' note four days after the photo first appeared, *The Times* said: 'The photographer reports that she recovered enough to resume her trek after the vulture was chased away. It is not known whether she reached the [relief] center' (in Moeller 1999, p148). Two months after receiving his Pulitzer, Carter would be dead of carbon-monoxide poisoning in Johannesburg, a suicide at 33. Did he lack the empathy to put down his camera and help her? His role as a journalist mandated a 'detachment' from his own feelings. Did the guilt of that contribute to his death? He told a friend: 'I'm really, really sorry I didn't pick up the child' (in Moeller 1999, p40). The science of trauma tells us that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is much more likely if people are unable to make sense, and a meaningful outcome, from a horrific incident. If you witness an atrocity and feel empathy for someone, then if you can somehow involve yourself in helping them – saving their lives,

as in the case of the Sudanese girl, or joining in, however vicariously, efforts to prevent a repetition of such incidents – you are much less likely to develop PTSD, because the event thereby acquires more meaning.

Group responses

If particular patterns of news reporting – encapsulated in Galtung's description of war journalism – can be regarded, on this basis, as potentially harmful on an individual basis, separate research has highlighted the importance of our empathic capacity, conveyed through mirror neurons, in governing group responses. If someone watches a report of an atrocity against another group – a white European, say, watches coverage of the bombing of Gaza, *with a Palestinian* – they are likely to feel the same feelings as the Palestinians (Argo et al. 2009, p30).

And this works the other way too: in experiments at MIT and Harvard – funded by Queen Noor of Jordan and Richard Branson – subjects have been shown to respond to an attack on a member of a group with which they identify by wanting 'revenge', more than if the attack is made upon them personally. Many researchers have made the link between group status, sense of self and personal self-esteem. Examples include the 1992 Los Angeles race riots where TV news showed repeated images of Rodney King being beaten by police officers – officers who were later acquitted in court. More recently, studies on the radicalisation of militants in Iraq have linked it to the humiliating images of prisoners in Abu Ghraib being mistreated by US soldiers.

Similar findings were repeated in laboratory conditions when 240 people in Boston watched violent vignettes:

> First, subjects were more likely to report a desire to retaliate at the perpetrator when their friend was the injured party than when they themselves were slighted or harmed. This finding was strongest for men, and strongest for subjects under age 30. Second, females were more likely to report that the perpetrator deserved to have retribution meted upon him when a group member was the injured party than when they themselves were. (Argo et al. 2009, p28)

Is it possible that these responses might now be more widespread and more rapid because of intensified media coverage? Here's the view of a young Palestinian in the occupied territories:

> The difference between the first intifada and the second is television. Before, I knew when we were attacked here, or in a nearby camp, but the reality of the attacks everywhere else was not so clear. Now, I cannot get away from Israel – the TV brings them into my living room … And you can't turn the TV off. How could you live with yourself? At the same time, you can't ignore the problem – what are you doing to protect your people? We live with an internal struggle. Whether you choose to fight or not, every day is this internal struggle. (in Argo et al. 2009, p9)

Significant in this context is evidence that group information is processed in emotional centres of the brain. 'That is, group-related reasoning and perception may well be implicit, emotional, and untouchable via traditional cognitive and rational approaches' (Argo et al. 2009, p33). This holds profound implications for considerations of media influence on the actions and motivations of parties to conflict, whether direct or indirect, linear or extra-linear. It suggests we are more likely to find differential group responses to media representations of conflict through adjusting the more emotional, less explicit content, than the more cognitive, fact-based elements: revealing elements of context and background through telling a story based on human interest, perhaps.

A study of reader responses to crime stories in a US university showed greater receptiveness to 'peaceful' policy prescriptions – in the sense of attending to structural causes – among students whose empathic responses had been evoked by the news being framed in ways very similar to the peace journalism method for reporting conflicts. The Berkeley Media Studies Group, a lobby group for public health and social issues, carried out training with journalists in the newsrooms of five metropolitan newspapers. As with the experience of peace journalism training, participants were sometimes 'defensive and bristly', but many still said it had an effect on how they would cover crime in the future (Thorson et al. 2001, p414).

Precepts for the training were derived from the public health model of violence, adopted officially in the US by Surgeon General C Everett Koop in the 1980s, since the time when violence prevention became the domain of public health departments (Thorson et al. 2003, p53). In this model, death from violent crime is seen as preventable if the underlying causes are investigated, such as availability of alcohol, guns, unemployment, racial discrimination, violence in the media, lack of education, abuse as a child, witnessing violence, and male dominance over females. Researchers found that readers of crime stories framed with this public health model are more likely to be less blaming of the perpetrators and look to societal causes and want holistic social/political initiatives to address those causes (Thorson et al. 2003, p53).

'A good reporter does not stop a story of two cars shocking, known as a collision', Lynch and Galtung write, 'with an account of those killed or wounded, and material damage' (2010, p3). In an analogy intended to validate the peace journalism approach to reporting conflict, they go on to recommend consideration of the human cost of the rush-hour effect, with everyone attempting to drive to work at the same time and even – if alcohol is involved – the underlying reasons why people, in the society under discussion, use alcohol inappropriately or excessively. This, they say, is essential if journalism is 'to make the world transparent, unveiling causal chains' (Lynch & Galtung 2010, p4).

This is, in fact, an example of how expanding and spreading understanding of what Lynch and Galtung call the 'condition–consequence' relationship – the process leading up to an event – actually helped to bring about a change in outcomes. Until the 1960s, traffic accidents in the US were simply blamed on 'the nut behind the wheel' (Coleman & Thorson 2002, p403). Then 'the media began to include the type of cars involved, road and weather conditions, and whether people were driving drunk or wearing seatbelts'. It helped to create demand for safety features to be added to cars, for the wearing of seatbelts, and raised the social pressure against drink-driving – and the number of accidents fell.

Ethics and consequences

Shinar (2007, p200) put forward a set of five headings for exercises in content analysis to identify and recognise peace journalism

1. Exploring backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation, and presenting causes and options on every side so as to portray conflict in realistic terms transparent to the audience

2. Giving voice to the views of all rival parties

3. Offering creative ideas for conflict resolution, peacemaking and peacekeeping

4. Exposing lies, cover-up attempts and culprits on all sides, and revealing excesses committed by, and suffering inflicted on, peoples of all parties

5. Paying attention to peace stories and postwar developments.

These all require and activate empathy in regarding and analysing conflicts, just like the reporting of road accidents, in allowing for a cataclysm, or an act of direct violence, to emerge from a background and provide a context resulting in an effort to understand how the perpetrators could have been brought to commit it. If the perpetrator is simply a 'nut', behaving with no discernible reason, then it apparently makes no sense to reason with them: for there to be scope for creative ideas of conflict resolution, there has to be an intelligible cause–consequence chain, and, for that to emerge, all parties – 'them' as well as 'us' – have to have a voice.

War journalism, on the other hand, in the original schema by Johan Galtung (in Lynch & McGoldrick 2005, p6), is journalism orientated:

- towards violence
- towards propaganda
- towards elites
- towards victory.

Why should the former be adopted, over the latter? When I was chairing the Reporting the World meetings in London in 2001 – a series

of reflective discussions for professional journalists about their coverage of particular conflicts – a senior editor at the BBC World Service said:

> I do think there's a danger of seeing a coincidence of interest between people engaged in conflict resolution, and the media. Conflict resolution is something on which I report, not something in which I engage. A side-effect of my reporting may be that it makes conflict resolution harder or easier, but that's a judgment that is made after our reporting. (Bob Jobbins in Lynch 2002, p24)

This is the journalistic ethics of duty, or conviction – to report 'without fear or favour', in the classic phrase. It is the reporter's duty *not* to empathise, not to consider how he or she may be involved in the story or consider how the reporting may be adjusted, in advance, in light of any such involvement. This deontological ethic of journalism can, Lynch and McGoldrick suggest, be conceptualised with reference to the universalising principle of Immanuel Kant: 'I ought never to act, except in such a way that I would will that my maxim [in so acting] could become a universal law'.

However, journalism is 'always already' involved, Lynch and McGoldrick say – explicitly adopting a characteristic formula of the critical discourse of post-structuralism – in a 'feedback loop of cause and effect'. They quote Max Weber's concept of an 'ethic of responsibility', a teleological ethic, as the appropriate governing principle.

> One should take into account the *foreseeable* consequences of one's actions, [Weber] argued, and adjust one's behaviour accordingly – it is foreseeability that confers responsibility. A deontological journalistic ethic is, in this sense, merely a teleological one 'in waiting' – waiting for a convincing explanation of the relations of cause and effect. (Lynch & McGoldrick 2005, p218)

That explanation becomes more convincing when considering the rapidly growing body of evidence that war journalism, the dominant mode of news reporting, influenced, through different means of transmission, by Hobbesian empiricism and Cartesian rationality – both of which relegate empathic, emotional responses – has identifiable

consequences, for both individual psychological wellbeing and group receptiveness to particular policy prescriptions.

If peace journalism can offer us more empathic responses to conflict, more examples of those working cooperatively for bridge-building or human rights, we have more behaviours to mirror. Whereas the exponents of war journalism can no longer hide behind claims that we cannot foresee the consequences of reporting in that way, this same evidence supports the claim that both war and peace journalism deserve their name: in general, the one makes more violence more likely, whereas the other makes it less likely. Journalism cannot be regarded as 'detached' – it is implicated in cycles of cause and effect.

It is in this context, among other senses, that Hall's less 'literal' concept of representation, set out in his lecture, acquires particular resonance. Representation is not separate from the event, he says, but 'constitutive' of it: 'one of its conditions of existence'. And it's interesting for our discussion that Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work is often seen as a forerunner of structuralism and post-structuralism, articulated his own philosophy of human nature in explicitly empathetic terms:

> To *be* means to *communicate* … To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks *into the eyes of another* or *with the eyes of another*. (in Rifkin 2009, p147)

The rhetorical connection with state sovereignty, which is the basis for the realist paradigm in international relations, is a clue as to the resonance of Bakhtin's insight for the entire philosophical tradition that Rifkin, McGilchrist and others are now reworking in light of these recent findings.

Clifford Christians argues from a standpoint of 'philosophical anthropology' (2010, p16) that peace journalism calls on the journalist's 'liberal self', based on 'social contract theory', transmitted from Hobbes through the work of such thinkers as Locke, Rousseau and Rawls. But the nature of journalism, and its inescapable involvement with causes and consequences, demands revision of the concept of self at the heart

of this theory: the 'Robinson Crusoe' figure alone on an island (Christians 2010, p17). Instead, Christians posits a 'relational self', which fits much better with the new paradigm of empathy. He writes:

> In addition to this demanding agenda – one could argue, our first order of business – peace journalism must transform its philosophy of the human. Rather than presuming the liberal/contractual self, the foundation of the new thinking is holistic humanness where community is ontologically and axiologically prior to persons. When we start intellectually with humans-in-relation, the golden rule becomes a credible normative standard for both the general morality and professional journalism ethics in this contentious age. (Christians 2010, p28)

Conclusion

Peace journalism sets up a binary opposition, directing our attention to what is wrong with journalism as it has been practised, and enabling calls for its improvement. It creates a need and an incentive to find reasons why it should be preferred. The emergence of new evidence of our capacity for empathy, as part of holistic humanness, strengthens its claims. And the marshalling of that evidence into coherent challenges to the philosophical underpinnings of our inherited 'war system' – as per the work of Rifkin and McGilchrist – strengthens them still further, by tracing connections with the struggles underway around binary oppositions in other academic disciplines and in social movements.

For the journalist, rather than being asked to follow a prescribed set of ethical rules, mandating an unattainable aspiration to 'detachment', professionals can connect with, and trust, their most basic empathic human instinct to behave relationally, morally and ethically to inform and enlighten their audiences. In other words, peace journalism produces a more authentic and realistic representation of human relations in conflict, thereby offering humanity the best chance of being able to resolve differences nonviolently, and ultimately transform relationships into a more nurturing reality.

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