

The Cinema

July 21, 2007

The world is in terrible shape, on the brink of a Third World War which will be immeasurably more horrible than World Wars One or Two. How did the world get to this point? It is useful not to think that it is a shallow problem with a quick-fix solution, so here are a few thoughts on how a common feature of modern life, the cinema, can have contributed.

The following quotation is from Franz Kafka, the famous Czech writer of about 100 years ago, in the early days of films: "Cinema upsets the way we see things. The speeding up of movements and the rapid succession of images necessarily means that they escape our vision. It is no longer our eyes that take in the images, it is the images that take over our eyes. They overwhelm our consciousness. Cinema means putting a uniform over the eye which wore no such uniform before. The eye is the window of the soul, and films are like steel shutters over that window."

What would Kafka have said about television? Let that pass. What he is saying here about the cinema is that it short-circuits the mind. The human being is composed of body and spiritual (non-bodily) soul. Accordingly man's way of knowing is composed of bodily sensing and the spiritual mind's thinking. So the human mind works – only works – from sensations, constantly reading within the sense-data the intelligible content inside them that it alone can read. Therefore any serious upsetting of men's sensing is bound to upset the working of our minds. For instance, to flood our eyes (and since Kafka's time, also our ears) with a too rapid succession of images and sounds will be to wash out our minds (Kafka says, "to overwhelm our consciousness").

Too many films, too little thinking. Too little thinking, too little truth. Too little truth, too many lies, and through

them a Third World War to enable the liars (as they hope) to take over the globe. It is we who have not wanted to think. We have only to take our medicine.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy upon us.

Kyrie eleison.