

Social Media

Mankind, in its aspiration to improve its lot on this earth, has always striven to reach for the stars, to go for the best and to build on that from generation to generation. The “average” was hardly ever good enough when there exist individuals of superior capabilities who can and do point the way to continued improvements in our world and our lives. The arts and sciences have been incalculably advanced and enriched by this “building upon the best” to continue to improve our lot.

So it troubles me more than a little that, in this age of lightening-speed communication and state-of-the-art technologies, we now seem to wish to be guided by some sensibility lesser than “the best we have”. I refer here to the growing propensity to abdicate this reasonable and proven approach, and to rely instead on the sway and observations of what we now call the “social media”. This means that instead of being guided by our brightest and best, we pay attention to what, by any reasonable definition, reflects only the lowest common denominator of critical understanding that our society may apply to any situation.

Any person with access to the internet can now weigh in on any matter. We have no real way of knowing the qualifications through which that person may be filtering his/her views, and what seems to count is the number of persons who take this side or that of any issue. The “likes” and “dislikes” are tallied up, and waved about as justification for what should or should not be done, simply because more persons have lined up on a particular side of an issue.

That makes about as much sense as being guided by “the social media” in, say, whether or not a child should undergo this regimen of treatment or that in the case of a life-threatening condition. Isn't that best left to experts and professionals in the field as opposed to the majority opinion of a large number of by-standers? Even if by some magic, it may be determined that all of the by-standers have some reliable knowledge of the matter at hand, by what logic is it assumable that the majority will be right, or at least in a stronger position to reach a “good” decision than several well-qualified practitioners fully conversant with all pertinent details of the case.

So, vaunted arbiter that it seems to have become, social media, in terms of accuracy, is, at best, average, and, in terms of responsibility, completely unaccountable.