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WHAT IS PROPAGANDA, AND WHAT EXACTLY IS WRONG WITH IT?

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The purpose of this essay is to offer criteria for the identification of propaganda as a type of discourse, and for the analysis and evaluation of argumentation used in propaganda.[1] Ten essential characteristics (as well as several other typical properties) of propaganda as an identifiable type of discourse are given. Some advice is given on how to analyze argumentation in propaganda, and to reconstruct certain types of common arguments that are central to propaganda. But the main problem addressed, and the most difficult one, is that of how to evaluate arguments used in propaganda.

What frequently happens, especially in courses on logic and critical thinking, is that arguments are automatically dismissed as irrational or fallacious, as soon as they are categorized as propaganda. For the term `propaganda' has such highly negative connotations that people tend to see only the arguments of their opposition as describable with this label, as if their own arguments could never be.

This essay critically questions such a policy of automatic dismissal of arguments used in propaganda, and seeks out a better method of evaluating such arguments, so that an evaluation can be supported or refuted by the employment of clearly stated criteria that can be used to assess the textual evidence given in a particular case.

I. NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS

According to the account of the origin of the term 'propaganda' given in Ellul (1967), the term originally referred to a committee of church officials called the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith). The name of this committee continued as the name given to previous meetings of Pope Gregory XIII with three cardinals in 1572-1585 that had the aim of combating the Reformation. It may be presumed that in this original meaning,

the term 'propaganda' did not have the negative connotations it does now, at least for the Catholics who originated the term. However, it is also reasonable to assume that it would soon have taken on negative connotations for the Protestants who became aware of what the word meant to the Catholics. Because the committee had the purpose of advocating a particular point of view, or taking one side, on an important issue of church doctrine, and because the committee had an interest at stake in doing so, it is easy to see how the modern, negative connotations of the word 'propaganda' developed from this original use of the term.

According to Marlin (1989, p. 47), the use of the word 'propaganda' by the Allies during both world wars characterized only the enemy opinion-forming activities as propaganda, and treated these so-designated enemy activities as composed mostly of lies. These practices left the word with strongly negative connotations. However, "here and there" in the literature on propaganda, according to Marlin, "one finds voices trying to rehabilitate the word for neutral usage." However, these connotations are so deeply entrenched, and the word 'propaganda' is so emotively charged with negative connotations, that the word itself is frequently used as a verbal weapon to attack the views or arguments one is opposed to, or wishes to condemn as not being rationally compelling. These strong negative connotations attached to the word `propaganda' imply that such discourse is both unethical and illogical. The ethical aspect implies intentional deception and manipulation of amass audience. The logical aspect implies that the argumentation used is not based on good evidence of the kind appropriate for a rational discussion, and instead is of an emotional and crowd-pleasing sort.[2]

As Marlin (1989, p. 47) notes, the word 'propaganda,' as used in the modern English-speaking world, still has the strong negative connotations set in place by its use, in the two world wars. Politicians and bureaucrats would definitely avoid this term to describe their own public relations and promotional activities, and would use it only to describe those of their opponents (when it is meant to be used to detract from them). Generally, to describe any discourse or message as "propaganda" is to downgrade it by suggesting that the information content of the message, or its usefulness as reliable evidence, is suspect, and not of high quality. More than that, the use of this word even suggests that the message referred to is intentionally manipulative and deceptive. For example, to describe a story in a newspaper, or a televised report, as "propaganda," would be to say that the story or report is not an objective presentation of the facts, or a balanced account of both sides of an issue, but is a biased argument with a "spin" where some "cause" or particular viewpoint or interest is being advocated. Generally, to say something is propaganda is to say that it is the output of

some interest group or organization that is pushing a particular viewpoint in a way designed to promote it to a mass audience.

But the negative connotations of the term 'propaganda' are not universal. As Marlin (1989, p. 47) reminds us, Lenin and Goebbels did not mind accepting it as describing their own activities of molding public opinions, despite the Allies' use of the term in World War Two as referring only to the enemy opinion-forming activities, which were presumed to be manipulative lies designed to deceive a gullible public that did not have access to free media.

So the word 'propaganda' has a mixed quality. It is generally negative in its connotations, and the negative aspect seems to be at least partly logical in nature, suggesting that the discourse in question is somehow untrustworthy, deceptive, or not a kind of argumentation that is based on a balanced consideration of the evidence relevant to the issue being discussed. Also, there is a negative ethical implication to the effect that propaganda is intentionally manipulative, and involves lying or dishonesty of some sort. The implication is that this type of discourse masquerades as something else, that is not what it appears to be on the surface, and hence that some kind of duplicity or pretense is involved in it.

Apart from ethical questions, these negative connotations of the use of the word propaganda raise some logical questions (logical in the sense of being questions of how to evaluate argumentation used in a text of discourse as rational or spurious, as correctly used or fallacious.)[3] What is propaganda as a type of discourse in which arguments are used for some purpose? And should the term 'propaganda' be defined in an inherently negative way so that it is always bad or wrong? That is, should all arguments used in propaganda be judged to be fallacious or incorrect (or at least suspect or ill-supported) just because they were used for purposes of propaganda? Or should 'propaganda' be defined in a neutral way that does not beg the question, or foreclose the question of the worth of the arguments used in it?

Of course, offering an abstract definition of a controversial word like 'propaganda' could be seen as the use of a persuasive definition (see Section Three below) that makes the definition of 'propaganda' itself a kind of propaganda. But even so, propaganda as a type of discourse does have certain characteristics that enable us to recognize it, or at least to use the word to make certain common kinds of claims and criticisms in everyday conversations and in academic arguments like ones in political science. To claim that an argument is propaganda, or is part of a discourse that may be described as propaganda, is a common way of criticizing arguments, or of evaluating them in a negative way that suggests that the argument is not based on reliable evidence

or rational argumentation, so that it may be rejected as logically unconvincing to a rational person.

But perhaps such common practices are naive, or not based on a form of evaluation that can be rationally justified by appeal to good evidence. Even worse, perhaps such condemnations are prejudicial and fallacious. For perhaps propaganda is not inherently bad or illogical. Perhaps it has a purpose as an organized and methodical type of discourse that is recognizable as such. And perhaps argumentation in such a type of discourse ought to be evaluated in relation to the goals appropriate for such a use of arguments. The suggestion that propaganda may not be all bad, or not as bad as those who use the term in a negative way so often take for granted, may be slightly scandalous. But until some clear account of what the term is supposed to mean is given, no way of throwing light on the issue is open.

II. PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND REASON

When an arguer addresses a mass audience using some form of communicative discourse to try to get the audience to accept a particular view, or to support a particular policy, to what extent is such discourse successful if it is reasonable, as opposed to being an appeal to emotions'and prejudices that should not be described as any kind of rational argumentation? On this question, it is easy to find a range of answers, and to find both extreme views represented.

According to Rawls (1993), political issues should be decided by citizens engaged in public discourse with each other in a democratic and civil exchange of arguments. A primary component of this process of rational argumentation in public discourse, according to Rawls (1993, p. 224) are "principles of reasoning and rules of evidence in the light of which citizens are to decide whether substantive principles properly apply..." and rules that determine the kinds of considerations that can legitimately be appealed to in advocacy of a position or in voting on a policy. According to Rawls (p. 224), we are to appeal to "presently accepted general beliefs and forms of reasoning found in common sense, and the methods and conclusions of science when these are not controversial." When arguing about laws and policies in public discourse, Rawls tells us, the duty of civility requires us to stay within the bounds of public reason. For Rawls then, when a political speaker addresses a mass audience, to try to get them to accept some view she advocates, or to support some policy she expounds; the ideals, of public discourse require that the speaker should appeal to presently accepted general beliefs and forms of reasoning found in "common sense." Rawls appears to be of the opinion that such public

discourse is not only a rational kind of argumentation, and also a type of discourse that is useful in mass communication, but can be successful in getting a mass audience to accept your view or to follow a policy you advocate.

Many would be highly skeptical about all these claims, and would say that viewing public discourse with a mass audience in this kind of way is not only hopelessly optimistic, it is a distortion of what really takes place in real public discourse, and would be hopelessly impractical as a method of getting a mass audience to do anything.

Among the skeptics at the other end of the spectrum from Rawls' view is Le Bon (1896) who argued that crowds think in images, and are especially impressed by colorful images and marvelous stories, and that therefore crowds are not influenced by reasoning. Le Bon (1896, p. 81), since he started from the premise, based on his observations, that crowds do not use logical reasoning to influence their actions and what they accept, inferred the conclusion that it would be a great mistake for a speaker who hopes to influence a crowd to use logical reasoning to try to persuade them to do anything.

> We have shown that crowds do not reason, that they accept or reject ideas as a whole, that they tolerate neither discussion nor contradiction, and that the suggestions brought to bear on them invade the entire field of their understanding and tend at once to transform themselves into acts. We have shown that crowds suitably influenced are ready to sacrifice themselves for the ideal with which they have been inspired. We have also seen that they only entertain violent and extreme sentiments, that in their case sympathy quickly becomes adoration, and antipathy almost as soon as it is aroused is transformed into hatred.

According to Le Bon's account, the nature of the convictions of crowds is more like that of religious faith, or even religious fanaticism, than it is like that of reflective, balanced, logical thinking. Characteristic or the convictions of crowds, according to Le Bon (1896, p. 83) are intolerance, fanaticism, and "whole-souled ardor" in the cause of an individual or in the service of a "victorious leader" who arouses their enthusiasm, and thereby becomes a guide to their actions., There does not seem to be much room for civil public discourse and rational thinking based on common sense, of the kind described by Rawls, in Le Bon's view of how the convictions of a mass audience can be influenced.

The views presented by Rawls and Le Bon represent the two polar extremes on how argumentation influences popular convictions and attitudes. Rawls' viewpoint seems to represent a normative model of how public discourse is to be conducted in a democracy, if it is to be

just, and represent liberal values. Le Bon's account is more descriptive in nature, based on his own observations of how crowds behave, and how their convictions are led in a particular direction by leaders and popular orators. But the two views do conflict, and are strongly opposed, in certain ways. If Le Bon is right about how popular discourse actually works in influencing mass audiences, then an account like that of Rawls, that assumes a fairly high level of rationality in public discourse, is bound to be hopelessly impractical, idealistic, and out of touch with how mass conviction works, and can be altered. On the other hand; if Rawls is right that his model of public reason is a good method for conducting the civil exchange of -arguments in a democracy, then cynics who pander to the worst instincts of crowds by engaging in Le Bon's methods of dramatic appeal to emotion are engaging in the very sort of irrational demagoguery that most threatens a democracy.

So can a speaker engage in a rational kind of deliberation or persuasion dialogue with a mass audience, say in an election campaign or in a political speech, or does public discourse influence a mass audience only by appealing to emotions and popular enthusiasm in a way that makes it a deceptive, myth-making or distorted type of argumentation that is logically suspect, or even fallacious?

III. APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE

One aspect of propaganda is that, by its very nature, it is designed to reach and influence a mass audience, and as such, it is a kind of technique that must appeal successfully to the emotions, commitments and enthusiasms of the crowd to win acceptance for a conclusion. The fact that propaganda is an "appeal to the people" as a type of argumentation makes it inherently suspicious to logicians. Indeed, the so-called appeal to the people *(argumentum ad populum)* is standardly treated by logic textbooks as a fallacious type of argument.[4] Citing two of the leading introductory textbooks will indicate how this type of argument has generally been treated in logic as a fallacy.

According to Hurley (1994, p. 120), the "appeal to the people" *(argumentum ad populum)* has the following basic structure as an argument.

> You want to be accepted/included/loved/esteemed in the group.
> Therefore, you should accept XYZ as true.

In the *indirect approach* (p. 119), the arguer directs his or her appeal to the individuals in the crowd, but in the *direct approach* (p. 120), each person feels united with the crowd, and anyone who fails to go along

with the conclusion accepted so enthusiastically by the crowd risks the loss of the security of acceptance by the crowd:

> The *direct approach* occurs when an arguer, addressing a large group of people, excites the emotions and enthusiasm of the crowd to win acceptance for his conclusion. The objective is to arouse a kind of mob mentality. This is the strategy used by nearly every propagandist and demagogue. Adolf Hitler was a master of the technique, but it is also used with some measure of success by speechmakers at Democratic and Republican national conventions. Waving flags and blaring music add to the overall effect. Because the individuals in the audience want to share in the camaraderie, the euphoria, and the excitement, they find themselves accepting any number of conclusions with ever-increasing fervor.
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> The direct approach is not limited to oral argumentation, of course; a similar effect can be accomplished in writing. By employing such emotionally charged phraseology as "fighter of communism" "champion of the free enterprise system," and "defender of the working man," polemicists can awaken the same kind of mob mentality as they would if they were speaking.

The appeal to the people is classified by Hurley (p. 116) as a "fallacy of relevance," meaning that although the premises of such an argument are psychologically relevant to the conclusion, making the conclusion *seem* to follow from the premises, they are not logically relevant, in the sense they "provide genuine evidence in support of the conclusion." Hurley's citing of Hitler as a propagandist who was a master of the technique of appeal to the people, indicates how propaganda, based as it is on the appeal to the people as an underlying argument, is something that contains or is based on fallacious argument.[5]

Copi (.1982, p. 104) defines *argumentum ad populum* as "the attempt to win popular assent to a conclusion by arousing the emotions and enthusiasms of the multitude, rather than by appeal to the relevant facts." He goes on (p. 104) to link this fallacious type of argument with the use of propaganda .

> This is a favorite device with the propagandist, the demagogue, and the advertiser. Faced with the task of mobilizing public sentiment for-or against a particular measure, they will avoid the laborious process of collecting and presenting evidence and rational argument by using the shortcut methods of the *argumentum ad populum*. Where the proposal is for a change and he is against it, he will express suspicion of "newfangled innovations" and praise the wisdom of the "existing order." If he is for it, he will be for "progress" and opposed to "antiquated prejudice." Here we have the use of invidious terms with no rational attempt made to argue for them or to justify their application. This technique may

> be supplemented by displaying the flag, brass bands, and whatever else' might serve to stimulate and excite the public.

Copi goes on to criticize the "twentieth-century advertiser" in particular, as a "huckster" and "ballyhoo artist" who has elevated the *argumentum ad populum* "almost to the status of a fine art" in designing commercials that sell "day-dreams and delusions of grandeur" (pp. 104-105). Copi classifies all such *ad populum* arguments as fallacious on the grounds that they commit "fallacies of relevance" (p. 98). Like Hurley, Copi sees the failure as one of a failure of logical relevance masked by a psychological relevance that makes such an argument seem persuasive and correct (p. 99).

Now it does seem to be true that propaganda uses, or is even based on the *argumentum ad populum*, because it does address a mass audience, it does try to persuade the mass audience to accept a conclusion based on premises that are popularly or widely accepted, and it does typically work by exciting the emotions and enthusiasms of the crowds. But if propaganda is based on this fallacious kind of argumentation, surely that both explains why propaganda is negatively evaluated from a logical point of view, and why it does contravene rational standards of argument.

But there are grounds for doubt about this explanation. According to the analysis of Walton (1992), *ad populum* arguments are not inherently fallacious, and can sometimes be reasonable. To clarify the question, it is necessary to examine the grounds on which the logic textbooks condemn *ad populum* arguments as fallacious.

One of these grounds is that *ad populum* arguments appeal to emotions, specifically to the emotions and enthusiasms of the crowd. But is the use of emotional appeal in itself sufficient grounds for judging an argument to be fallacious? In Walton (1992) it is argued that use of emotional appeal does not necessarily mean, by itself, that an argument is fallacious, and that such appeals can often provide good grounds for presumptively accepting a conclusion on a default basis (in the absence of the hard information needed to conclusively resolve the issue), as a way of steering conduct towards a prudent line of action.

Another basis for classifying *ad populum* arguments as fallacious is that they pander to the crowd by being based on premises that are popularly accepted, and, as Copi (1982, p. 105) warns, "...popular acceptance of a policy does not prove it is wise,...general assent to a claim does not prove it to be true." According to this account, *ad populum* arguments are based on premises that are commitments of the mass audience, and therefore they are not rational arguments based on evidence that is factual and has been verified.

But is this factor, by itself, a sufficient reason for judging all *ad populum* arguments to be fallacious? The answer is 'no,' according to the analysis of Walton (1992), because *endoxic arguments*, arguments based on popular opinions, or that have premises that express widely held assumptions, are not necessarily, and in themselves fallacious. Also, arguments addressed to a specific audience, and based on the commitments of that specific audience as premises, are not necessarily fallacious either. It depends on how those premises are used in an argument in a specific case, whether the premises are subject to doubt and critical questioning in the discussion, and what other kinds of arguments and evidential considerations are alongside these *ad populum* arguments. Once again; as long as the *ad populum* arguments are not taken as conclusive, or as the only basis for arriving at a conclusion, they can have legitimate weight in shifting a weight of presumption to one side or the other in a rational discussion.

But the main grounds Hurley and Copi bring to bear in classifying *ad populum* arguments as fallacious is that of relevance. On both accounts, *ad populum* arguments are said to be fallacious because the premises that appeal to a mass audience or crowd are psychologically relevant to its acceptance of a conclusion, but are not logically relevant, in the sense that they provide good evidence to support the conclusion.

But are premises based on popular opinions, or on the enthusiastic convictions of a crowd, always logically irrelevant to a conclusion? It would seem not. For in public opinion polls, of the kind commonly used to predict election results, for example, the premise 'The majority, or such-and-such per cent of respondents polled, accept proposition *A* (such as believing that so-and-so is the better candidate for office), therefore the conclusion that proposition *B* is true is rationally justified as a reasonable presumption with a certain weight of likelihood (for example, the proposition that so-and-so will win the election). In fact, in many arguments commonly used in everyday conversational exchanges and deliberations, the fact that a proposition is widely accepted is rightly taken as a reasonable (but not conclusive or irrefutable) and relevant premise for provisionally accepting that proposition as plausible, subject to further questioning, and for drawing inferences from it to other propositions.

Much depends here on what is meant by 'logically relevant.' A proposition based on crowd appeal or popular acceptance would not be logically relevant in a scientific discussion, say in physics or chemistry. But it could be logically relevant in an argument used in a court of law,[6] or in a business meeting about advertising strategy in marketing a product. Logical relevance seems to depend on the purpose of the discourse the argument in question is being used to contribute to.

If the purpose of our speech is to mobilize the country for war, or to persuade your audience to support a cause like protecting the environment, appealing to the commitments of the audience, or even to its enthusiasm, may be not only relevant, but it may also be necessary and appropriate in order to convince them that a particular course of conduct should be supported, and should be accepted as a policy.

Our tentative conclusion (which will require more support) is that propaganda is based on an appeal to the people type of argument, but that this characteristic should not, in itself, be regarded as sufficient for drawing the conclusion that all propaganda is irrational or illogical, or that any argument used in propaganda is for that reason alone fallacious.

IV. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS OF ARGUMENT USE

Traditionally in logic, arguments have been evaluated as valid or invalid according to semantic standards, but recently, pragmatic standards have been developed to evaluate how arguments are used in different types of conversational contexts. Each type of dialogue has its goal, and an argument is successful (or used correctly) to the extent that it contributes to a given conversational goal. This pragmatic framework has also been used to investigate informal (and formal) fallacies in Walton (1995), where an argument is judged to be used incorrectly or inadequately if it fails to contribute to a given conversational goal. Also, an argument is said to be used in a fallacious way, in a given context of conversation, if it hinders or even blocks the fulfillment of the goal of the conversation (often by the use of deception, by seeming to be used correctly).

In Walton (1995, chapter 5)-see also Walton and Krabbe (1995)-six types of conversational frameworks-called types of dialogue-are identified and analyzed that are especially basic to evaluating argumentation of the kind typically used in everyday conversational arguments. These are eristic dialogue, persuasion dialogue, deliberation, inquiry, information-seeking dialogue, and negotiation. Each goal-directed type of dialogue provides a conversational framework in which a given argument can be normatively evaluated as used correctly or.incorrectly to contribute to the goal of a type of dialogue the participants are presumably engaged in, in a given case where there is a text of discourse from which the argument can be reconstructed and identified.

For full descriptions of the goals and other characteristics of these types of dialogue, the reader must look to Walton (1995, chapter five) and Walton and Krabbe (1995). But here a brief description of the nature of each type is given. Eristic dialogue, of which the quarrel is the leading subtype is the type of verbal exchange where each party has a

grievance, and "hits out" at the other party to try to humiliate him or her. The quarrel is often an angry, emotional exchange, and as the saying goes, it generates more heat than light, and is not much of a friend to logic. In persuasion dialogue, each participant has the goal of getting the other party to become committed to a particular proposition, based on arguments using only premises that are propositions the other party is already committed to. The key concept is that of an arguer's commitment. This notion derives from Hamblin (1970), and is fully analyzed in Walton and Krabbe (1995). In the inquiry, the goal is to prove a particular proposition (or disprove it, or prove it cannot be proved, or prove it cannot be disproved) based on premises that are verified (known to be true), using cumulative argumentation of a kind that is so well established that no propositions in the chain of reasoning ever need to be retracted. At least that is the goal (ideally) of the inquiry type of dialogue. In information-seeking dialogue, one party tries to get some information that the other party possesses but that she (the first party) lacks. In the negotiation type of dialogue the goal is to "make a deal"-to come to a division of some goods, services or interests that are in short supply. Each party tries to get a share of the goods that represent what is most important to her, while leaving the other party enough of a share of what is important to him so that he does not feel cheated. Negotiation dialogue is not about searching for the truth of a matter, or about rationally convincing the other party that a particular proposition is true or false. It is simply interest-based bargaining.

One special type of dialogue called the critical discussion is classified in Walton (1995) as a subspecies of persuasion dialogue, and its characteristics have been fully set out by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992). In van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1987), ten rules of a critical discussion are postulated. A critical discussion presumes the existence of a conflict of opinions and the goal of the discussion is to resolve this conflict by using rational arguments. Each party has a point of view (standpoint), and tries to convince the other party that her (the first party's) point of view is correct. The rules to be used for this purpose include notably Rule 4 (p. 286) that a party's point of view may be defended only by advancing arguments that are relevant to that point of view, and Rule 3 (p. 286) that an attack on a point of view must be directed to the point of view really advocated by the protagonist. [7]

In the theory of van Eemeren and Grootendorst, fallacies are violations of the rules of a critical discussion. For example, violations of Rule 3 cited are "imputing a fictitious standpoint to someone" and "distorting someone's standpoint" (p. 286). These violations of Rule 3 correspond to the *straw man fallacy*, the fallacy of setting up a distorted version of an opponent's thesis (standpoint), and then demolishing this distorted version, thereby claiming to have refuted

the opponent's argument. An example would be the person who argues against an environmentalist position by setting up an extreme or exaggerated version of that position, e.g., "You are trying to make the world a pristine wilderness. That is not practical!", and then proceeds to demolish that extreme position by using arguments against it.

V. PERSUASION AND PROPAGANDA

The ultimate goal of propaganda is to get the respondents to fake a particular course of action. Many definitions of 'propaganda' postulate that the goal of propaganda is to change the respondents' beliefs, or to persuade the respondents to accept some proposition as true (or false). But these goals, although they are typically part of propaganda, are secondary to the ultimate goal, which is always (as a matter of practical politics) to get the respondents to do (or abstain from doing) something. These secondary goals are always means to the ultimate end of propaganda, which is action, or compliance with action.

In persuasion dialogue, the proponent's goal is to use the commitments of the respondent as premises in order to persuade the respondent to also become committed to some particular proposition he previously had doubts about accepting. According to the description given in Jowett and O'Donnell (1986, p. 24), persuasion, when it is successful, elicits a reaction of the form, "I never saw it that way before." This process of persuading a respondent to accept some particular proposition as true is tied in with how propaganda is used. And therefore, many conclude that propaganda can be defined essentially as a type of persuasion dialogue.

But the aim of propaganda is not just to secure a respondent's assent to a proposition by persuading him that it is true, or that it is, supported by propositions he is already committed to. The aim of propaganda is to get the respondent to act, to adopt a certain course of action, or to go along with, and assist in a particular policy. Merely securing assent or commitment to a proposition is not enough to make propaganda successful in securing its aim. Whether or not an audience really believes a particular viewpoint, or accepts it as true, the aim of propaganda is to get them to go along with it in a more practical sense. The aim is to get them to go along with a policy or program by taking part in it, and by allowing it to be implemented as a plan of social action.

This way of defining 'propaganda' has important implications on the issue of whether propaganda is inherently bad, deceptive, or against truth. For if you see propaganda as a type of persuasion dialogue, then once you note its indifference to the truth, you then can pinpoint its

bad aspect as being a defective kind of persuasion dialogue. For participants in persuasion dialogue are supposed to have a regard for the truth of a matter, particularly in the critical discussion subtype, where participants are not supposed to ignore relevant evidence on the issue of the discussion-see van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1987; 1992). Hence propaganda, once seen as a species of persuasion dialogue, is easily seen as inherently defective, because it ignores, or even suppresses relevant evidence on the issue being argued when such an ignoring is convenient to its purpose. But if you don't see propaganda as a type of persuasion dialogue, it may be less easy to convict it as being inherently negative or critically defective in nature.

If the goal of propaganda is to get the respondent to act in a certain way, then ignoring evidence on whether certain propositions are true,. or are relevant to accepting them as true, is not necessarily a deviation from or a subverting of the goal of the dialogue. Defining propaganda as a kind of action-getting dialogue, as opposed to a persuasion type of dialogue, it is harder to condemn propaganda as being inherently negative in nature. Its perceived indifference to the truth, as indicated by a failure to collect more information before committing to action, may no longer necessarily be a failure, or critical defect of propaganda that makes it inherently bad or deceptive. It could be that propaganda seems indifferent to truth because finding the truth of a matter is simply not its purpose. It shouldn't be ethically condemned for failing to pay attention to some aim that is not central to its purpose as a type of discourse anyway.

On the other hand, it is clear that persuasion is typically an important part of propaganda, and that much of the method of propaganda involves persuasion. And it does seem to be the case, descriptively speaking, that one of the main means used in propaganda to get an audience to act in a certain way is to use persuasive argumentation targeted to their commitments, to get them to accept or to adopt a favorable attitude. to certain propositions they may have doubts about. Propaganda is in this respect comparable to the discourse of commercial ads, of the kind used on television. The purpose of the ad seems to be to get the viewers to buy more product. If you talk to representatives of the advertising firms that make these ads, and suggest to them that the ads should use rational persuasion to convince the viewers that the product is good, or is better than those of the competition, they will dismiss this account of the purpose of commercial advertisements as both naive and too narrow. Sometimes the ads are evidently designed to rationally convince the potential buyer that the product has certain good or useful features, or is a good buy. But more often the strategy of the ad is simply to draw attention to the brand, or to generate a

favorable ambiance associated with the brand, by using visual images to arouse emotions.

Similarly, the goal of propaganda is basically to get compliance for action, or action itself, and surely the success or failure of the propaganda ought to be judged by this criterion. Persuasion by logical reasoning designed to rationally convince the audience is not necessarily involved although it could be used in some cases-even though persuasion of a sort is involved as part of the *modus operandi.* In section nine, the idea of a dialectical shift is introduced, where a sequence of argumentation starts out as being part of one type of dialogue, and then changes to being part of a different type of dialogue. The argument used for one purpose, initially, may have to be judged by a different standard when a dialectical shift has taken place.

Propaganda then is a mixed type of dialogue that does not fit any of the six normative models of dialogue exactly, but seems to be a distinctively different type of discourse altogether, even though it can directly involve some elements of at least five of the six types of dialogue. Propaganda is best seen as a type of goal-directed discourse in its own right that has ten essential, identifying characteristics. As such, it can function in its own right as a normative structure in which arguments can be evaluated as used correctly or incorrectly (provided the other normative models of dialogue are also used) in a given case. Like deliberation dialogue, it is directed towards recommending a course of action, like persuasion dialogue, it works by using the commitments of the audience to gain their acceptance for a standpoint, and like eristic dialogue, it is aggressively partisan and emotional.

VI. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPAGANDA

Below, ten essential characteristics of propaganda as a type of discourse are set out, and there follows a discussion of some other incidental characteristics.

1. Dialogue Structure. Propaganda has the form of a dialogue (communicative discourse) between two participants. The one party, who can also be a- group, or a person representing a group, is called the *proponent,* and is the speaker, or sender of the message. The other party, called the *respondent,* and who is generally a mass audience of people, is the receiver of the message. Typically, the proponent is the active participant while the respondent is a passive receiver of the message sent out by the proponent. But this asymmetrical relationship is not characteristic of all cases of propaganda. In some instances, the respondent group do engage in a bilateral dialogue exchange by responding positively or negatively to the proponent's message, or even

by questioning or criticizing it-information that the proponent can use as feedback to craft her message more persuasively. Also, propaganda has a dialogue structure in that the argumentation of the proponent is based on (what she takes to be) the commitments of the respondent, in order to alter the convictions or actions of the proponent in a particular direction or towards a particular view which is different from the one the respondent already has.

2. Message Content. The content of the proponent's message is an argument, expressed in a verbal discourse and/or in other means of altering convictions that are not verbal in nature. The message can be purely verbal, as in a speech, but it can also be pictorial. Or it could be a mixture of these, as in the case of a news reporter commenting on videotaped clips. Propaganda frequently involves props like drums and flags, and it may also use music or drama, or be conveyed in a dramatic format like a film or a novel. In some cases, propaganda can be conveyed by coins, statues, or even by costumes and settings that convey the values of a particular life style or social class.

3. Goal-Directed Structure. Propaganda is essentially goal-directed as a type of dialogue exchange. The proponent's goal is to get the respondent to carry out a particular action or to support a particular policy for action. This purposive aspect of propaganda is so marked that it is frequently described as "manipulative" in nature. As well as there being a goal for the proponent, against which the success or failure of the proponent's argumentation can be evaluated, there is also a general goal for propaganda as an institutionally recognizable type of dialogue. The general purpose is to support the existence, aims and interests of a particular regime, organization, viewpoint or interest group. Frequently, the purpose of propaganda is to support the interests of a country, or of a political party, government or regime that directs the affairs of the country. But other groups or individuals, like religious groups, political action groups, advertisers, and so forth, can also engage in propaganda.

4. Involvement of Social Groups. Propaganda is not just any argumentation meant to persuade or to get action. The respondent is a mass audience (Jowett and O'Donnell, 1986, p. 21). And while the message may be delivered by an individual speaker, she always represents some broader agency or organized group who have interests or views that bind them together.

5. Indifference to Logical Reasoning. The goal of,propaganda is to move a mass audience in a certain direction, and its success or failure as argumentation used in a context of discourse should be judged in relation to how well (or badly) it performs in fulfilling this purpose. If methods of logical reasoning are useful for this purpose, then they

should be used in propaganda, otherwise not. Thus propaganda is not, as a structure of discourse, either for or against using logical reasoning and relevant evidence. If appeals to emotion, of a kind that would be judged dubious or even fallacious by logical standards of good reasoning, work better than rational evidence to achieve the goal of argumentation used in propaganda, then such appeals are appropriate and should (normatively speaking) be used by good propaganda.

6. One-Sided Argumentation. Propaganda is a kind of advocacy dialogue that uses partisan argumentation to advocate one side of an issue, and to present the arguments in favor of that side as strongly as possible. Propaganda is not an attempt to rationally deliberate on the wisdom or prudence of a course of action by looking at all the alternatives and weighing them judiciously or fairly. Neither is it an attempt to critically discuss an issue by openly considering all the arguments on both sides. Instead, it is inherently one sided as a type of discourse in which argumentation is used.

7. Involvement of Persuasion Dialogue. The primary goal of propaganda is to get an audience to support the aims, interests and policies of a particular group, by securing the compliance of the audience with the actions being contemplated, undertaken, or advocated by the group. The goal of the propagandist then is not just to persuade or "re-educate" the audience to change their beliefs, but also to gain their commitment to the extent that they will act on the basis of the new viewpoint they have come to accept, or to take part in or support actions in line with or justified by this viewpoint. So persuasion is involved, but more than just a change of the beliefs of the audience is the speaker's goal in propaganda. The proponent's fundamental goal in propaganda is to move the masses to action (to go to war, to buy a product, etc.) or to comply with action, or to accept, and not oppose a certain line of action. But persuasion is involved in a secondary but essential way, because the means used to get action, or support for action, is that of persuading the audience to become committed to a particular point of view they did not accept (or did not fully embrace) before.

8. Justijrred by Results. Because the central purpose of propaganda is to get action, propaganda as a socially organized activity is justified by the results it is supposed to achieve (both normatively and, in fact, by its defenders, in particular instances). In fact, propaganda is justified by the supposed value of bringing about a particular outcome said to be necessary for a good end, like public safety, or the saving of human lives in war. Propaganda is generally justified by citing a danger to the group, and then stressing that the adoption of a particular point of view is needed to combat or guard against that danger. Such a justification balances the costs of engaging in one-sided or even deceptive argumentation against the danger

or loss of life that might result from an open-minded rational discussion that might turn up good arguments for the other side. The justification of propaganda is, in this respect, similar to the justification of lying in ethics, illustrated by case 6 below. Not only is propaganda justified, as a matter of fact, in terms of its consequences, by those who try to justify or excuse its use, but also, from a normative point of view, propaganda ought to be justified by such a use of argumentation from consequences, for its goal is to lead to actions. The reader needs to be warned here, however. This form of justification is not the extreme form of consequentialism it may appear to be, as will be shown in section nine, when the idea of a dialectical shift is introduced.

9. Emotive Language and Persuasive Definitions. An essential part of all propaganda is the use of emotively charged words and phrases that make the advocated viewpoint take on a highly positive coloration, and any opposed viewpoint take on a highly negative coloration. For example, supporters of the advocated view may be called "freedom fighters" which supporters of the opposed viewpoint are designated as "terrorists." A whole new vocabulary may be invented, and all kinds of pejorative words and phrases may be used to denote the opposed viewpoint. Another characteristic of propaganda is the use of persuasive definitions, as defined by the theory of evaluative meaning of Stevenson (1944). According to Stevenson's theory, the purpose of a persuasive definition is to engender a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards something by changing the descriptive meaning of the word for that thing while leaving the evaluative meaning the same. Hurley (1994, p. 92) offers some illustrative examples:

> *Case 1:* "Abortion" means the ruthless murdering of innocent human beings.
>
> "Abortion" means a safe and established surgical procedure whereby a women is relieved of an unwanted burden.
>
> *Case 2:* "Liberal" means a drippy-eyed do-gooder obsessed with giving away other people's money.
>
> "Liberal" means a genuine humanitarian committed to the goals of adequate housing and health care and of equal opportunity for all of our citizens.

Persuasive definitions tend to be deceptive as used in argumentation (and objects of suspicion, from a logical point of view) because, as Hurley (p. 92) points out, they conceal the approving or condemning of something by masquerading as an honest assignment of meaning to a word.

10. Eristic Aspect. Propaganda has a structure of argumentation like that of the quarrel, or eristic type of dialogue. It postulates a dichotomy

for the audience: "We are the good guys. If you are not for us, you must be against us. All those opposed to our view are the bad guys." Often the words 'fight' or 'struggle' are used in propaganda. The implication is that any means required to fight against the "evil" or danger posed by the "enemy" is justified. Propaganda is most visible and has been most studied as used in war. In time of war, the participants become caught up in an emotional attitude of hate and bitterness that is not conducive to what Thouless (1942) calls "calm thinking" of the kind that dispassionately weighs up the evidence on both sides of an issue. However, it is not just in time of war that propaganda is used. Even when used outside war, propaganda often paints the picture of an emergency or danger_ of a kind that provokes fear and panic. The circumstances are portrayed as like that of a war, where a "fight" is needed to combat the danger facing the group.

Another characteristic of propaganda (Marlin, 1989, p. 46) IS the phenomenon of *orchestration,* meaning that it manipulates different media over time to produce a cumulative message. Other characteristics associated with propaganda cited by Marlin (p. 46) are misuse of statistics, manipulation of opinion polls, photomontage techniques and the use of psychological techniques of persuasion. Propaganda is known to use psychologically effective techniques like visual imagery, repetition, massed crowds, symbols of group identification, and so forth, to create a climate of acceptance for its message. Propaganda is also known to often use suggestion, in place of, or to supplement, explicitly verbalized arguments for a conclusion (Thouless, 1942, p. 65).

These additional characteristics are not essential to propaganda, but only typical of it, whereas the first ten characteristics listed above are all essential for a text of discourse in a given case to qualify as propaganda. This definition is not meant to be purely stipulative in nature, but is meant to represent, within the limits of any abstract philosophical theory, the conventionally accepted view of propaganda as a familiar kind of discourse. But primarily it is meant to be a normative model of a type of conversational discourse that can be used in a helpful way to identify, analyze and evaluate argumentation used in particular cases in a given text of discourse.

VII. IS PROPAGANDA NECESSARILY DISHONEST OR IRRATIONAL?

One approach has been to capture the negative connotations of the word 'propaganda' by defining it as a type of discourse that expressly has the purpose of going against or circumventing critical thinking of the kind used in a rational discussion of an issue, based on good evidence and information. This type of definition makes propaganda

inherently negative, or illogical and/or deceptive in nature, on the grounds that it is opposed to rational discussion and logical evaluation of arguments. The definition given by Marlin (1989, p. 50) is of this kind:

> PROPAGANDA = (def.) The organized attempt through communication to affect belief or action or inculcate attitudes in a large audience in ways that circumvent or suppress an individual's adequately informed, rational, reflective judgment.

This definition is very helpful in capturing several important features of propaganda, but in light of the approach proposed here, it goes questionably far in defining propaganda as inherently negative on grounds of its being opposed to informed, rational argument and discussion. According to Marlin's definition, the purpose of propaganda includes the circumvention or suppression of informed, rational and reflective judgment. But there are grounds for questioning such a negative way of defining 'propaganda.' According to the definition of Jowett and O'Donnell (1986, p. 16), "Propaganda is the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist." This definition appears to make propaganda neutral-it could be good or bad, depending on the goal of the propagandist. But even this neutral definition has a negative connotation, because it suggests that the communication is a manipulative act on the part of the proponent, who does what she does for her own purpose, whereas the respondent (the audience) does not have a purpose, or active role in the exchange. Jowett and O'Donnell reveal this aspect when they write (p. 16), "responses to propaganda are manipulated" to keep the audience "in a contained area."

Thouless (1942, p. 71) has discussed the issue of whether the word `propaganda' should be defined in a negative way that makes it contrary to the aims of logical thinking or not. He argued (p. 71) that if `propaganda' is used to mean any attempt to influence attitudes or opinions of a group, it does not follow that propaganda is necessarily dishonest or irrational. Thouless (p. 71), to support this point, cites a case where a true statement is made as a propaganda claim.

> Case 3: Men's opinions may be changed by telling them a perfectly. true fact that was previously unknown to them. Thus a statement that British fighting aeroplanes have shot down thirteen German bombers with a loss of seven to themselves may serve the ends of propaganda by creating confidence on our side and alarm and despondency in the enemy (if he hears it). Yet it may be perfectly true. This is one honest and reasonable way in which propaganda may influence opinion; by giving new and true information.

In this kind of case, propaganda presents a statement that is both true, and is informative to the audience. In such a case, the propaganda is not dishonest, deceptive, or against the aims of rational discussion, because informing the audience of a true statement has propaganda value. Case 3 provides a counter-example to the thesis that propaganda should be defined as inherently negative, in the sense of always being against informed, rational judgment, or of always consisting of lies or deceptions.

However, there is another sense in which propaganda does seem to be against informed, rational, and reflective thinking of the kind characteristic of a critical discussion that takes into account all the relevant information on an issue. Propaganda selects out the facts it presents to an audience, and although it may present some true statements, it may ignore other true and relevant statements that lack propaganda value, even though they are relevant, in a logical sense.

As Thouless (1942, p. 71) put it, "The difficulty is that not all truth has propaganda value." He uses the following case (p. 71) to illustrate the point.

> Case 4: Let us suppose that there were two air battles in one of which the enemy losses were heavy and our own were light, while in the other battle our own losses were heavy and the enemy's were light. If our own news service chose to tell us only about the first battle while the enemy news service only reported the second, there would be a certain (not very important) sense in which both sides were telling the truth. Neither side would be telling the whole truth, and it would no longer be honest propaganda. This is a very simple example of what is meant by "selection" of the facts, perhaps the commonest of all the devices used by propaganda which is intended to mislead.

In this case, reporting the outcome of the one battle has propaganda value to one side, but not to the other. Whereas reporting the outcome of the other battle has value only to the other side. Thus both sides are telling the truth in their propaganda reports. The fault lies in the selectivity-both sides are giving a biased or one-sided account.

In Case 4, what makes the propaganda at odds with a balanced critical discussion, or a presenting of information that "tells the whole truth," is the selectivity type of bias evident in the discourse. It is not that the propaganda lied, or was deceptive in reporting what was not true. The problem, from a point of view of informed and rational thinking, was that the propaganda showed evidence of a bias, by ignoring those facts that had no propaganda value, or would even have had propaganda disvalue. And this aspect does seem to imply that propaganda is against the aims of a rational discussion based on an informed assessment of the facts. The, conclusion implied is that propaganda is

necessarily irrational or dishonest in the sense of being opposed to the critical and informed rational discussion of an issue.

But now the question is raised whether all bias is necessarily bad bias, in the sense of being bias that is dishonest or contrary to the aims of logic and reasoned discussion and argumentation. Blair (1977) has argued that not all bias is of the kind that could be called "bad bias," and that in many cases, bias is normal partisanship or advocacy, of the kind that is expected in a certain type of case. Walton (1992) defines dialectical bias in-argumentation as one-sidedness of an argument. Such one-sidedness, exemplified in arguing to support one's own point of view in a critical discussion, is normally expected in that type of dialogue, is required for the dialogue to be successful, and is not a sound basis (by itself) for condemning the given argument, used in a particular case in that context, as logically defective or fallacious. Where bias does become what could be called bad bias, from a logical point of view, it occurs in the kind of case where the argumentation is supposed to be balanced, in the sense of considering the evidence on both sides of an issue, but where the argumentation is only one-sided. It is in just this kind of case that fallacies of relevance tend to occur, i.e., cases where an argument is supposed to be part of a balanced type of dialogue like a critical discussion, but is really being advanced in eristic fashion. In such a case, the problem is that the argumentation is not supposed to be exclusively one-sided. Such an argument is appropriate and useful as part of a quarrel, but it is not a productive way of taking part in a critical discussion, where openness to both sides is essential.

It is in just this kind of case where a dialectical shift has occurred of the kind that makes an argument appear (psychologically) to be relevant when it (logically) is not. And this explanation of fallacies of relevance pinpoints exactly the problem of evaluating arguments used in propaganda. If a discourse is supposed to be propaganda, and if the audience is aware that the discourse is of this type, then no deception or irrelevance need be involved if the speaker uses arguments that appeal to the commitments and enthusiasms of the people by using emotional language slanted to one side of a cause, or even persuasive definitions that involve emotive connotations of words and phrases. However, if such a discourse purports to be a critical discussion, a rational deliberation on the issue, or some other type of dialogue requiring standards of argumentation, but uses emotional mass appeals that are inappropriate, or non-contributing to the goals of that type of dialogue, then the argumentation actually used could be correctly judged to be irrelevant (dialectically irrelevant to the goals of the dialogue that the

participants are supposed to be engaged in). Therefore, it could reasonably be judged to be fallacious on that basis.

It follows then that propaganda is not in itself irrational or deceptive, in the sense that arguments in it should always be judged as critically defective, not based on good evidence, fallacious, or whatever. Propaganda is a type of discourse in which arguments can be justifiably dismissed as logically defective on grounds *of* irrelevance where there has been an illicit dialectical shift from some other type of dialogue that is supposed to represent a balanced account of two sides of an issue, to a purely one-sided attempt to engage in a kind of mass appeal to emotion to push in a one-sided way to gain the commitment of an audience to accepting a particular conclusion.

According to our consideration of propaganda so far then, there are not sufficient. grounds for concluding that propaganda is inherently irrational or deceptive as a type of discourse. But one key factor remains to be carefully considered.

VIII. OPENNESS TO CONTRARY EVIDENCE

The eristic and one-sided characteristics of the argumentation used in propaganda raise questions about the closed nature of propaganda as a type of discourse. As noted in describing the eristic characteristic of propaganda, a dichotomization typically occurs, and the words 'fight' and 'struggle' are often used. One of the properties of the quarrel as a type of dialogue is that the one side being advocated is never really open to defeat.[8] Any argument that presents good evidence for the other side will be deflected by any means possible, instead of admitting that it makes a good point. Propaganda also has a biased manner of treating the evidence, indicating a lack of openness to arguments on both sides of an issue. Thus the question is raised whether propaganda is essentially a closed type of discourse that never judges an argument on the basis of the evidence that is brought forward to support it.

To begin with, it is evident from instances of propaganda that it does have a way of interpreting a situation in a way that conforms to the viewpoint being advocated. A good case in point was found by Thouless (1942,,pp. 72-73) in an article, "-Germany and the Law at Sea," in the *Sunday Times* of December 24, 1939.

> Case 5: The writer described how a British fishing trawler was sunk by a German submarine; the boats were stated to have been shelled while they were being lowered, the submarine afterwards going away. Here we have a typical atrocity story. If the shelling

> of the boats was deliberate and not accidental and if the submarine went away intending to leave those who were in the water to drown, this can properly be condemned as wicked and cruel behavior. The article also reported, however, that the submarine came back, picked up survivors out of the water, took off their wet clothing, and gave them hot drinks and blankets. That surely would seem to an impartial observer to be a good and kind action. It might, in fact, arouse some doubt as to whether the earlier atrocity story was not perhaps based on inaccurate observation. The matter is not, however, so simple to the propagandist. The writer of the article says: "This sort of thing makes it clear that the German submarine commanders, while acting with true German ruthlessness, are also acting in accordance with a carefully prepared plan designed to impress upon the world that Germany is, in fact, employing chivalrous and human methods despite the well-established and widely known facts to the direct contrary." So it appears that if the Germans are ruthless to their enemies, they are showing their ruthlessness; if they are kind to their enemies they are carrying out a plan to conceal their ruthlessness.

Thouless (p. 73) describes the argumentation in this case as similar to that used by the handwriting expert in the Dreyfus trial, where Alfred Dreyfus was accused of giving military secrets to his country's enemies. When the handwriting on the document in evidence resembled that of Dreyfus, this was taken as proof that he wrote the document. But when other aspects of the handwriting on the document differed from that of Dreyfus, the differences were taken to prove that he had disguised his handwriting. So it was a case of "Heads I win, tails you lose." This kind of argument represents a persistent twisting of the evidence so that it always comes out only one way.

Case 5 shows how propaganda has a tendency to interpret a situation in such a way that the evidence always supports the advocated viewpoint and goes against the opposed viewpoint. What seems like it should be exactly the right sort of empirical evidence to support the other side is somehow cleverly interpreted in a way that it comes out looking like positive evidence supporting the advocated view instead. This twisting of evidence phenomenon in cases of propaganda raises questions about the verifiability and falsifiability of arguments used in propaganda generally. It suggests that argumentation used in propaganda is never really open to refutation, even by clearly opposed evidence. What one may conclude is that propaganda is an inherently closed type of dialogue, like eristic dialogue, that never really admits defeat, even when good evidence supporting the opposed view has been presented.

What reinforces this conclusion is that the examples of propaganda that are often cited, like Nazi propaganda, and religious propaganda of certain kinds, do represent a kind of argumentation that could be

called fanatical, in the sense that it represents an ideological view of things that is not really open to refutation by means of rational arguments citing factual or verifiable evidence. These fanatical kinds of discourse always twist the evidence to support the one side exclusively, exhibiting a closed kind of attitude that has been described in Walton (1992) as hardened bias. The bias is not only a one-sided argumentation, but a pattern of argument that is inevitably one-sided, relentlessly so, in a predictable way.

But is propaganda inevitably one-sided, exhibiting this pattern of hardened bias as a type of discourse? It seems that it is not. For often propaganda is most effective when it pretends to be balanced, to admit contrary evidence, and to present true statements in a reporting format. To make such a pretense effectively for an audience, it has to admit some true statements and to acknowledge some evidence that does not support the point of view being advocated.

Hence this twisting of evidence, while it is a typical feature of propaganda is not so constant that it makes propaganda exhibit the hardened form of bias as an essential characteristic. Propaganda has a tendency to interpret evidence in such a way that it supports the advocated viewpoint, but it also often makes a pretense of being impartial which requires an admitting of some evidence that may support the opposed viewpoint.

IX. DECEPTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE IN PROPAGANDA

Bernays (1923, p. 212) distinguishes between education and propaganda by defining the former as "the advocacy of what we believe" and the latter as "the advocacy of what we do not believe." This definition makes propaganda a species of lying, that is, of advocating as true something one does not believe is true. Certainly it makes propaganda deceptive in a way that makes it an insincere or dishonest kind of advocacy. But is propaganda necessarily insincere or deceptive in this way? It would seem not; for it is possible to put forward propaganda for a cause the propagandist believes in, and not all propaganda consists of saying what is false, or what is known or believed to be false.

What then does the deceptiveness of propaganda consist in? The deceptiveness of propaganda is not just due to the conveying of statements that are known or believed to be false, which is really more of an accidental feature of it. The deceptiveness is due to the format within which propaganda is typically presented. For example, the news reports in Nazi Germany were essentially propagandistic in nature because they mixed factual reporting in with the lies and distortions to enhance the credibility of the message reported. The audience may

well have been aware that what was presented to them was propaganda-that is, biased advocacy of a cause, but its presentation in the news format set in place an expectation that the function of the discourse was to report the news. Thus the deception, the clever illusion that is at the basis of propaganda as an effective kind of advocacy, is the expectation of the audience concerning the type of discourse that is supposedly being engaged in. Because it is placed within a format, like news reporting, that normally (at least supposedly) has a balanced way of reporting facts, propaganda is not likely to be so easily dismissed as simple partisanship and promotion deliberately used to get compliance to action by appealing to emotions and working on the audience psychologically.

So the explanation of the deceptiveness of propaganda that makes it a kind of discourse that can be used effectively for persuasion to a course of action is the *dialectical shift,* or change from one type of dialogue to another. Expectations are put in place for the audience that one particular type of dialogue is being engaged in, but the reality is that underneath this surface appearance, really a quite different sort of dialogue is being engaged in (unilaterally, by the one-side, and generally without the other side knowing about the real purpose of the discourse).

It is exactly this kind of dialectical shift from one type of dialogue to another that underlies the evaluation of the logic textbooks of the *argumentum ad populum* as a fallacy of relevance. In itself, there is noting logically fallacious about appealing to enthusiasms of a crowd or to popular beliefs, if you are trying to get a mass audience to accept a conclusion they did not accept before, or to commit to a policy of action. But such an argument would be irrelevant, and could be fallacious on such grounds, because the speaker was supposed to be engaged in convincing the audience by rational arguments that looked at all the available evidence on both sides in a calm and dispassionate way. So the question of relevance depends on an assessment, in a given case, of what the speaker was supposed,to be doing in the given situation. The question is one of what type of dialogue she was supposed to be engaged in (as known or reasonably presumed in a given case).

The next question is whether this kind of deceptiveness, which is associated with the failure *of dialectical relevance,* or relevance of use of arguments in a purposive context of dialogue, is essential to propaganda. Does it have to be present for a given instance of discourse to qualify as propaganda? The answer is that it does not.

If it is clear at the outset that the purpose of an advertisement is to sell a product, or that the purpose of a speech is to rouse crowd enthusiasm to support a cause, there need not be any deception to try to pretend to the audience that the discourse is supposed to be a critical

discussion of the issue, or a balanced deliberation on what could be the prudent course of action. Such an advertisement or speech could be described as propaganda, because it is based on an appeal to the people, and has all the other characteristics of propaganda, but the arguments` used in it could be dialectically relevant. In such a case then, an argument that appeals to the people to sell the product, or to get support for the cause, could be dialectically relevant within the discourse (in relation to the goals for this type of dialogue). There has been no dialectical shift, no failure of relevance, no deception, and no fallacy.

To judge the dialectical relevance of an argument used in a particular case; a critic has to look at the direction the argument is taking, to identify the goal of the type of dialogue the participants are supposed to be engaged in, and then ask whether the argument could (actually or potentially) be used to contribute to that goal. For example, if the discourse is supposed to be a critical discussion, an argument used in that discourse is dialectically relevant if it could be used to help resolve the conflict of opinions at issue in the discussion, by supporting (or refuting) the point of view on one side or the other of the conflict.

The question is thus raised-when is an argument dialectically relevant as used in propaganda (assuming there has been no dialectical shift from another type of discourse)? As expressed in the seventh characteristic of propaganda as a type of discourse, the goal of propaganda is to get an audience to support the aims, interests and policies of a particular group, by getting the audience to act in compliance with these aims and interests. The goal of propaganda, somewhat like that of negotiation dialogue, is to try to get the audience or respondent to serve the interests of the person or group who is arguing. Any argument used in propagandistic discourse to contribute to the goal is dialectically relevant. Thus the relevance involved in propaganda as a type of discourse is an instrumental kind. To say that an argument is relevant in this sense is not to commend it very highly from a logical point of view (if at all) as a rational argument that furnishes evidence supporting the conclusion that a proposition is true or false, or that a course of action is a practically reasonable thing to do, or to assent to as wise policy.

X. EVALUATING PROPAGANDA

The ten characteristics set out in Section Six give a rational critic a means of identifying discourse as propaganda in a given case where a text of argumentative discourse has been presented. Of course, such an identification is bound to be subject to dispute, because arguers are often very much opposed to their discourse being labeled as propaganda,

and may have a lot to lose by such an identification. But the ten characteristics at least give relatively clear criteria that may be used to support such an identification. The second task is the analysis of argumentation in a context of use in propaganda, to try to find missing premises, required to support arguments. The third task is that of evaluating the argumentation. This task has proved the most controversial and confusing one to make sense of.

On the theory proposed above, propaganda is not necessarily against informed, rational, reflective judgment, or logical thinking on an issue, in the sense that its goal is opposed to these ways of thinking. Instead, its goal is to get the desired action by any persuasive means. If logical thinking and informed rational judgment work for that purpose, then propaganda can or will use these means. But if these means don't work, then propaganda will use other means that can or do work, including myths, stories, symbols, group loyalties, group-oriented appeal to the people, popular enthusiasms, visual imagery, and any techniques of persuasion that are psychologically effective. All these, ways of arguing can be dialectically relevant in propaganda, and therefore *ad populum* arguments or appeals to the people, the kind of arguments typically used in propaganda, should not be evaluated as irrelevant and fallacious *per se*.

Our attitudes towards propaganda are highly ambivalent. It is a much more common type of discourse than is generally recognized, no doubt partly because people are given to the verbal practice of describing only the opposed viewpoints as "propaganda," while refusing to admit that their own arguments could be so categorized. But it is a type of discourse that can be justified, or at least excused, on instrumental grounds, despite this aversive attitude.

Propaganda comes under the heading of what Garner (1993) calls "convenient fictions," or stories that are useful for getting people to do things, and in particular, for running a state or country. Such convenient fictions have been advocated and justified by philosophers- Garner (p. 89) cites Plato's advocacy of the "noble lie" the kind of convenient fiction in the form of a "caste-fixing myth" used by the rulers to convince the various classes, like the guardians, that their role is a noble one.

Convenient fictions are also used in Buddhist philosophy, in the tradition that when understanding is reached the Buddhist doctrine can be discarded as something only provisionally needed to get there. Justification of the use of convenient fictions is similar to the kind of justification cited for some instances of lying in moral philosophy. For example, Garner (1993, p. 91) cites the case in chapter three of

the *Lotus Sutra* where a father tells his children a lie in order to save their lives.

> Case 6: In chapter three of the *Lotus Sutra* a parable is offered to support the practice of using expedient devices. The parable, told by the Buddha to his disciple Sariputra, is about a wealthy lord who has placed his children in a huge but run-down house that catches fire. The children are occupied with their toys, to which, we are told, they are addicted. When the father cries to them about the fire, they pay no attention, so busy are they with their play. Finally the desperate father hits upon the expedient of telling them that just those toys they most love are outside the door waiting for them. This they hear and understand, and immediately scamper to their safety.

In this case, the father lied to save the lives of his children, and inclination is not to condemn the lie, at least as wholly wrong, in the dangerous circumstances. Instead we see it as an act that, while deceptive, was necessary to save lives, even at the expense of telling the truth. Hence it can be ethically justified.

Propaganda is not necessarily lying, as we have seen. But it is a use of argumentation that is not directed towards the truth of a matter. To justify its use, for example in time of war, the danger of putting forward balanced arguments that fairly and dispassionately consider all the evidence on both sides of a question is cited-and in particular, the loss of life that may result by giving information or -encouragement to the enemy. Propaganda is an instrumental type of discourse that is justified (appropriately) by the use of argumentation from consequences. Such arguments are not necessarily fallacious, but care is needed to watch for dialectical shifts in using them.

Propaganda, and the use of *argumentum ad populum* in appeals to crowd enthusiasms, is often condemned in the context of teaching courses on logic and critical thinking, but such condemnations (as noted in section three) tend to be more reflexive than thoughtful.

Propagandistic discourse sometimes takes the high ground of pretending to be a rational discussion of an issue, by portraying the opposition as being illogical, deceptive, or dishonest. But this is not an essential property of propaganda, even though it is a characteristic of the quarrel. Propaganda is not inherently deceptive or illogical, but once discourse has been identified as propaganda, it is wise to be on guard to realize that it is not a critical discussion or rational deliberation of the kind that openly examines arguments on both sides of an issue.

Thus a certain skepticism towards arguments used in propaganda is justifiable and prudent, from a logical point of view of critical thinking. As a normative framework of the use of argumentation of the kind

that is worthy of rational assent on the grounds that it provides evidence to support a view, propaganda is not much a friend of logic. It has a kind of dialectical relevance that represents only an instrumental use of argumentation, somewhat like that of negotiation dialogue or eristic dialogue.

The best critical attitude to take toward propaganda is not to dismiss every argument used in it as critically defective, or of no value as an argument, or even fallacious. For such an argument may be based on good evidence, and may be a form of reasoning that is rationally compelling (or it may not be). The best attitude to take is to recognize that the argumentation in this type of discourse as a whole is a biased kind of advocacy that is specifically designed to be persuasive to get action, and to push for the one side of an issue in as strongly partisan a manner as possible (or is useful for the purpose of getting a particular action). The best attitude to take is one of careful skepticism, but not one of routine or holistic dismissal with respect to the arguments in the discourse.

On the other hand, if the discourse is supposed to be that of a balanced critical discussion, or other type of dialogue that requires a balanced consideration of the arguments on both sides of the issue, then propaganda is an extremely inappropriate and inefficient method of argumentation to fulfill the goals of such a type of dialogue. If the propaganda pretends to be one of these other types of dialogue, but covertly and systematically takes the one-sided approach characteristic of propaganda (as defined above) as a type of discourse, then the argumentation should be evaluated as demonstrably irrelevant, on grounds of there being an illicit dialectical shift. The deceptive tactic used here is the device of the concealed shift from one type of dialogue to another, and this is in fact the very type of tactic so often (but not always) used by propaganda to-gain credibility. In some cases, the appeal to the people can be evaluated as a fallacious argument, but the evidence required to support the charge must be based on an assessment of the purpose of the discourse the argument is supposed to be part of, as compared to the way the argument has been put forward in the text of discourse of the case. This evidence can then be used to support (or refute) a charge of dialectical irrelevance in a given case.

So once propaganda is identified in a given case, that is not the end of the story. The job of evaluation of the argumentation (and especially the assessment of dialectical relevance) remains to be done.

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NOTES

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2. As shown in Section Three.

3. See Walton (1995).

4. See the account of this fallacy in Walton (1992).

5. It is a common feature of the standard treatment of certain types of arguments in logic textbooks that they are said to have been used by a bad person for some bad purpose, and then the student, or user of the textbook, is encouraged to conclude that (therefore) the argument is fallacious. See Hamblin (1970) and Walton (1995).

6. Say, in a copyright dispute about a brand name, where notions of popular acceptance can be relevant.

7. Rule 1 (p. 284) states that parties must not prevent each other from casting doubt on a standpoint. Rule 2 (p. 285) states that anyone who advances a standpoint is obliged to defend it if asked to do so. Rule 9 (p. 291) states that a failed defence of a standpoint must result in the withdrawal of that standpoint by the arguer who advanced it.

8. See Walton (1995, chapter 5).