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The word 'propaganda' arose from the name for a committee of cardinals called the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) formed in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV, but can be traced even earlier to a smaller propaganda commission of 1568 (Cunningham, 2002, 15). The term originally did not have the negative meaning it has now, and in the two world wars it appeared to have less negative meaning in Germany and Russia than in England and North America. According to Marlin (1989, p. 47), the use of the word 'propaganda' by the Allies characterized only the enemy opinion-forming activities as propaganda, and treated them as composed mostly of lies. These practices have now left the word with strongly negative connotations. From a point of view of ethics, the problem is to judge whether propaganda should be seen as an inherently bad thing that is deceptive, unethical, and against norms of reasoned discourse, or as sometimes a useful or necessary way of carrying out a good objective, like winning a just war (*see* MILITARY NECESSITY).

The problem with trying to define propaganda as a distinctive type of discourse is that widely varying definitions of it have been offered. There are well over a hundred such definitions or descriptions (Cunningham, 2002, 60), although it is not easy to determine in some instances which ones are meant to be definitions rather than merely descriptions. Most are because they are negative in wording, implying that propaganda is something bad. Marlin (2002, 18- 21) has given a list of eight negative definitions that have been proposed, three neutral ones and two favorable ones. In common speech in western democratic countries, propaganda is generally viewed as an inherently negative type of discourse that is manipulative (*see* MANIPULATION) in a way that opposes it to rational argumentation that fairly looks at the available evidence on both sides of an issue being discussed and that is open to correction by contrary evidence. Probably the feature most common to these definitions is that of deliberate manipulation of the beliefs of others (Cunningham, 2002, 63). Propaganda is defined by Marlin (2002, 22) as "the organized attempt through communication to affect belief or attitudes in a large audience in ways to circumvent or suppress an individual's adequately informed, rational, reflective judgment". This negative definition makes propaganda go against rational argumentation by trying to circumvent or suppress it. According to the definition given by Jowett and O'Donnell (1986, p. 16), propaganda does not sound quite so bad, but still makes it appear to be highly manipulative in nature: "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". Thouless (1942, p. 71), however, argued that if 'propaganda' is simply used to mean any attempt to influence attitudes or opinions of a group, it does not follow that propaganda is necessarily dishonest or contrary to rational argumentation. Trying to persuade a group to accept a claim or carry out an action by offering arguments, should not be condemned as inherently illogical, improper or deceptive. Propaganda is seen as negative when contrasted with other goal-directed types of discourse, like educational discourse, or discourse where the goal is to prove something by means of evidence, or critical discussion where the goal is to look at the evidence on both sides of an

issue. To define it properly, we have to determine what its goal should be taken to be, and to study the methods that are commonly and most effectively used to carry out or undermine this goal.

Traditional approaches to propaganda that analyzed it in terms of logical fallacies, interpreting it as a species of defective reasoning, are not regarded as entirely successful (Cunningham, 2002, 108). However, new resources are provided by research in argumentation theory that identifies fallacies not only with errors of logical reasoning, but also with argument use in a communicative framework like persuasion dialogue, where one party uses deceptive tactics to try to unfairly get the best of a speech partner or audience (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1992; Walton, 1995). Henderson (1943) argued that method, as opposed to content, must be the key factor that differentiates propaganda from non-propaganda. Taking this approach, propaganda can be associated with certain forms of argument that can be reasonable in some instances, but that in the past have been associated with deceptive uses of argument called fallacies. *Argumentum ad hominem* is the use of personal attack to try to discredit the ethical character of the other party with whom one is engaged in discussion, in order to try to refute that party's argument. The so-called *ad baculum* argument, or appeal to force, is used to threaten the other party with negative consequences if he or she does not accept one's claim. Closely related to it is the fear appeal type of argument, in which an arguer tries to get his co-discussant to accept his claim or take a course of action he advocates by painting a picture of some fearful outcome that is likely to come about if the co-discussant fails to comply. Appeal to pity (*argumentum ad misericordiam*) is another form of argument often used in propaganda. For example, the execution of British nurse Edith Cavell by German forces in 1915 was a main theme of anti-German propaganda used by the Allies in World War I. Appeal to popular opinion (*argumentum ad populum*) is a form of argument that appeals to generally accepted opinions or commonly accepted ways of doing things as reasons for accepting a conclusion. Use of positively or negatively loaded emotive language is very commonly used in propagandistic discourse. In using a straw man argument, one party in a discussion misrepresents his opponent's position, then uses this distorted version of it to attack the opponent's argument. None of these forms of argument is inherently unreasonable in itself when attempting to use reasoning to persuade another party to carry out an action or accept one's view of the matter being discussed. However, they are also traditionally known as fallacies because they are defeasible types of arguments that hold only tentatively and need to be seen as subject to potential defeat when new information comes into a discussion. They can also be powerful arguments as tactics of deception to get the best of the speech partner unfairly when used in the right circumstances. Therefore their association with argumentation used in propaganda raises questions about whether propaganda is somehow contrary to logical reasoning. To study such tactics of deception, it is necessary to make assumptions about the communicative context in which an argument is used for some purpose.

If propaganda is defined in this way, as a species of discourse that has a distinctive method, it should be modeled in modern argumentation theory in relation to some known type of dialogue that has a distinctive goal and has forms of argumentation that are implemented to attempt to carry out this goal (see DISCOURSE ETHICS). The most obvious and probably also the

best way to classify it along these lines is as a type of persuasion dialogue (Walton, 2007, 11). In one type of persuasion dialogue, called a dispute, one part has a thesis to be proved, and the other party has an opposite thesis to be proved. In a dissent, one party doubts that the thesis of the other is true, and the first party offers arguments designed to remove the other's doubt. Thus every persuasion dialogue, whether dispute or dissent, is characterized by an opposition between two parties, meaning that there is a particular proposition that one accepts and the other does not. Such opposition can represent a disagreement on whether some proposition is true or not, or a disagreement about whether some action, or kind of action, is a good policy or not. The goal of propaganda is to use argumentation to gain the commitment of the audience. This can take the form of an attempt to get the audience to come to believe some proposition it was formerly doubtful about or disagreed with. But it more typically takes the form of an attempt to get the audience to take part in or support an action, like buying a product, enlisting in the armed forces, or taking part in a proposed revolution. The speaker's goal in such propaganda is to move a mass group to action by persuasion, and to get the group to accept this line of action and not oppose it.

As suggested above, there is nothing inherently illogical or wrong about trying to get an audience to accept your claim by persuading them with arguments. There is an element of advocacy in all persuasion dialogue because each side is trying to persuade the other to except its claim. Thus if we see propaganda as a type of persuasion dialogue, it follows that there is nothing inherently illogical or wrong about propaganda. The qualification needs to be added, however, that propaganda is normally a one-sided type of discourse (*see* IMPARTIALITY) in which the goal of the speaker is to get action or change belief through persuasion while the audience is passive, and normally simply hears or sees the persuasive message without engaging in a debate with the speaker. There is a danger in this situation, because there tends to be an indifference to the use of logical reasoning in propaganda. The propagandist needs to use logical reasoning where that works, but needs to avoid logical reasoning if other methods of persuasion will work better. Propaganda is a kind of advocacy dialogue that mixes persuasion dialogue with partisan argumentation that is different from rationally deliberating on the prudence of a course of action by looking at the alternatives in a balanced manner. To gain its end propaganda may present factual information, but tends to only tell one side of the story, and even use one-sided and fallacious argumentation to gain its end, if it seems possible to get away with these tactics.

What about the audience? Is it merely a passive receiver of arguments, or can it take a more active role in the argumentation? The answer is that the audience can take an active role by identifying the implicit assumptions in the discourse presented to them, asking critical questions, asking about factual matters that have been overlooked, and even by carefully diagnosing fallacies that the arguments in the discourse may have committed. Persuasion dialogue of the critical discussion type has normative rules (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1992, 208-209), like the rule that require that a party must not commit the straw man fallacy by attacking the other party's argument claiming it is based on a position that the other party did not commit to. Although the audience may not be able to verbally interact with the

propagandist, or prudently attack her arguments in public, they may still have the freedom to think for themselves, and to critically weigh the argumentation on both sides of the issue.

In short, while propaganda is not altogether negative as a type of discourse, it can especially have negative consequences if the audience to whom it is directed lacks the critical thinking skills to ask the right questions and probe into the weak points in its argumentation. Because of its one-sided nature as a practical political tool to change belief and move a mass audience to action, it is a type of discourse we are suspicious about and tend to see as negative, with a good deal of justification. That is how we think of it now, but in times of national crisis, like a world war that threatens our existence, we tend to see it politically in a more positive light as a useful and necessary tool that can save lives. So there will always be some ambivalence about it from an ethical point of view.

D. Walton

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