

# **Government Propaganda and Autonomy**

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“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”

## **Abstract**

This thesis analyzes the nexus between propaganda and personal autonomy. There are two important questions that this thesis will address: First, does propaganda infringe individuals' autonomy? Secondly, can a state be justified in trading off its citizen's autonomy for a greater good? I argue that propaganda uses techniques that diminish critical thinking and independent reasoning. Those techniques have the power to control the belief, attitude, and perception of the audiences. They manipulate audience's ways of thinking towards the intended objectives of the propagandists, and they make the targets do things for the reasons that the propagandist wants them to do. I argue that those techniques treat the audiences as a mere means to the ultimate objective of the propagandists and consequently, infringes personal autonomy – which I consider as a fundamental element of a human being in order to live a worthy life. That makes propaganda a bad thing to have. However, I also argue that there are conditions that make propaganda survive normative questions – states can be justified for employing propaganda where propaganda happened to be the only or the better option.

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# Introduction

Propaganda reflects itself in most aspects of our life: political, social, cultural and economic, etc. When it comes to the academic area propaganda is also a very contested concept. Scholars debate over its meaning and what it constitutes. There are over hundred definitions yet, none of them are comprehensive enough to incorporate all revolving issues. Besides the problem of definition, the normative question raised by practitioners and scholars have made the study of propaganda attractive. Some scholars consider propaganda as inherently unethical<sup>1</sup> while others propose examining propaganda as a neutral tool.<sup>2</sup> Both sides have come up with their meaning, but none of them overcome the problem.

This study starts by examining definitions from both sides and then characterizes propaganda, instead of pursuing to come up with one explanation. By analyzing the definitions from both sides and how propaganda has been working on the ground, I believe that it is possible to characterize propaganda in its broadest sense. Characterization will fill the gap where either definition falls short. The characterization will give us a comprehensive picture of what propaganda looks like without entirely rejecting the competitive approaches. Characterizing propaganda is more about the description of how it functions and what it constitutes. That will pave us the way to the main objective of the thesis. Since the primary goal of this thesis is to analyze how propaganda infringes personal autonomy, the characterization will help us analyze the subject by looking into how it operates on the ground beyond theory.

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<sup>1</sup> Cunningham 2002

<sup>2</sup> Ellul 1981

Propaganda as communication discourse uses mind altering techniques to adjust one's attitudes, beliefs, and to serve the interest of the propagandists. It manipulates one's cognition and shape beliefs and attitudes towards the intended objectives of the propagandists. It makes one do things for the reasons that the propagandists want to achieve. That practice trespasses our thinking capacities and hence, autonomy.

Autonomy is a fundamental condition to live a meaningful life as an individual. This also prompts one to raise some descriptive and normative questions against the practice of propaganda. What are the characteristics of propaganda? Why do we need personal autonomy? How does propaganda infringe personal autonomy? Is propaganda bad/good? Is infringing someone's autonomy unethical? Why or why not? Can a government trade-off citizen's autonomy for something better? These are the main questions that will be discussed in this paper.

I will argue that propaganda infringes personal autonomy because of the techniques it employs. Those techniques that are used by propagandists cripple the important conditions of autonomy: they weaken one's thinking abilities, and they treat one a means towards achieving the propagandists' goal. However, there might be circumstances that justify the infringement of personal autonomy using propaganda, and these conditions will be discussed.

In the first chapter, I will look into the concept of propaganda. The first part will discuss the problem of definition. I will try to analyze some definitions from both categories, and I will argue that both are insufficient to show us the comprehensive picture of what propaganda is. In the second part, I will suggest characterization as the best approach to analyze propaganda without rejecting or endorsing either of the approaches. By examining some definitions and observing of the practice of propaganda on the ground. I will try to list some common characteristics of propaganda.

In the second chapter, I will discuss the concept and values of autonomy. Like propaganda autonomy is also a very broad concept. I will show the difference between autonomy and liberty. Then I will look into the two conceptions of autonomy - substantive and procedural conceptions. And I will endorse the procedural conception of autonomy as the one that I use though out my thesis. In the last part of the chapter, I will argue for the importance of personal autonomy and address some potential objections to the conception of autonomy.

The last chapter will connect the first two chapters. I will discuss how propaganda infringes autonomy using a normative analysis. I will argue that techniques propagandists employ to address their targets are manipulative. I will show how propagandists manipulate their targets in a way they do not even recognize. Those manipulative techniques infringe personal autonomy, and they are inconsistent with the conditions and value of personal autonomy that will be discussed in the second chapter.

# Chapter One: A Conceptual Analysis of Propaganda

This chapter both introduces, and makes a conceptual analysis of propaganda. First, I will show that there is a problem with defining propaganda. I start by looking into the definitions of propaganda that are proposed by scholars. These definitions are categorized as neutral and negative. I show that none of them give us a comprehensive definition of what exactly propaganda is. Propaganda is executed in different ways, uses different mechanisms and contains different contents. This alone contributes to the problem of the definition of propaganda. In the second part, I discuss the characteristics of propaganda which I believe result in the deficiency in the two categories of definitions of propaganda. That will help us to overcome the challenge of unifying the concept of propaganda by providing one definition. I put forward what I consider as essential features that all propaganda shares so that we may define propaganda to be the concept of family resemblances.

## 1.1. The Problem of Definition

The emergence of the word and concept of propaganda is an early modern phenomenon. The origin of a planned propaganda apparatus can be traced back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century during the time of Pope Gregory the XV. The term originally referred to a committee of Roman Catholic Cardinals called the *congregation de propaganda Fide* (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) established to fight the Reformation by advocating the unifying teaching and the doctrines of the church.<sup>3</sup> At the time, the word did not have any negative connotations beyond its then purpose.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John Clewas 1964, p. 3

<sup>4</sup> Cunningham 2002, p. 15



Following this, the word became increasingly popular in the global vernacular, particularly during the two World Wars. As those people who use propaganda shifted from Catholic priests to statesmen. Given that it started evolving as a social and political phenomenon, the concept and practice of propaganda became more complex, broader and started to lose its original meaning.<sup>5</sup> This affects the process of defining propaganda as a communication discourse.

Currently, propaganda is a contested concept.<sup>6</sup> There are a number of competing definitions that are forwarded by scholars. Despite the challenge to come up with a single comprehensive definition, it is familiar to see the tendency to categorize the competing definitions of propaganda as 'neutral' and 'negative.' A negative definition attributes unenthusiastic connotations to propaganda and portrays it as something inherently bad. It portrays propaganda as a one-sided<sup>7</sup>, manipulative<sup>8</sup> or irrational<sup>9</sup> technique of influencing others attitudes, beliefs, and shaping their minds. The following definitions can be used as a basis for analyzing propaganda.

Bruce L. Smith defines propaganda as the:

... more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of symbols (words, gestures, banners, monuments, music, clothing, insignia, hairstyles, and designs on coins, postage stamps, and so forth). A relatively heavy emphasis on deliberateness and manipulateness distinguishes propaganda from casual conversation or the free and easy exchange of ideas.<sup>10</sup>

Stanley Cunningham defines propaganda by saying that:

[It] involves thought control and the manipulation of beliefs, but it is much more complex than that. It also comprises a number of deep-structured epistemic twists

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<sup>5</sup> Cunningham 2002

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Jason Stanley 2015

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Ellul 1975, 9888 as quoted in Marlin 2013, p.8

<sup>9</sup> Ellul considers some types of propaganda as irrational

<sup>10</sup> Bruce L. Smith: 1986 as cited in Randal Marlin 2013, p.9

and turns: Characteristically propaganda uses facts and poses as truthful information; it instrumentalizes truth; it does falsify, but in ways that involve the use of truths and facts as much as possible; it exploits expectations and confusion; it overloads audiences with information; it relies upon murkier epistemic moves such as suggestion, innuendo, implication, and truncated modes of reasoning; it accords priority to credibility and being believed; it discourages higher epistemic values such as reflection, understanding and reasoning, and the accumulation of evidence and its procedural safeguards.<sup>11</sup>

Smith considers manipulateness and deliberateness to be the factors that make propaganda exceptional from casual communication. I am not convinced that his definition touches the essence of propaganda, despite its attempt to show the negative attributes that are attached to propaganda in a qualified way. His definition proves too much and makes the scope of propaganda too vague. Consider a woman, Meron, who wants to be romantically involved with her colleague Bill. One day she invites him to her place for a dinner, arranging her room, dressing uniquely, and using a perfume that she thinks will influence Bill's attitude toward her. Her action is deliberate and manipulative, yet it is not propaganda.<sup>12</sup> I contend that Smith's definition fails to acknowledge the fact that propaganda is more complex than being manipulative and deliberative.

Furthermore, Smith's definition seems to be influenced by the commonsense understanding of propaganda. People call someone's idea propaganda when they discredit it and question its source. When they consider propaganda, they usually think of dishonesty, lies, deception, manipulative communication, and one-sided information. They think of it as a discourse that appeals to emotion and does not rely on reasonable justification. However, in his definition Smith does not say

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<sup>11</sup> Cunningham 2002, p.198

<sup>12</sup> There is a chance that the most unanticipated communication could turn out to being manipulative

anything about how those symbols are used in systematic.

On the other hand, I consider Cunningham's negative definition as more vivid than Smith's, for it describes the most common negative characteristics of propaganda, irrespective of its types, and does so without any explicit normative judgment. This definition clearly describes how propaganda directly, and indirectly diminishes the epistemic qualities such as reflexivity, critical thinking, understanding, and truthfulness which are essential to engage in genuine communication, and make a competent decision. Propaganda is more powerful than deception and manipulation. It also has the power to control our beliefs by controlling what constitutes them. In other words, it shapes our beliefs by having control over the kind of information we use to form that belief. This means that the propagandist selectively forwards the information or evidence that fits their purpose.

What is at the heart of the negative definition of propaganda? Most of the negative connotations attached to the concept project propaganda as both unethical and illogical. The unethical feature is that it deliberately uses unfounded information, lies, and unreliable sources as its evidence to form a desired belief in the mind of its target. It is unethical for two major reasons. Firstly, it relies on deep-structure epistemic twists that negatively affects the critical thinking capacity of its targets or its audience<sup>13</sup>. Secondly, it manipulates the audience to force them to move in the direction the propagandists want. The negative connotations of propaganda are neutral to the consequence of propaganda in the sense that they do not have any impact on whether you use propaganda for a

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<sup>13</sup> I will use "target" and "audience" interchangeably.

good or bad cause.

However, it seems that the negative definition is simplistic and insufficient in fully sketching out the concept of propaganda. Propaganda is not necessarily illogical, irrational or appealing to emotion. Propaganda can use rational arguments and true statements but only for the instrumental purpose. Communication can be true or logical, whilst simultaneously being propaganda because propagandists can use true information such as reliable statistical data, actual images, and quotations from books or interviews as evidence to manipulate the audience to achieve their intended goal.

Suppose a government uses scientific statistics about global warming to persuade the citizens to consider shifting towards environmentally friendly ways of life, or else risk the lives of their grandchildren. The government, by invoking the idea of future generations and unborn relatives, tries to connect the targets to the future and make them feel responsible. The government might even use some animated pictures about what would the future environment look like if the people do not take the measures that are advised. In this case, the government is not using any false information or illogical argument but presenting scientific facts in persuasive ways.

Additionally, someone can utter a true statement and use it for propaganda without adding anything to it. Assume a situation where Donald Trump – the Republican Party candidate for the 2016 United States of America(USA) presidential election – in one of his campaign rallies utters a statement, "There are Muslims among us." The statement is true. However, the purpose of the person is not to assert that there are Muslims in the country. Rather, there is something that makes this statement propaganda – the implicit assumption. The speaker is raising the presence of the Muslims as a warning to instigate some fear into the public. He is playing with the common

prejudice of connecting current terrorism acts with Muslims. He uses the statement in a way that implies the presence of the Muslims seems to be a threat to the collective security of the country.<sup>14</sup>

Conversely, a casual conversation that contains inaccurate information can be false without being propaganda. A person may tell us false information with no intention to make us believe it, or believing that what he is saying is true. Someone might just say Addis Ababa is the capital city of Hungary, and he also believes that this statement is true. Not all false statements necessarily intend to manipulate us.

Furthermore, a child may get into a manipulative conversation with his parents, but that should not be considered as propaganda. For example, he may refuse to eat if they do not promise to take him to the park every Sunday afternoon. We do not call the action of the kid as propaganda. Thus, I believe that we need something deeper than this unsatisfactory approach to the concept propaganda.

On the other hand, unlike a negative definition, a neutral definition attaches no normative value to propaganda, presenting it simply as a *tool* that people use in communication. It does not prejudge the moral standing of propaganda qua propaganda. It does not explicitly say anything about whether propaganda is good or bad. However, it might still judge propaganda based on some of the unacceptable methods it uses or on the ends it aims for, but not propaganda as propaganda.<sup>15</sup> This approach would do some justice to the study of propaganda. As any social phenomena, it should be explored as a neutral phenomenon where it is possible.

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<sup>14</sup> Someone might say that, even if what he says seems true, by saying that he is implicitly assuming something false that Muslims are a threat to common security.

<sup>15</sup> Marlin: 2013, p.10

Randal Marlin carefully defines propaganda in a neutral way as follows:

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.<sup>16</sup>

For Marlin, propaganda functions by affecting beliefs, attitudes, and actions, of the propagandee. It bypasses or undermines critical judgment. Here what is important is not just the information that is forwarded to the audience, but also the way it is forwarded. In his definition, Marlin does not say anything about how propaganda suppresses rationality and reflective judgment [Cunningham's definition overcomes this problem]. His definition does not explicitly say anything about what propaganda contains. Propaganda works by manipulating, deceiving, lying, and withholding information. It might be the case that if he explains how propaganda suppresses adequately informed, rational and reflective judgments, then his definition might fall into the negative category.

Moreover, Marlin's definition, contrary to what he claims, does not seem to be completely neutral. In his definition, phrases such as "circumvent" or "suppress", have negative implications besides their descriptive characters. I believe that his expression of propaganda, as communication that has a task of suppressing individual reflection alone, implies something negative about propaganda. This also implies that there is no clear boundary between the negative definition and the neutral one.<sup>17</sup> Both definitions consider propaganda as a systematic, deliberative tool, which is used to shape people's beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, thus driving them towards the actions

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<sup>16</sup> Propaganda is not *defined* as wrong, but it might still be wrong, See Marlin: 2013; 12

<sup>17</sup> Additionally, what one considers as a neutral definition might be considered as a negative definition by others. Eg. Marlin categorizes Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell's definition as negative while he considers his own as neutral. In contrary, Daugulas Walton considers the Marlin's definition as negative and the latter's definition as neutral.

intended by the propagandist.

Nevertheless, settling the disagreement over the meaning of the concept of propaganda is challenging, especially given the fact that the definition propaganda has become very broad. Attempting to control the attitudes of people and shaping their minds is prevalent almost in religious institutions, trade organizations, education institutions, the media, social organizations, and political parties - all employ different methods and propagate for different goals. The method that works for one might not work for the other. This by itself contributes to the problem of definition. The attempt to define propaganda is conducted by experts in the field, but those who are practicing propaganda always work on how to improve its techniques and make it more efficient, further evolving the characteristics of propaganda. Propaganda is thus ever-changing, which I believe is a major contributing factor in the difficulty of solidly defining its concept.

I think the debate over the definition of propaganda will remain a contentious issue in the future, due to its varied function is dependent on the time, location and its intended purpose. Despite the dispute over the meaning of the concept, I also believe that looking into the common characteristics of propaganda will help us to have a fair understanding of the phenomena and concept of propaganda, without forcing us to lean towards either side of the definitions.

As my discussion so far has shown, there is disagreement and confusion about the meaning of propaganda and its utility. I believe that one of the ways to reduce the confusion over the meaning of propaganda is by looking into its common characteristics.<sup>18</sup> The discussion of the characteristics of propaganda will help us to have an in-depth understanding of propaganda without siding with

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<sup>18</sup> I have adopted most of them from Douglas Walton and developed others based on my analysis of the negative and neutral definitions given by others. See Walton 1997, 396–400

either the neutral or negative definition. By common characteristics, I mean those characteristics that all different types of propaganda share and features that make propaganda different from other forms of communication.

## 1.2. Common Characteristics of Propaganda

The word propaganda itself is used as a verbal weapon to attack the views of one's opponents. It is common to label one's opponent's idea as propaganda when the purpose is to discredit it.<sup>19</sup> During WWI and WWII, allies considered their enemies' communications as propaganda, implies everything their enemy was saying was false and so was composed of fabricated stories.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, during the Cold War period, states with opposite political ideologies were waging verbal war against each other while each of them considered their opponent's rhetoric as propaganda. If someone labels information from someone as propaganda, then the implication is that the information is not right or the source is not reliable.<sup>21</sup>

It is a good tactic to call someone's idea as propaganda in order to win the conversation.<sup>22</sup> This is because labeling the information as propaganda shifts the burden of proof to the person whose information is discredited. Instead of asking the person who discredited his opponent's idea as propaganda to prove their claim, we expect the person whose information is discredited to prove what he is saying is trustworthy. This is due to the person who is discrediting his opponent's idea as propaganda is not just attacking his opponent, but also practicing propaganda on the audience. He can discredit his opponents' argument by simply labeling it propaganda. These practices left

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<sup>19</sup> Marlin 2012

<sup>20</sup> However, at the same time, some countries were applying the word propaganda to their communication. For example, during the WWI British set up what they called "War Propaganda Bureau" to launch propaganda war against the German aggression in Europe.

<sup>21</sup> Cunningham 2002

<sup>22</sup> Ibid



the concept of propaganda with strong negative connotations which are deeply entrenched in the ordinary understanding of propaganda.

Thus, it is important to analyze the concept of propaganda by looking into its characteristics because I believe that looking into these characteristic will help us to understand how propaganda functions on the ground and how it manifests itself in different ways. Furthermore, because of the complex nature and practice of propaganda, sometimes it is even difficult to differentiate genuine communications from propaganda.<sup>23</sup> Genuine communication relies on true information, and it does not aim at manipulation or deception. It lacks most of the features of propaganda that are to be discussed below. Thus, analyzing the common characteristics will help us to differentiate propaganda from genuine communication.

#### *Asymmetrical Dialogue Structure*

Propaganda does not encourage symmetrical or mutual communication. The dialogue does not let both sides equally participate in the subject matter. The relationship between the propagandists and the propagandee is sender and receiver, respectively. In this dialogue structure, the propagandists forward their claim to their audience and expect them to accept it. There is no room for the propagandee to influence back the propagandists. The content and way of delivering are all controlled by the propagandists side, and that makes the structure mostly asymmetrical. Most of the time it does not encourage the audience to have their reflection on the subject matter.<sup>24</sup>

However, there are exceptional cases where the propagandee influences the content of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Walton 1997, p.396

propagandists. Sometimes the audience might indirectly engage in the dialogue and respond “positively or negatively to the propagandists’ message, by questioning and criticizing”<sup>25</sup> what has been forwarded to them. For example, a strong negative reaction from the audience sometimes may force propagandists to change the content of what they intended to deliver.

### *Vehicles of Propaganda*

Propaganda presents its message in different ways: it can be presented in verbal discourse or written form. It uses music, images, statues, symbols, and literature.<sup>26</sup> Nazi Germany produced numbers of films that dehumanized Jewish peoples. During the Rwandan genocide, ethnic Hutu artists produced songs that encouraged the Hutus to kill the ethnic Tutsi people. Likewise, during election campaigns, politicians use hilarious cartoons to characterize their opponents in negative ways. Countries build statues to their war heroes, heroines, and victims of genocide. They prepare for gatherings of hundreds of people and make persuasive speeches. Anti-smoking campaigns usually use fear-provoking images such as tar-filled lungs, and mottos such as ‘Smoking Kills’.

### *Propaganda is Goal-directed*

People engage in propaganda when there is something that they want to achieve.<sup>27</sup> The politicians engage in propaganda when they want to convince the masses about a certain policy and when they campaign for election. Those who want to sell their product participate in propaganda because they want to attract customers. The ultimate goal of propaganda is to drive its targets to take a

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.397

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

particular course of action.<sup>28</sup>

Propaganda aims to achieve its ultimate goal by changing the attitude, beliefs, and perceptions of the people. For instance, as previously mentioned in the Donald Trump example, when a politician says "There are Muslims among us," his aim is to instigate fear and prejudices into his targets by labeling the Muslims as a threat to national security and then present himself as savior. As to this example, evoking some fear in the audience is an essential part of the propaganda, but it is a secondary goal. The ultimate goal is to get votes from the people. The secondary goal serves as a mechanism to bring the audience into the needed course of action.<sup>29</sup>

### *Involvement of Social Groups*

Propaganda by its nature aims at the mass audiences and propagandist also represents some group. Individuals may come out and deliver a speech, but there are interest groups that are represented by him: it might be his political party, his government or his office. It is very uncommon to direct propaganda to a single person. It always is aimed at the masses. A government engages in propaganda to get support from the masses, regarding certain policies or particular political decisions.

Additionally, issues that are used for propaganda are public. For instance, issues such as unemployment, migration, minimum wage, gender equality, and the like concern the masses. These issues by their very nature involve many people. It does not engage in private issues such as where a couple might spend their honeymoon.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

*Indifference to Logical Reasoning*

As a goal oriented communication, propaganda aims at influencing the perspectives of the masses in ways that it considers viable. As goal oriented discourse, it focuses on how to achieve its purpose. To achieve its purpose, propaganda uses emotional language, jingles, catchy images, fictions, myth, symbols, music, and other tools that are common in discursive logic. It is not the concern of propaganda whether what it is delivering is logical or fallacious.<sup>30</sup>

Though propaganda is not explicitly against logic, I believe that it usually tends to avoid it. By engaging in logic, a propagandist implicitly invites his audience to do the same. This would put the message of the propagandist under logical inspection, which means it might not easily succeed if there are logical flaws in his argument.

Nevertheless, propaganda is not necessarily against formal logic. Where it finds logically convincing arguments, propaganda uses them for its instrumental purpose. Otherwise, propaganda is indifferent about the logical structure of its arguments. Although it goes beyond the scope of this discussion, it is important to note that most arguments employed in propaganda commit logical fallacies.<sup>31</sup>

*Indifference to Truth*

Propaganda is insensitive to truth.<sup>32</sup> Propagandists employ false or unverified statements where it serves their purpose of winning or influencing the attitude of the masses. It is not the objective of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Cunningham 2002

propagandists to help people in order to get adequate and accurate information that would help them to make a competent decision. Rather, propagandists prefer using information that will help them to succeed easily.<sup>33</sup> When they find it helpful, they will make up false information, cook data, invent quotations, produce false documentaries, and fake images. For instance, in 2003 George W. Bush' government used false information in order to get public support for his planned war against Iraq's government by saying the Iraqi's government has a connection to Al-Qaida. This drove massive support from the public for the war, until they discovered the allegation of connecting the then government of Iraqi and Al Qaida was false.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, propagandists use truth for instrumental value. Presenting true information will help the propagandists in two ways. Firstly, it helps them to build trust with their audience. The more they use truth, the more they become credible. If they present accurate and factual information, then the masses take them for granted as a reliable source for the future. As a result, using statistical facts, direct quotation, recorded videos, or real images, is more favorable for propagandists in order to provide evidence that boosts their credibility.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, they mostly try to present something true and then they give it their interpretation which might be distortion, exaggeration, or selective presentation of the actual information itself. If what they present is true, then it is easy for them to make their target believe their interpretation.

### *Emotively Charged Discourse*

Propaganda, in order to influence the emotion of its audience, it employs techniques that evoke

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<sup>33</sup> Jowett and O'Donnel

<sup>34</sup>In 2009 the former Vice President Dick Cheney, in an interview with CNN, has admitted that there was no link between Saddam Hussien and Al-Qaida.

URL=<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/06/01/cheney.speech/#cnnSTCVideo>

<sup>35</sup> Cunningham 2002

feelings.<sup>36</sup> They give us feelings of hope or fear, instigate hatred or sympathy, and encourage enmity of friendship. For instance, catchy pictures that can evoke some fear, or hatred, or compassion, depending on what the propagandist wants. War time propaganda uses pejorative terminology to describe your enemy's actions while using kind words for your own side's action.<sup>37</sup>

Two opposing propagandists may give opposing adjectives to the same person or phenomena. Competing propaganda can make us feel different things about the same thing or event by employing different value-laden expressions.<sup>38</sup> For instance, anti-abortionists campaigners define abortion as "the ruthless murdering of human beings" while pro-abortionists defined it as "a safe and established a surgical procedure whereby a woman is relieved of an unwanted burden."<sup>39</sup> The way they characterize abortion has the power to affect our attitudes toward abortion. Using these kinds of expression helps them to get support easily from the masses.

#### *One-sided Argumentation:*

As propaganda is most of the time one-sided, its users use information selectively in ways that fit their purpose. As propaganda is also goal oriented, propagandists present the side of a story that will assist them in achieving their goal. For instance, one of the characteristics of war propaganda is to present the truth selectively. Each side does not tell the whole truth, but only the part that helps them to encourage their soldiers and their people. They only tell the part that they kill soldiers of their enemy but they conceal the losses of their side, nor they tell about innocent civilians that murdered in the process.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Walton 1997, p.399

<sup>37</sup> Cunningham 2002

<sup>38</sup> Walton 1997

<sup>39</sup> Patrick Hurley quoted in Walton 1997, pp.399

<sup>40</sup> Jowett and O'Denell 1992

I believe that these characteristics speak about what propaganda is and what it looks like without subscribing to either side of the definition. As the analysis reveals propaganda is not necessarily against genuine evidence.<sup>41</sup> However, propaganda does not use truth or rationality for their inherent values, but for their instrumental value. It may even use false information and unreliable sources as long as they serve the propagandist's purpose, which is to get something done in one or another way by being psychologically effective.<sup>42</sup>

In this chapter, I have argued that propaganda is a contested concept. The problem of definition is one of the challenges in the study of propaganda. Different scholars have tried to give definitions. Some of them put forward negative definition while others try to define it as neutral phenomena. However, I have argued that neither the negative nor the neutral definition alone is sufficient to define propaganda. Instead of looking for a single definition, I have argued, it is better to sketch what propaganda looks like through its features. In my view, propaganda is an asymmetrical form of communication that is, among others, goal-oriented, one-sided, indifferent to truth, and indifferent to logic. Most types of propaganda share these characteristics.

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<sup>41</sup> Propagandists may use true evidence and rational arguments for their further end. However, they do not engage in rational discourse.

<sup>42</sup> Cunningham 2002

## Chapter Two: Autonomy and Its Values: A Conceptual Analysis

Autonomy is a controversial concept and value. What is considered as the value of autonomy may not be endorsed by others. It is a single concept conceived differently, to use Gerald Dworkin's<sup>43</sup> expression. Within this chapter, I will examine how different philosophers conceptualize autonomy. Following this, I will discuss the conditions of autonomy. I will endorse a weaker conception of autonomy, which seems to be more practically achievable and inclusive. Finally, I will discuss why autonomy should be considered as valuable.

### 2.1. The Nature of Autonomy

In the Western tradition, the discussion of the concept of autonomy in moral and political philosophy traced back to the time of ancient Greece. Putting weight on the importance of individuals' capacities to govern themselves has been emphasized in moral and political philosophy by contemporary philosophers. The central idea that underlies autonomy is stated by the etymological meaning of the term *autonomia*, which is derived from two Greek words: *auto* which means 'self,' whereas *nomos* is 'rule' or 'law.' It is believed that the term was first applied to the ancient Greek city-states where the city had autonomy when its citizens made their laws without being under the control of external aggressors or conquerors.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Dworkin 1998

<sup>44</sup> Ibid



Like the concept of propaganda, which was discussed in the previous chapter, autonomy is also a contested concept; it is challenging to find a single definition on which everyone can agree. Different scholars use the concept of autonomy in different ways. Some of them use it as a moral ideal, others use it as a political ideal, and even some others use it as a social ideal. As a political ideal autonomy is used against any design and functioning of political institutions, that attempt to impose a set of ends, values, and attitudes on individual citizens.<sup>45</sup> It is also used to oppose perfectionist or paternalistic views of the government. Some use it to argue for the illegitimacy of obedience to authority.<sup>46</sup> As a moral ideal, autonomy is used to claim that autonomous man is not subject to the will of another person in a sense that he made the moral law for himself and governed it.<sup>47</sup> Individuals' convictions must be given precedence over authority and tradition. As a social ideal, it looks into how non-political institutions affect the values, beliefs, and attitudes that we develop in our society. It is concerned with how to differentiate legitimate and illegitimate ways of influencing the minds of the members of society. These different ideals are not mutually exclusive. In all these ideals of autonomy, there is the self that needs to be respected, left unmanipulated.<sup>48</sup>

Having mentioned how the concept of autonomy can be idealized, I will now narrow down to the particular ideal of autonomy that this chapter is concerned with. Due to the fact that autonomy is a broad concept, it is important to make a distinction between the kinds of autonomy that will predominantly be discussed in this chapter. Autonomy is conceptualized in

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<sup>45</sup> Dworkin 1998

<sup>46</sup> Wolff 1970

<sup>47</sup> Dworkin 1998 p.3-6

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

two different senses: moral and personal. Moral autonomy is the view that an individual should be the author of her own moral rule. It clearly means that a person is morally autonomous if the moral principles she uses to govern herself are her own, which means that they are not imposed on her by force against her will, rather they are the product of her rational will.<sup>49</sup> This is where autonomy stands as a moral ideal.

On the other hand, personal autonomy encompasses a character that individuals can display concerning any aspect of their life, including the moral one. It is a trait that one shows in setting her values, interests, and decision-making process.<sup>50</sup> Personal autonomy concerned with whether a person is making decision in accordance with principles and values he self-reflectively affirmed, without external influence. Those principles might be moral or non-moral.<sup>51</sup> It is broader than moral autonomy. Moral autonomy can be seen as the self-imposition of moral laws or moral rules.<sup>52</sup> For example, a person may self-reflectively develop a moral principle for himself which says 'I should always keep my promise.' Then he has exercising his moral autonomy as long as no one is imposing this moral principle on him. As long as he is the author of this rule, then he is also exercising his personal autonomy, because one cannot have moral autonomy while he lacks personal autonomy. One may self-reflectively choose to be a football player instead of going to a college, then he is exercising his personal autonomy but not moral one.

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<sup>49</sup> Christman 2015

<sup>50</sup> Friedman

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Christman 2015

A number of philosophers discuss formulations for their own concepts of autonomy. Immanuel Kant claims that autonomy is a rational reflection on one's own rule.<sup>53</sup> A person should rational develop a moral rule that governs him. Thus for Kant autonomy is not just being free to choose one's moral rule but it also includes the duty to be governed by it. On the other hand, Scanlon believes that it is personal sovereignty.<sup>54</sup> It is person's sovereignty to examine what others told him before accepting it. His concept of autonomy gives weight to self-reflection and independent thinking.

Other prominent political philosophers also put forward their conception of autonomy. It is important to consider their definitions in order to understand how different philosophers deal with the concept.

In his "A Theory of Justice", John Rawls writes: "acting autonomously is acting from principles that we would consent to as free and equal rational beings"<sup>55</sup>

Isaiah Berlin in his 'Two Concepts of Liberty' writes about positive liberty

I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's, acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See Robert Johnson 2014

<sup>54</sup> Scanlon 1972

<sup>55</sup> John Rawls: 1971; 516

<sup>56</sup> Isaiah Berlin

Gerald Dworkin, in his ‘The Theory and Practice of Autonomy’, puts forward this very detailed summary of his conception of autonomy:

[S]elf-rule or sovereignty...freedom of the will, dignity, integrity, individuality, independence, responsibility, and self-knowledge...self-assertion, critical reflection, freedom from obligation, absence of external causation, knowledge of one's own interests.... It is related to actions, to beliefs, to reasons for acting, to rules, to the will of other persons, to thoughts, and to principles.<sup>57</sup>

Joseph Raz, in his ‘The Morality of Freedom’, explains the ideal of personal autonomy:

The ruling idea behind the ideal of personal autonomy is that people should make their own lives. The autonomous person is a (part) author of his own life. The ideal of personal autonomy is the vision of people controlling, to some degree, their own destiny, fashioning it through successive decisions throughout their lives.<sup>58</sup>

All of the above authors show that autonomous life is the life of self-creation, where, partly, a person is the author of his life and control his destiny. In the process of mapping his life, a person should play the greatest role. A person should determine who to have as his friends and his partner, which path of life to walk, which place to reside in, and which profession to choose for a career. As we can see from the above definitions, all of these need the engagement of self-reflection and independence from external forces, amongst other things. There is a fundamental attribute attached

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<sup>57</sup> Dworkin 1978

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Raz 1986, p. 370

to the autonomous person. Rawls describes the autonomous person as ‘consented one’ while Kant emphasizes on the rational and author of his own rules; Raz emphasizes on the ‘self’ as a partial author of his life, while Scanlon defines him the sovereign. For all of them, “self” should be uncoerced. Thus, it the that the rational person, the sovereign, the partial author of his life considered as autonomous.

Additionally, the autonomous life is not just about making a choice or decision on an issue. Rather, it is also about how one should independently make this choice or decision.<sup>59</sup> We may make a decision in a way others influence it and that is not an independent decision. Our decision-making process is said to be independent when it is not influenced by others. One can be influenced in order to make a particular choice. For instance, Ms. X can be forced by her father in order to choose Mr. Y as her husband than Mr. Z, because her father promised Mr. Y that his daughter will marry him. Ms. X may accept Mr. X as her husband because she does not want to fight with her father, though she is in love with Mr. Z. Even her father may manipulate her in order to choose Mr. X, by setting up a false story and telling her that Mr. Z has cheated on her. Her father manipulates her choice.

However, how she makes a choice is what determines her autonomy. The question of how she chooses is about whether external force influences her or not in her choice making process. Ms. X should be allowed to exercise her discretion over whom to choose as her husband. Only in this way can an autonomous person's well-being consist in the pursuit of self-chosen goals and relationships.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Raz 1986, Dworkin 1998

<sup>60</sup> Raz 1986, p. 371

Furthermore, they all show that autonomy is a condition of a person who has certain abilities or capacities. Joseph Raz investigates the detail of what this condition of a person consists in. He instigates a tripartite distinction of these conditions, naming them “the conditions of autonomy”: ‘mental ability’, ‘adequate options’, and ‘independence’. He writes about them further:

If a person is to be maker or author of his own life then he must have the mental abilities to form intentions of a sufficiently complex kind, and plan their execution. These include minimum rationality, the ability to comprehend the means required to realize his goals, the mental faculties necessary to plan actions, etc. For a person to enjoy an autonomous life he must actually use these faculties to choose what life to have. There must in other words be adequate options available for him to choose from. Finally, his choice must be free from coercion and manipulation by others, he must be independent.<sup>61</sup>

These conditions of autonomy are shared by different scholars who are working on autonomy, though each are using their own unique expressions. As highlighted above, Dworkin<sup>62</sup> writes of the importance of the absence of eternal and external restrictions, which can be equated with the three conditions. Scanlon emphasizes the importance of personal sovereignty, which amounts to independence.<sup>63</sup> Berlin talks about the importance of being independent from external forces.<sup>64</sup> Raz presents these conditions in a comprehensive and explicit way.<sup>65</sup> I will adapt these three conditions in my discussion of autonomy, because I believe that it is important to determine the

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<sup>61</sup> Raz 1986, p. 372 – 373

<sup>62</sup> Dworkin 1998

<sup>63</sup> Scanlon 1972

<sup>64</sup> Berlin 1968

<sup>65</sup> Raz 1986

autonomy of a person, and hence a discussion of them is useful in this thesis.

### **2.1.1. The Conditions of Autonomy: Mental Ability, Adequate Choice and Independence**

First, an autonomous person needs to have a mental ability such that they are in a position to think rationally and critically on issues that have both direct and indirect influences on his life. He should be in a competent position to comprehend the complex facts of life. Having the capacity to reason is important. This capacity to reason, as Robert Wolff says, includes “reflecting on motives, predicting outcomes, criticizing principles and so forth.”<sup>66</sup> It helps an agent in order to make competent reflection on what he choose to do and how to do it.

Further, the capacity to reason can help autonomous persons subjugate their internal trivial temptation for reasonable decisions that affect their short term and long term projects. For instance, a girl that is attracted to one of the terrorist groups’ propaganda in Libya or Syria must have to critically question and examine the nature and motive of their propaganda. She must reflect on whether that is where she wants to end up or lead a normal life. If she is in some bad state of mind, then she might easily be attracted to their propaganda. If she is not using her rational faculties in a neutral way she may easily subject herself to their propaganda. By a neutral way of using one's rational faculties, I mean using any of the thinking capacities without it being subjected to irrational emotions such as fear, bias, or hatred. Thus, the idea of having one's own reasoning, reflection, and acting accordingly is also important in the discussion of autonomy. I am not referring to hyper-rationality and high-quality technical reasoning skills. Rather I refer to the capacity to differentiate one's own desires, interests, values, and having the capacity to reflect on them.

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<sup>66</sup> Robert Paul Wolff 1998, p. 14

Secondly, if a person is not in the position to have an adequate range of options to choose from then she cannot be considered as autonomous. The adequate option condition must go beyond having trivial options that we use for daily routines. Trivial options are “all short-term and negligible in their significance and effects.”<sup>67</sup> For instance, a slave may have a set of trivial options as to whether to stretch his legs or not, to eat his lunch now or later, whether to comb his hair now or later. However, all these options on the table cannot make him autonomous as they do not significantly affect his life project: in other words, even if he can choose to stretch his legs or not, he is still a slave that is lacking autonomy. Thus, in order “to be autonomous a person must not only be given a choice but he must be given an adequate range of choices.”<sup>68</sup>

Further, a person should have the option to choose among what is going to affect her life in the long-term and the short-term as well.<sup>69</sup> Consequences of some of our decision may only stay for a short period while some others have long-ranging impact. A person should be given choices over both of them. It should not be “either...or” but both must be on the table and a person should be allowed to choose from both.

The idea of adequate options should also ensure the presence of a variety of tests.<sup>70</sup> If we ask a boy to choose one from one hundred identical toys, then it is difficult to claim that we have offered him enough options to choose from. Thus, having adequate options is not just about sheer volume, but also importantly about having sufficiently diversified options.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Raz Ibid, p. 373

<sup>69</sup> I am not assuming that a person’s long-term plan is totally different from his short-term plan. There might be cases where the short-term plan can be used as a mean to make a long-term plan.

<sup>70</sup> Raz 1986



Having said this, the options should not be between something considered as desirable and something considered as undesirable. We cannot be justified in placing committing suicide<sup>71</sup> into the set of options that an autonomous person should have. Likewise, the choice should also not be between desirable and less desirable options, such as having fried chicken for dinner or going to bed starving. The adequate options should include options that are desirable by any competent person.

The third condition is independence. An autonomous person needs to be independent of external force such as coercion and manipulation. Coercion and manipulation do not only take independence from the person but also allow the person to be treated as an instrument for another's will or goals.<sup>72</sup> Independence does not necessarily refer to self-sufficiency. A person should not be subject to the will of others and nor should they be treated as means for further ends. The decision that one is making in one's life should be one's own. The presence of alternatives by itself is not enough: not only what one chooses from the alternatives, but also how one chooses it, matters as well. The presence or absence of personal independence has the capacity to significantly affect our behavior. The autonomous person not only has a set of options to choose from but also has the capacity to choose freely from them.

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<sup>71</sup> Here I am assuming that a person cannot consider committing suicide when he is in a psychologically normal state of mind. I am only referring to suicide that people decide to commit out of desperation about challenges they face in life. The operational conception I am using here does not include suicide that is committed by terrorists, among others.

<sup>72</sup> Raz 1986

## 2.2. Autonomy and Liberty

Additionally, it is important to differentiate autonomy from liberty. It is common to notice people using these two words interchangeably as if they were identical. Liberty can roughly be considered as “the ability of a person to do what she wants, to have significant options that are not closed or made less eligible by the action of other agents.”<sup>73</sup> If we consider both as identical then interfering in autonomy would be equated with interfering with liberty. Of course, by interfering into the liberty of a person sometimes we also interfere in their autonomy.<sup>74</sup> For instance, if we give a blood transfusion to a Jehovah’s Witness by force, then the action will not be only interfering with the person’s liberty, but will also be a violation of their autonomy to determine for themselves what kinds of medical treatment they want to go through.

However, there might be a situation where we interfere in the autonomy of a person without interfering in their liberty. In order to show the fact that interference in someone’s autonomy is not identical with interference with their liberty, let us look to John Locke’s famous example of putting a person in an unlocked cell.<sup>75</sup> Assume that we put a person in a cell while he is asleep. Once he wakes up and realizes that he is in a strange place, we tell him that all the doors are locked, when in fact one is unlocked. All he knows about the doors is what we have tell him. The person is free to leave the cell, had it been known to him that there was an unlocked door. However, his not being provided with this important information, his ability to perform what he wishes, is clearly limited. He is free to leave the room using the unlocked door which means his liberty to leave the room is not restricted. But his ability to decide to leave the room or to stay is restricted because of the important information that we conceal from him. He does not know that there is one unlocked door

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<sup>73</sup> Dworkin 1988, p. 14

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> see Dworkin 1998, p. 14

and because of that he cannot decide to leave the room. We restricted his autonomy on whether to decide to leave the room or prefer staying. Thus, there are different ways to restrict the self-determination of somebody without having interference in his liberty.<sup>76</sup>

### **2.3. Conceptions of Autonomy: Substantive and Procedural**

One of the debates in the conceptualization of autonomy is whether it should be conceptualized procedurally or substantively. In order to avoid confusion, it is important to make it clear which conception of autonomy I am referring to in this work. I believe that the value we attach to autonomy is also determined by the type of conception we have about autonomy, and hence the discussion of these two concepts is vital for this thesis.

According to the substantive view of autonomy, a person can be considered as autonomous “to the degree that what he thinks and does cannot be explained without reference to his own activity of mind.”<sup>77</sup> Here, self-sufficiency is vital, which means a person is autonomous if and only if he is self-sufficient in what he decides or choose to act. In support of this view R. S. Dawnie and Elizabeth Telfer write, “An autonomous person must be independent-minded.”<sup>78</sup> They argue that he must not have to rely on others for what he has to decide.

Additionally, the substantive view advocates normative autonomy by which I mean the right life is the autonomous life. Friedman writes that an autonomous person’s choice must be in accordance

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> R. S. Dawnie and Elizabeth Telfer 1971, p. 301

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

“with the value of autonomy itself, or, at least, choose so as not to undermine that value.”<sup>79</sup> The content of your choice is also matters in a sense that what you choose should be in accordance with certain value. The right-rule is the self-rule where the person rules himself. Accordingly, his choice should be also a choice that enhances her autonomy or should be a choice in accordance with the value of autonomy.<sup>80</sup>

However, it seems that the substantive claim sets the bar too high.<sup>81</sup> Human beings, as social beings, influence each other. Human beings learn from others’ experiences and then shape theirs. The environment we are brought up in, the family within which we are raised, the school we attend, the books we read, our social activities, and the political system within which we are living, all have their own role in shaping and influencing our decisions and our ways of life. These elements have their own part in making us mature persons and hence we cannot avoid them at all. It is practically difficult for a human being to escape influences from society, culture and the environment within which he is living.

If we need to make reasonable decisions, then we must follow the canons of reasoning, norms of conduct, and standards of excellence, that are the products of larger society. We do not invent them, we adapt them from others through socialization, education, and the like. We reflect on them, and take them further, modifying them in a way we such that we need to internalize them to our life.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Friedman 2003, p. 19-21

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Dworkin 1998, p. 21

<sup>82</sup> Dworkin 1998

Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that we have to accept everything that comes into our way from our culture, our social interaction or through our family. An autonomous person cannot accept the judgment of others as to what he should do without independent consideration. We may depend on the ideas of others, but when we do so we must be willing to advance independent reasons for what we are going to decide.<sup>83</sup> Self-reflection, rational scrutiny of others' thoughts, and critical examination of evidence should be used in the process of learning from others and developing one's decision making.

Secondly, autonomy is not the only desirable principle in our life. We also value other important assets in our life as much as we value autonomy. The substantive concept of autonomy is inconsistent with other important values that we hold in our life.<sup>84</sup> For instance, we value loyalty to our friends and partners, being objective in our judgment and showing benevolence, care, and love to others. All these values come to us with some sort of commitment that can be considered as restrictive from the view point of substantive autonomy. In the substantive view we are autonomous if we are completely independent in our life and the ways of shaping life, and those values that mentioned above, are secondary.

Substantive view of autonomy insists that a person committed to autonomy behaves only in a way that makes him autonomous<sup>85</sup>. However, one may decide to look after one's parents at the expense of a once in a life-time opportunity to go to one's dream college. If we take autonomy in this substantive sense, one might say that this decision could not enhance the person's autonomy, because they forfeit the opportunity that would help to enhance their autonomy. Going to the college will help the person in order to get professional training and will give them some important

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<sup>83</sup> Thomas Scanlon 1972, p. 217

<sup>84</sup> Gerald Dworkin 1988

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

skills that will arguably make them self-sufficient. Conversely, the person places more value on being a caring person to their parents than just leaving them behind. Why should we view this as forfeiting autonomy? These values are sometimes in conflict with substantive autonomy, which advocates self-sufficiency and individualism.<sup>86</sup>

What I propose is a weaker concept of autonomy. If we endorse the substantive sense, then I believe that most of us may not, practically, have autonomy at all. In procedural autonomy, the autonomous person is *partly* the author of his life.<sup>87</sup> It is opposed to a life of coerced choice and diminished self-reflection. This kind of life is where we exercise our capacity to choose whatever we want to do. It requires some degree of “self-awareness” and the capacity to understand how different choices will have considerable effects on a person’s future short term and long term plans.<sup>88</sup> In this paper I shall endorse procedural autonomy for two main reasons.

Firstly, an autonomous person is minimally self-determining in a sense that the self has considerable control over what should determine a person’s behavior or actions. The self has minimal reflective capacity on what importantly matters to a person’s life.<sup>89</sup> What is important here is the capacity to self-rule. By self-rule I am referring to the capacity to govern one’s own matters and control them. A self-governing person is conscious of what is going on around themselves and is aware of his or his desires, wants, and values. The self-ruling person is capable of reflecting on what they value and endorse, deciding whether to reject or accept things, and so initiating a new path of life. If a person is aware of his choices, and is an autonomous agent, then

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<sup>86</sup> Dworkin 1988, p. 21 - 34

<sup>87</sup> Raz 1996

<sup>88</sup> See Raz 1996, Dworkin 1998

<sup>89</sup> Friedman 2003

they are expected to exercise thinking for one's self and being true to oneself. Thus, procedural autonomy gives considerable recognition to the lower threshold of autonomy –which is the capacity to make reflective thought on one's own desire, values and reaffirm them.<sup>90</sup>

The procedural conception, unlike the substantive, does not emphasize on the right-rule. The idea of right-rule is that a person must do the right thing or must choose the right option. The right-rule is normative by dint of its content, which means an autonomous person must choose what is objectively right. What is objectively right is what is consistent with being committed to autonomy.<sup>91</sup> A person should be committed to autonomy behaves only in a way that makes him autonomous. However, procedural autonomy is content-neutral. It does not require an agent's behavior to be right or morally acceptable. It does not suggest any specific way of behaving or acting. Rather, what is import is how the person is coming to decide to execute his or her action.

Secondly, the procedural conception is inclusive of the substantive conception. As mentioned above the substantive conception is too demanding and hence, only few people might be considered as autonomous. It might only be accessible to people who are at the top of any society, such as a rich and politically powerful upper class.<sup>92</sup> However, the procedural conception does not reject the substantive conception. Those who are autonomous in the eyes of the substantive conception are also autonomous from the point of view of the procedural conception. The procedural conception is also inclusive of people who are competent enough to have minimal

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid

<sup>91</sup> Natalie Stoljar 2015

reflection on their behavior, even if they might not be perfectly reflective to high cognitive standards.<sup>93</sup>

The argument in the above paragraph might lead us to the question whether all those fit the threshold line and those who are self-sufficient are equally autonomous. We all do not have the same degree of reasoning and reflective capacity. In real life scenarios, we all lead different kinds of lives. As indicated above we come from different cultural, economic, social, religious, and political backgrounds. All these have their own influence on our personal lives and on how we plan to set our future. For instance, people in Western countries might be more individualistic than those living in Africa. Cultures which uphold privacy, individuality, and calculative rationality, might stimulate people in order to be more autonomous and independent than cultures that value communality and strong social interaction.<sup>94</sup> In this case, people from the former society might enjoy more personal autonomy than from the latter. Even people living in the same community might not have the same degree of autonomy. Thus, autonomy comes in degrees because of our different levels of reasoning and reflective capacity, influenced also by many factors in our environment.<sup>95</sup>

## 2.4. Value of Personal Autonomy

Let us assume that autonomy is intrinsically valuable. Something is said to be intrinsically valuable when its value is derived from nothing but the object itself. However, this assumption might raise two important questions. The first problem is, let us assume that there are two persons, and one of them is autonomous, while the other one is not. Both of them separately perform the

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<sup>93</sup> Friedman 2003

<sup>94</sup> Friedman 2003

<sup>95</sup> Raz 1986



same wrongful action. Is the autonomous wrongdoer morally a better person than the non-autonomous person, just for the mere fact that we have assumed autonomy to be valuable by itself? Raz argues that the action of the autonomous person is morally worse than the non-autonomous person's action.<sup>96</sup> This is because the action of the autonomous person has been carried out willfully and deliberately.

However, I believe that alone cannot make autonomy valueless or make it devoid of intrinsic value. An autonomous person has the capacity to reflect on his behavior and then reaffirm it or refrain from it.<sup>97</sup> That is what the non-autonomous person lacks: the will to avoid what he is doing. The lack of autonomy from the latter person might make his wrongness morally excusable. But the wrongdoing of the autonomous person does not make autonomy bad. The main point here is that autonomy, whilst itself valuable, might not confer value on to the outcomes of one's autonomy.<sup>98</sup>

Additionally, autonomy can be seen to be analogous to knowledge in the debate over its intrinsic value. Knowledge is believed to have intrinsic value. Some people seek knowledge just for the sake of knowledge. Let us say that a doctor abused his knowledge of medicine to kill his patient, which is a wrongful action. Does this action press us to question the intrinsic value of knowledge? I doubt it. Just because someone can use knowledge for evil, it does not mean that knowledge itself is evil: knowledge in itself is sufficient for committing evil, but not intrinsically evil. Congruently, autonomy can be used in order to commit reprehensible or evil acts, but that doesn't immediately mean that autonomy lacks intrinsic value. Additionally, I believe that there might be a possible

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<sup>96</sup> Raz 1986

<sup>97</sup> An autonomous person can perform a wrong action. The wrongness of his action may not have any direct connection with the value of autonomy. However, for Raz, autonomy is valuable only when we use it for good things. My claim is autonomy is valuable irrespective to how we use it.

<sup>98</sup>

world where someone needs autonomy just for the sake of it, and hence, this is enough to consider it as intrinsically valuable.

The other question is whether we still consider autonomy as worthy by itself when a person deliberately surrenders his autonomy. Firstly, an autonomous person might choose to waive her autonomy and make herself a subject of the will of others by his choice. He may just want to do what his wife tells him. If he is doing that with the full awareness, if he is coming to that decision without any external force such as coercion or manipulation, if he is choosing that from different competing options, and if that is exactly the kind of life he wants to have, then why is he not autonomous? If his decision is one taken where he is conscious of his behavior, and if his decision involves self-reflection of his desires and values, then why do not we value his decision? If what he decides reflects his preference, then his action is autonomous.<sup>99</sup>

Some might object by saying that autonomy should aim at something good. This man is waiving his autonomy and subjecting himself to the will of his wife. So we should not value this sort of exercise of autonomy which diminishes his capacity to behave autonomously? My response is that autonomy is not a supreme good. There are many things that we value in our life, and autonomy is one of them, but it is not at the helm of all of them. As in my one of the previous examples, a young girl may prefer staying with her parents and taking care of them at the expense of going to the prestigious college. A professor may prefer staying in his small town because of the social interactions and friendships he has built there, and so reject a job offer from Harvard.

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<sup>99</sup> Autonomous life is not necessarily a self-realized life. One may choose the path of self-realization or one may reject it and still be autonomous. See Raz 1986, p. 374 - 376

Furthermore, there might a situation where autonomy becomes secondary. Some others may prefer to act according to the norm of their religion and tradition. A man's decision to rely on his wife's choices could be traced to his desire to live as to the tradition of society or his religion. It could be because his wife values most of the things that he values in his life. It could be that he is fulfilling his promise to her that was made whilst they were in high school.<sup>100</sup> In any of the cases he is autonomous and his life should be considered valuable.

Nevertheless, the value of autonomy becomes uncontested when we look into it from the view point of those who really lack it. A person who lacks autonomy lacks particularity, among other things. What makes a human being a particular person is his way of life and his projects – how he wants to lead his life, what he plans to achieve and what he wants to leave behind. If he truly shapes his life in ways that are meaningful to him, if he wants to have his own reflection on his values and preferences, and reaffirm them accordingly, then he is expressing his autonomy. However, if the situation – i.e. his parents, the society, the government or other institutions - within which he is living is restricting him (by force or some sort of manipulation) from achieving it, then we can certainly say that he lacks one of the essential capacities in his life - to live as a particular person that makes his life his. It is important to make one's own life meaningful.<sup>101</sup> If one does not, then the life one is living is not one's own, and as such one is not trying to find one's place within one's environment." However, here the point is not to refer to excessive individualism that promotes selfishness and mutual indifference from others. By particularity I am referring to doing things one's own in a way that reflects one's desires and values.

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<sup>100</sup> Dworkin argues that loyalty may conflict with autonomy. see 1998, p.21

<sup>101</sup> Chrisman 2013

Furthermore, autonomy is valuable because it calls upon everyone to treat others as an end in themselves. We value autonomy and this means we treat others as ends in themselves, not as a mere means to our ends. If we do not treat others as autonomous by themselves then it means that we use them as a means for our purpose, and for our own achievement. If we treat human beings as autonomous then we acknowledge that every person has his own way of achieving what he desires and has its own place in the world. We do not coerce them and nor do we manipulate them.

Additionally, autonomy is valuable because it demands us to treat others in the same way.<sup>102</sup> If I am advocating personal autonomy, then the same principle requires me to treat others in virtue of that capacity. As a social being, reciprocity is a part of human life. That reciprocity helps us create the environment that promote autonomy.<sup>103</sup> It is by valuing autonomy that we can create an autonomy enhancing environment. In principle, we should treat others in the way we want to be treated. We cannot build our own autonomy in a vacuum, rather we develop it in our practical personal life with the relations we have with other fellow human beings, with the project that we want to achieve in our life. A single person cannot be safe in a society dogged by violence. Thus in order to lead a peaceful life, we need to live in a peaceful society. The same is true for autonomy: it can be enhanced in a society that encourages individuals to act and live autonomously.

With regard to reciprocity two points must be made clear. Firstly, it does not mean that one can make another person autonomous, but can help them exercise their autonomy.<sup>104</sup> The environment that encourages personal autonomy gives enough space for its members, to develop and strengthen

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<sup>102</sup> Someone might also consider autonomy as valuable because he thinks that only autonomous person will exercise his autonomy not to interfere in to the life of others. Sometimes we might feel forced in order to interfere into the life of others. For instance, a mother might feel pressurized by member of her society in order to pull out her daughter that free chooses to live as a prostitutes.

<sup>103</sup> Friedman 2008

<sup>104</sup> Raz 1996

their autonomy, by assisting them develop their thinking and emotional capacities, through education and by providing them adequate options to choose from, whilst also respecting their desires and values. Secondly, the reciprocity I have in mind does not endorse ‘tit-for-tat’ in a negative sense. For instance, I do not necessarily have to infringe the autonomy of a person infringing my autonomy. Thus autonomy is important for respecting others’ ways of life.

Finally, as it is a contested concept and value there might be objections to my approach to autonomy. I will consider three objections as being important ones to address. Firstly, someone might say that the self is just a non-existing narrative construct. There is no solid self. At the non-existence of the conscious-self then there will be autonomy. This argument can be seen in two dimensions: metaphysical and social. The self does not have ontological existence. There is no such thing like a conscious self. If we find this challenge convincing, then there is no point in talking about autonomy.<sup>105</sup> However, all the debates over autonomy assume the existence of a self. I exist as Mr. X, she exists as Ms. Y, and you exist as Mr. /Ms. Z. The procedural conception assumes the existence of the self, even the conscious self.<sup>106</sup>

From the social perspective, it might be difficult to know where exactly the ‘self’ begins to emerge. As social beings we share agency, partly my parents are influenced by their parents, and I am influenced by my parents and my social environment. It seems like there is no distinct boundary of a separate self. There is not mutual separation among a society and its members, and hence personal autonomy is impossible.<sup>107</sup> It is true that we are partly molded through the influence of our society. However, as we mature, most people start to initiate their own individual way. For

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<sup>105</sup> Freidman 2003

<sup>106</sup> Ibid

<sup>107</sup> Ibid

instance, we start to choose what subjects to study, where to live, and so forth. That is where the ‘self’ starts to emerge.

Secondly, someone might ask that how can the self-determine itself? How can autonomy be genuine when we are partly shaped by our environment? It is true that the self is socially entrenched, partly, but this cannot deny autonomy. For the procedural conception of autonomy, what one needs to exercise autonomy is the ability to think, adequate option and independency. This conception of autonomy does not require total detachment from social bondage, though it does not exclude it.<sup>108</sup> Secondly, as Raz argues, autonomy comes in degrees.<sup>109</sup> Someone who is living where the social ties are strong might exercise less autonomy than someone living in a society that encourages individualism.

Thirdly, someone might say autonomy might threaten our social bondage and reduce human society to simple collections individuals. This objection depends on the exact conception of autonomy that we have in mind. If we are advocating the substantive conception of autonomy the objection might have some considerable truth. However, in the procedural conception of autonomy, the plurality of values is recognized. Someone can still be autonomous while following some societal values. Autonomy is not inconsistent with social life.

In this chapter, I have discussed the concept of autonomy. Personal autonomy mostly conceptualized as substantive and procedural. For the former what you choose is important in order to be an autonomous while for the latter how you choose matters. There are three conditions of autonomy: capacity to think, adequate option, and independence. Finally, I have discussed the

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> Raz 1996, Christman 2013

value of autonomy. In the next chapter I will discuss how propaganda affect some of the conditions of autonym that I have discussed here.

## Chapter Three: A Normative Analysis of Propaganda

This chapter has two major parts. The first part analyzes how propaganda is manipulative and how it infringes autonomy. As shown in the first chapter, propaganda shapes our way of thinking and influences our decision-making process: in order to do so, it uses different mechanisms. The techniques that propagandists use have manipulative capacities that direct the audience towards the goal of the propagandists. Propaganda undermines our faculties of thought and infringes on our autonomy through these manipulative techniques. I argue for this claim in the first part of this chapter. The second part will consist of a normative inspection of propaganda. I will address three questions: “Is infringing someone’s autonomy unethical?”, “Is propaganda inherently unethical?”, and “Can a government be morally justified if it uses propaganda at the expense of autonomy?”

### 3.1. Manipulation as a Technique of Propaganda

Propaganda is manipulative: it manipulates our ways of thinking towards the intended objectives of the propagandist and it makes us do things for the reasons that the propagandist wants us to do them. Here it is important to define clearly what manipulation means. Manipulation, like propaganda, is also a contested concept. Philosophers and psychologists have debated regarding what exactly the concept of manipulation constitutes.<sup>110</sup> There are different competing theories about the concept and features of manipulation. It is not the objective of this paper to fully engage in this debate; however, a brief discussion is warranted. Putting aside the richness of the debate

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<sup>110</sup> Sapir Handelman 2009



over manipulation, I will only examine the relationship between propaganda, autonomy, and manipulation.

There is no a single definition of the concept of manipulation that all scholars agree on. Some equate manipulation with deception.<sup>111</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, I will use Joel Rudinow's definition, seeing as it considers manipulation as beyond deception, and thus investigates it with a broader perspective.<sup>112</sup> Defining it in a broader sense will help us to look into the manipulative techniques that are not necessarily deceptive. If we equate manipulation with deception, then there might be a type of propaganda that is said to be non-manipulative. To settle this problem, I find Rudinow's definition to be less controversial. He defines a particular case of manipulation as, "A attempts to manipulate S if A attempts the complex motivation of S's behavior by means of deception or by playing on a supposed weakness of S." <sup>113</sup> This definition is broad. Unlike some definitions, it does not reduce manipulation to deceptive activity. It is my believe that a propagandist usually applies this technique in order to drive the propagandee toward his intended goal.

Manipulation is a motivating action: it is a method used by one person over the other, to drive him towards a certain course of action, without making his will the sole reason that he is performing the action. Manipulation occurs in almost all parts of our lives, like coercion and persuasion. They all have the capacity to interfere in a decision-making process of another person without that person's endorsement. However, manipulation is different from coercion and persuasion. It exists

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<sup>111</sup> Sapir Handelman 2009, Chap. 1

<sup>112</sup> Rudinow 1978

<sup>113</sup> Ibid p. 346

as some gray area between them, and because of this, it is difficult to characterize it exactly.<sup>114</sup>

On the other hand, coercion and persuasion function explicitly with the awareness of the target. The target can easily understand that he is coerced when, for example, his boss orders him to vote for political ‘Party X’ or be expelled from his job. Likewise, he could also understand that he has been persuaded when his boss comes to him and asks him to vote for Mr. X because Mr. X is his friend, and he wants to see him as the President of the country. Those who are targeted know that the other side is coercing them or persuading them in order to do something.

However, manipulation is more sophisticated than coercion and persuasion, in the sense that the target may not suspect that he has been manipulated. I will turn to some of the manipulative techniques propaganda uses to influence the decision-making processes of its target. These techniques are not comprehensive, but they can at least show what propagandists employ to manipulate their targets.

Some propaganda techniques cause fear and insecurity in our lives. It is in the nature of human beings to feel fear and uncertainty when there is a problem to deal with. In this kind of situation, the propagandistic message presents some kind of life-saving condition.<sup>115</sup> For instance, during an election campaign, politicians use different methods to get votes from the people, and thus to get elected. Suppose that an incumbent president of a country is campaigning to voters by saying that “if you vote for my opponent, you will lose your job, your free or low-cost health insurance, and different social benefits, because of the economic policy of my opponent.” This kind of

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<sup>114</sup> Handelman 2009, p. 1

<sup>115</sup> Shabo 2008

propaganda will cause feelings of insecurity among the voters due to the fact that the president is instigating some sort of fear in their minds, and is making them doubt their future without him. Here he manipulates them by making them feel insecurity and at the same time presenting himself as a savior.

What is wrong with feeling insecurity or fear? Under normal circumstances, we are expected to make decisions on complex issues like the economy and government policies after a period of critical reflection on the subject matter. Particularly when it comes to political elections, there are lots of things that we should consider before going to the poll. We should make comparisons between the policies of the contenders and vote for the one we think will serve our best interests: that is what rational voters are supposed to do. However, the fear that the propagandist instigates in us may cause diminished thinking capacity in the faculties that we use to evaluate the offered policies critically. When we feel fear, what will come to our minds is how best to escape the particular situation that makes us insecure. Finally, we may end up voting for the person who presents himself as a savior without critically analyzing his policies.

Additionally, some propaganda techniques evoke feelings of anger. We cannot usually have control over what, where, and when, we get angry.<sup>116</sup> Getting angry is emotional, can be unexpected, and spontaneous. Some politicians use this technique in order to gain votes from people. Invoking anger can easily be used as a manipulative technique because it has the capacity to shut down our thinking capabilities.

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<sup>116</sup> Of course some may even sit and make an analysis about things that make them angry, and thus have some semblance of "control" over their anger.

Furthermore, causing hatred and distrust is also another technique that political propagandists use to manipulate their targets. Hatred and distrust have a strong capacity to make people act, or refrain from acting, on something. Politicians use them to force people in the direction that they want. If they want to drive people to action, they evoke these feelings in the people, particularly in economically, ethnically, and socially diversified societies. For instance, Donald Trump, the American front-running Republican Party nominee for the 2016 presidential election, has been using this technique in his campaign speeches. He has been targeting the immigrant population, especially the Muslims and the Latinos, by projecting them as if they are taking Americans' jobs and making them insecure, respectively.

He has projected Latinos as criminals and rapists, while he proclaims Muslims to be terrorists and a threat to the national security of the United States. I believe that this is manipulative propaganda. Of course Trump does not create these accusations and labeling out of the blue, because there are Mexicans who are performing illegal activities in the United States, and some Muslims have performed terrorism. However, it is not consequently justifiable to label all the Latinos as rapists, and all Muslims as terrorists, or adherents of terrorism. He emphasizes the fact that Mexicans are the largest illegal immigrant population in USA. Likewise, the fact that those who carried out some terrorist attacks are Muslims is where his labeling of them all as terrorists comes from. His accusation of all the Muslims as terrorists, or being a threat to the national security of the USA, contradicts the fact that millions of Muslim Americans are playing their part in the daily political, economic, and social aspects, of the country. This sort of propaganda is manipulative because it uses facts that apply to a marginal, and then uses them out of context by applying it to the mass. It imprints and encourages prejudice and hatred in the mind of the voters so that he can use them for his intended final goal, namely that of gaining their vote.

Propaganda infringes on our autonomy by affecting the three conditions of autonomy that were discussed in the second chapter: those of critical thinking, adequate options, and independence. Manipulation directly affects our capacity to think critically and reflectively. Critical thinking can be considered as a dedicated guard to keeping our decisions and behaviors in line with our desires, values, and worldview. A person who employs critical thinking in their decision-making process will scrutinize the evidence and facts presented to them before making a decision. They will ask whether the information that they have at hand is exhaustive enough to make a decision and whether what they are going to decide is in line with their values, interest, and affirmations. However, propaganda manipulates its targets (i.e. the propagandees) by employing strategies that blur, cloud, and limit, the critical thinking capacity. The above examples show us that propaganda affects our critical capacity by instigating fear, insecurity, and anger, in our decision-making process.

Propaganda also limits our range of options in manipulative ways and presents them as if they were exhaustive. Since propaganda is a deliberate action, it is employed to achieve a specific goal. The propagandist usually arranges a set of options in a way that can lead his targets toward his intended goal. Nevertheless, he does not give adequate options to his audience because including more options into the set risks the failure of the intended goal of the propagandists. Assume that I am attempting to manipulate you to do 'W' and I give you some options to choose from. If I give you two options (W and X) then each have a 50% chance of being chosen by you: call this case 1. If I give you three choices (W, X, and Y), then each will have a one-third chance of being chosen: call this case 2. If I give you four options (W, X, Y, and Z), then each will have a 25% chance of being selected: call this case 3. Given that my goal is to drive you towards action 'W', I can

manipulate you best by minimizing the number of the options to the smallest possible amount that I can, and make you believe that the options are comprehensive. The highest chance of me being able to do this would be to offer you case 1.<sup>117</sup>

There might also be another way that I can manipulate you here. I manipulate you by presenting the option in the 'either...or.' form and then make one of the two options bad. In 2001 the USA President George W. Bush said regarding the war against terrorism "you are with us, or you are against us."<sup>118</sup> This is clearly a manipulative propaganda. He presented the options as if they were exhaustive. Either you support the American way of handling the case, or you will be labeled as a terrorist. He intentionally curbed "neutrality" as non-existent. There might be some countries which do not want to engage themselves in the war, but they do not want to be categorized as "against us". This also works at the individual level. There might be individuals who do not want a war, but the platform does not give them the option to stay neutral. Neutrality is reduced to enmity. You do not want to be an enemy so you will take the other side. As we have seen in the second chapter, limiting options will infringe personal autonomy. Thus, manipulative propaganda that limits our options infringes our personal autonomy.

Propaganda also employs manipulation in a way that limits or diminishes self-rule. When you manipulate someone you are not respecting their independence or self-rule. You are driving the person toward your goal without their awareness or their endorsement. They are not doing what they are doing for the reason they believe it should be done for. They are doing it for your reasons

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<sup>117</sup> It could also be the case that propaganda would give you no choice at all. However, "no choice" propaganda is not a sophisticated way of manipulating a target.

<sup>118</sup> This case is not only manipulative, but it is also coercive and commits the fallacy of the false dilemma because the part of the statement which says "against us" can be interpreted in different ways. It may mean if you do not fight with us then we will fight you. It is fallacious because the person is presenting the options as if they were exhaustive.

though they are not aware of it. Had it been known to them that you are manipulating them, then they could have made a different decision. Thus, propaganda infringes autonomy through its manipulative techniques.

It is also important to mention that propaganda can also use manipulation for something good. It can be used to inspire people in order to take good actions, and can be also used to promote civic-mindedness, amongst other things. For instance, a government can use propaganda to drive its citizens toward a good end. A government can use propaganda on its people in order to make them actively participate in the election process, pay their taxes on time, and protect themselves from a disease. If the government wants the young generation to come out and vote for the party that they believe keeps their best interests in mind, then they might use propaganda to encourage voting. However, propaganda that ends with a good consequence cannot be considered as less manipulative for the mere fact that the end is some state of affair that is morally desirable. The only difference in one case is that you can bring something good by manipulating your target and in the other case you can use it for something bad.

### **3.2. Is Propaganda Unethical?**

Until this point, I have withheld my judgment about whether propaganda is morally right or wrong. This is because I have so far wanted to provide a fair discussion about propaganda without assessing its normative aspects. Characterizing propaganda mostly dominates the analysis of propaganda as something negative, and I believe that to some extent that has affected the discourse

on propaganda. I, however, believe that methodologically, as Jacques Ellul says<sup>119</sup>, it is worthy to start the analysis of propaganda from the neutral perspective.

As a communication discourse, it is vital to examine propaganda by looking into how it works, what it constitutes, and its essential features before jumping into the normative questions. If we start studying propaganda as something that is morally wrong, then there would not be any importance in going further with the normative inspection of propaganda, unless we are looking for some exceptional cases. The neutral approach, however, gives us the opportunity to analyze it as a communication discourse.

Nevertheless, propaganda, as shown, is a very complex phenomenon, and thus making normative analysis will not be an easy task. Propaganda can be used for a good cause or a bad cause.<sup>120</sup> It can be argued that propaganda contributed to the death of millions of during the two World Wars, and has often played a role in the displacement and death of millions of people across the world. Conversely, it has also been used for good ends, such as reconciliation among societies that used to consider each other as enemies. To substantiate this point, I will mention exemplar cases where propaganda played a destructive role, and one example where it played a constructive role.

Before the 1994 genocide, Rwandan ethnic Hutu militias employed massive propaganda against the Rwandan Tutsi ethnic groups. They used all the available media and stories to dehumanize the Tutsis, and calling them 'cockroaches,' claiming that they needed to be wiped out from Rwanda. They convinced most Hutus that the Tutsis were the enemy and that they were a threat to the national security of Rwanda. They propagated a new that Rwanda is only for the Hutus. The Hutus

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<sup>119</sup> Jacques Ellul 1981

<sup>120</sup> Ibid 1981



used art as a way to create, consolidate, and circulate their propaganda. Many Hutu artists used their music to incite hatred and prejudice against the Tutsis. Hatred, violence, and discrimination against the Tutsi become normal and acceptable. Finally, this propaganda contributed to the resultant massacre of more than 800,000 Tutsis, and moderate Hutus, in Rwanda, in 100 days. It is evident to me that propaganda has played very destructive roles in this situations.<sup>121</sup>

Conversely, propaganda has also been used as a good tool, to avoid catastrophe and to rebuild destroyed societies in different parts of the world. After the genocide of the Tutsi, and after the fall of the Hutu-led regime, propaganda contributed a good deal in bringing the Rwandans together, and in the reconciliation process. The government has encouraged and financed creative music, film, theater, and different festivals of art, that preach unity among the Rwandans.<sup>122</sup> A lot of music that preaches unity, honors the victims, and condemns those who committed the atrocities, have been released. A lot of survivors have told their stories in touching ways, and these have been presented in documentary films and in theaters. The moderate Hutus that helped the Tutsi to hide and survive have been praised in public.<sup>123</sup> Due to massive constructive propaganda launched by the Rwandan government, people started reconciling and have been developing trust amongst each other. Now most Rwandans remember the genocide as a dark part of their history.

What we can learn from the above examples is that propaganda can be used for a good end or for a bad end. However, the important point that I want to make is not to evaluate propaganda based

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<sup>121</sup> Alison Desforges 1999

<sup>122</sup> Marie-Chantal Kalisa 2006 has discussed how the Rwandans have utilized art for the reconciliation.

<sup>123</sup> Kalisa 2006

on what it brings. But based on how it works, i.e. how it works to achieve the end that it intends. I contend that propaganda is bad because it negatively affects most of the conditions of autonomy that I discussed in the previous chapter. What makes it bad is how it functions: it functions by diminishing our thinking abilities and by treating us as a means to what the propagandists want to achieve.

Thinking abilities are vital for a person to have his own meaningful life: it gives us the privilege to exercise our individuality or particularity. It is that individuality that keeps society usually moving in the right direction. It makes us question the norms of our society within which we are living and bring alternative ideas. However, propaganda will take those features from us by endangering our thinking abilities.

Someone might say that propaganda is not bad because it does not intend to deceive or manipulate: rather, it just aims to achieve its goal. Deception or manipulation is just the negative side of propaganda, but it is not what the propagandist intends. For instance, positive propaganda does not intend the manipulation of its target, but intends to achieve something good. Thus, we should not consider it as inherently unethical. This objection is complicated because it implicitly assumes that propaganda is a neutral device. Someone might reply by saying being manipulative and treating others as a means is at the heart of propaganda. It does not aim at enlightening its audience. It does not aim at honoring the truth. It does not aim at treating its target as an end in himself. It aims at achieving what it intends at the expense of valuable things such as truth, reason, treating others with respect and the like. Whether propaganda is successful or not, it endorses manipulation and the deception of its target.

However, an act can be considered as morally bad and still be used for a good end such as lying to a murderer to save one's own mother. Further, something can be considered good and be used for a bad cause. I refer back to the example of knowledge mentioned in the second chapter: knowledge is good but can be used for some bad causes. Assume the case where you were intentionally using your knowledge to invent a chemical that the Nazi uses to kill millions of Jewish. Does that make knowledge bad? No, not at all.

Thus, propaganda uses anything as an instrument to achieve its goal. It uses lies, deception, manipulation, psychological threats, and other manipulative elements. These techniques impair the thinking capacities that one uses to lead a properly life: Without a competent cognitive faculty one cannot properly decide what to do and cannot set goals for oneself. Additionally, the ability to think is a necessary condition for personal autonomy. A person cannot exercise his autonomy without being able to think competently. Thus, propaganda infringes our autonomy by impairing our thinking abilities, hence it is morally impermissible.

Furthermore, Propagandists use techniques to treat others as a means and drive them toward their intended goal. There is something wrong with treating human being as a means. Treating human being as a means for one's further end is morally impermissible. It is wrong because it infringes the autonomy of the targeted persons. However, there might be conditions where propaganda survives the moral blame for threatening autonomy.

### **3.3. Is the Propaganda That Trades-off Autonomy for Something Good Morally Justifiable?**

Assume Mr. X, who is unemployed and he has no means of income. Fortunately, he has a good friend, Mr. Y, who has got a good job. Mr. Y offers Mr. X the opportunity to live with him until he finds a job and starts to earn money. However, while they are living together, Mr. Y starts asking Mr. X if he will accompany him every morning for a jog, or every morning to pray to God, as a gesture of gratefulness for giving him a place to stay. If Mr. X does not comply, then he will have to leave Mr. Y's home. However, Mr. X is an atheist who likes sleeping in the morning and does not like jogging at all. If he refuses the request of his friend, then he has to leave the home and will end up living on the streets. If Mr. X chooses one of the first two options, instead of ending up in a dire situation, then it's obvious he has waived his autonomy to avoid the worst: namely, to save his life, which is more important than autonomy. We cannot say that what Mr. X chooses is morally wrong since it is difficult to defend his autonomy at the expense of his life.<sup>124</sup> Sometimes we may waive our autonomy to avoid the worst. Life is more valuable than autonomy because only when you are alive you can know that your autonomy has been infringed. It is only when you are alive that you can make any claim for the value of autonomy.

If one can waive one's own autonomy or endorse the infringement of one's autonomy for something that is more valuable, then why can't we justify when a government uses propaganda that infringes one's autonomy for something better? Assume that the government is offering

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<sup>124</sup> Someone might say this person cannot be considered as autonomous since he depends on somebody else for his existence. However, it is important to keep in mind two things. First, autonomy comes in degrees. This person can be considered as less autonomous but not non-autonomous at all. Secondly, autonomy is different from self-sufficiency. It is a way of life that encompasses different things in our life including economic self-sufficiency but cannot be reduced to that.

unemployment for people who lost their job. However, because of his political ideology Mr. X does not want to register for welfare and instead of that he prefers to end up on a street. The government successfully engages in massive propaganda in order to convince him and others like him about the importance of welfare. Can we say what the government did was morally wrong? One might respond by saying that the person who waives his autonomy is doing so willingly, which means he might be exercising his autonomy of waiving his autonomy. This objection does not challenge the position that autonomy is not absolute; instead it strengthens it.

Further, there might be conditions in which propaganda can be justified. Governments might sometimes engage in different types of propaganda that can be morally justifiable. For instance, it is morally justifiable to infringe the autonomy of a group of people who are going to cross a dangerous bridge that is going to collapse through their defying the warning sign. If the government uses some propaganda techniques to change their decision to cross the bridge, then I would say that it is morally justifiable. What makes it justifiable is the magnitude of the destruction. If we let them try crossing the bridge, then their life would end there. Governments have a duty to protect citizens' lives as much as the obligation to respect their autonomy. However, duty to protect the life trumps duty to respect autonomy.

War propaganda can be morally justified if it contributes to the prevention of further destruction or for self-defense. Assume that aliens are living on another planet, and NASA has discovered that they are planning to invade planet Earth to loot our resources, destroy our environment, and enslave some of us. Their soldiers are human beings like us. These aliens are planning to use their human soldiers to invade us. Assume also that the only way that we can stop these aliens from invading our planet and enslaving us is by waging propaganda on their soldiers and so that they

will be discouraged and refuse to fight. However, the propaganda that we are going to use negatively affects the autonomy of their soldiers and autonomy of some of us. If we do not engage in propaganda, then they will win the war and enslave us which will be a loss of autonomy for us. If we engage in propaganda, we will win the war though we infringe the autonomy of their human soldier and the autonomy of some of us. I believe that in this case, it is morally justifiable to engage in propaganda since it comes as the only way to win the war and protect ourselves.

Someone might also justify propaganda against terrorism, for two main reasons. Firstly, it can be used to discourage those who are planning to join the terrorists. It is morally justifiable for governments to engage in massive propaganda in order to make the potential targets vigilant against the terrorists' propaganda. One of the methods of discrediting propaganda is by engaging counter-propaganda. If what we are achieving is by far preferable than the projected damage and if propaganda is the only way to do that, then we can say propaganda can be justified.

Secondly, targeting militants with propaganda might manipulate them in order to reassess their reason to fight and consequently, discourage them from fighting. The same technique was used during WW2 against the Nazi soldiers in order to demoralize them from fighting.<sup>125</sup> Thus, if it is the only way to avoid war without destroying resources and taking away anyone's life, or if it contributes in preventing a country from destruction then I would say that propaganda can be morally justifiable.

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<sup>125</sup> Marlin 2012

However, someone might object to the above view by using the ‘Doctrine of Double Effect’(DDE), which says it is unethical to use others intentionally as a means to pursue the good.<sup>126</sup> Positive propaganda uses others as a means. The propagandists strictly intend the manipulation of their targets. There is a closeness between propaganda and using others as a means, and it follows that the propagandists clearly intend the manipulation or treating others as a means. Thus, there is no moral difference between using positive propaganda and infringing audiences' autonomy. This objection might work on some propaganda such as election campaign. However, it might not make war propaganda impermissible as stated above.

In this chapter, I have connected the last two chapters. I have shown how propaganda manipulates the audience by impairing their thinking capacities and consequently, infringes autonomy. In addition to that I have argued that propaganda is bad because of what it constitutes: lying, dishonesty, treating others as a means to the intended goal of the propagandists. Thus, propaganda is impermissible. However, conditions such as self-defense and avoiding something worse might make it permissible.

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<sup>126</sup> Victor Tadros 2015

## Conclusion

Propaganda is deeply entrenched in our daily life. It is hard to find a social, political, or cultural issues that is not being affected propaganda. However, the study of propaganda is a recent phenomenon – early half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are different challenges that the study of propaganda is facing, and one is the challenge of having a precise and widely accepted definition. Some scholars have forwarded negative conception which considers propaganda as unethical practice, while others try to study it as neutral phenomena. However, this paper argues that neither the negative nor the neutral definition is sufficient to define propaganda.

Instead of looking for a single definition, it is better to sketch what propaganda looks like through its characters. My reservation to define propaganda is not to deny its existence but to go beyond the existing spectrum of the discourse. It is undeniable that the analysis should go beyond characterization and should come up with a workable definition that fills the gap. That needs very detailed, intensive, and comprehensive research which are the limitation of this research.

Further, autonomy is fundamental to an individual's life. It is essential because it makes one live the life of one's choices. It makes one exercises one's individuality. Thus, it should be respected. To be considered as autonomous a person should have enough reflective capacity on his desire and actions, a person should have an adequate option, and should be independent undue influence.

Propaganda infringes on one's autonomy by diminishing cognitive ability and treating its targets as means to achieve what propagandists intend. It diminishes the thinking and reasoning capacity of its targets and treats them as a mere means and that makes it morally impermissible practice. In addition to that, propaganda is bad for what it constitutes – lie, deception, dishonesty, and treating



others as means. These things make the practice of propaganda challenging to justify it morally. Nevertheless, there are situations that justify propaganda as a necessary thing when for example one use it for self-defense, to avoid the irreversible harm. This might trigger another question – what should be done about about it?

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