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Some Reflections Concerning the Problem of Defining Propaganda

Abstract: The main objective of this paper is to underline the difficulty of defining propaganda in a systematic and noncontroversial way. I will present a few definitions of this term, from the pejorative and widely spread one, to the theoretical explanations provided by prominent authors in the field, and I will argue that they have to face some serious objections. In the final section of the article I suggest that the causes of this difficult task have to do with the influence of the pejorative conception, with the overestimation of the role played by the propagandist, and with the insufficient attention given to the function of propaganda in the process of configuring the social identity of a community.

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