Irrationalism: The Foundation of Hate Propaganda

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Abstract

This article proposes that hate propaganda be examined in terms of its basis in irrationalism as a philosophical orientation. In the first part of the paper, irrationalism is discussed from the perspectives of various 20th century philosophers engaged against the rise of fascism or responding to it. In the second part, selected examples of contemporary propaganda are discussed, demonstrating continuity in the use of irrationalism as a limitation to thought and analysis.

Keywords: irrationalism, antisemitism, Frankfurt School, Vienna Circle, Max Weber, Karl Popper, Georg Lukács, Leo Löwenthal, Max Horkheimer, Norbert Guterman, critical theory, Continental philosophy, anti-immigrant, xenophobia, eugenicism, separatism

Many of the ideological sources of contemporary hate propaganda lie in the history of racism, antisemitism, and the legacy of fascism in Europe, although their roots are much lengthier and lie deeper. While the object of antisemitism is an obvious single population, its classic statement of the modern period, *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, projects its message more broadly than the immediate intended target and thus has served as a model for hate groups of the contemporary period. In that document, claims about Jews were strengthened by additional objectives, such as the hatred of democracy, liberalism, and modernity (Bronner, 2000). In the contemporary period, the Klan, Aryan Nations, and racist skinheads, among others, broadcast hate to build movements, drawing on the possibility of violence against ethnic minorities, gays, and lesbians. Other propagandists, such as those examined in the second half of this essay, are less oriented to violence; they ground their pronouncements in immediate experience and what they consider to be the reasonable interests and expectations of their audience in preserving their social positions and the status of the group to which they belong, or recovering those preferred relations they perceive to be lost.[1] Like the *Protocols*, the object of these contemporary hate propagandists extends beyond a target group to include law enforcement and judicial personnel, liberal politicians, and others perceived to be blocking the return of more stable, natural, and "diverse" societies. Tolerance, legal due process, multiculturalism, and democracy have, in the view of such

propaganda, opened the door to the dissolution of the rightfully dominant culture.

Researchers of hate groups and propaganda often explain the means by which propagandists draw people to their cause by identifying communication techniques employed as persuasive or deceitful, a soft-sell approach or one that is guilt-inducing, to prod the listener or reader to accept a group's message and purpose. Variations of this approach have been used by researchers over time, beginning with members of the Frankfurt School and those on its periphery studying the rise of fascism in the 1930s. Leo Löwenthal and Norbert Guterman (1987), for example, sought out "themes of agitation" in their analysis of antisemitic and profascist communications in their *Prophets of Deceit*, while Theodor Adorno (2000) identified a series of "devices" used in the radio speeches of Martin Luther Thomas. In the contemporary period, Weatherby and Scoggins (2005) examined techniques of hate groups such as the "foot-in-the-door" and the "low-ball" techniques. McNamee, Peterson, and Peña (2010) identified four themes by which to understand the communication strategies of hate groups over the internet. Messner and her coauthors (2007) cited "tactics" evident through linguistic analysis by which writers and singers of hate-inspired country music hoped to attract and seize an audience; Futrell, Simi, and Gottschalk (2006) analyzed white power music through the interconnections of spatial typologies.

Identifying such techniques or devices has value for understanding some of the mechanisms hate propagandists use to persuade audiences of the power of their guiding principles, and the viability of their group for addressing perceived social problems and the frustrations of potential adherents. However, communication requires more than specifying its structure and techniques. Techniques that are identified and labelled must be treated in a way that not only exposes their persuasive or coercive character, but also provides a critique of the dominant mode of thinking that the messenger and the audience alike have internalized from their social environment. It is this philosophical orientation in both speaker and audience that is the greatest facilitator of adherence to a cause, whether as activity in a group or as isolated individual acquiescence.

It is argued here that the success of propaganda rests on the ground of irrationalism, as the underpinning of propaganda and as the political uptake of it as it supports the actual or perceived historical foundations of the social order. Founding propaganda on irrationalist orientations attempts to establish a greater legitimacy for hate communications and the development of reactionary social movements. What is promoted as a rational assessment of a social problem is a means of making a perspective acceptable to the consumer of hate propaganda where the more volatile or violent message might be rejected as too extreme. The latter, of course, might well be

the future goal of the more subtle agitator or the academically-clothed propagandist.

While marginal to the mainstream of democratic societies, hate propaganda nevertheless exists in large measure in such societies because of their relative openness and their philosophical orientation to common sense as the dominant mode of appropriating and responding to reality. This is the means by which large proportions of a population acquiesce to distinct structures of power: the existing liberal political and economic institutions, for example, or the alternative racially-motivated groups whose power lies primarily in their capacity to claim insight into personal dilemmas related to the perceived disintegration of the social order.

It was during the late inter-war years, when fascists were able to acquire state power in Europe, that antisemites and pro-fascists were widely evident on the radio airwaves in North America, in pulpits, on speaking tours, and in their publicly-distributed publications. Their efforts were rooted largely in claims of American freedom and individualism, while haranguing against the encroachments of modernity, the liberal state, and the purported loss of security and status for the individual. The concentration on irrationalism in hate propaganda came about during this period primarily as a means of assessing the rise of fascist politics and the seeming ease by which its measures against a range of distinct social groups dominated not only the actions of such politics, but also the mode of their communication. Similarly, in the contemporary period, hate propaganda relies on a communication form intended to build sustainable organizations and ideas that can be promoted as suppressed and in need of re-kindling. In both cases irrationalism serves as the foundation and the structure of the communication of hatred.

I.   DEFINING IRRATIONALISM

Any attempt to define irrationalism must acknowledge its relation to rationalism, or rationality, for it is in arguing against irrationalism that the "rational attitude," as Karl Popper called it, is necessarily illuminated. This relation of rationalism to irrationalism is a common element of the theorists discussed in the first part of this essay.

Writing in the post-war period but motivated, in part, by the attack on reason by all forms of totalitarianism, Popper (1966) saw the necessity of the rational attitude, at base, as a "readiness to listen to critical arguments and to learn from experience." Such an attitude required a degree of intellectual modesty and was closely related to the "scientific attitude" (p. 225). To say that irrationalism is the opposite kind of attitude is the beginning of a definition, provided it is noted that irrationalists do not reject the rational

attitude entirely, but argue that it is possible for only a small proportion of people–the elite of the propagandists in this instance, or, in the case of philosophers such as Plato, a belief in the limited distribution of "intellectual intuition" (Popper, 1966, pp. 227-228; see also Plato, 360 BCE). In Popper's view, irrationalism is founded on the belief that the majority of people are weak in intellectual skills, a division that extends the foundation of irrationalism to a belief in the natural inequality of human beings applicable within any group as well as comparisons of distinct groups. Such intellectual weakness allows irrationalism to take root in the emotions and passions of persons against the capacity to reason (Popper, 1966, pp. 228, 234-235).

Despite the obvious political and philosophical differences between Popper and Georg Lukács, their views of irrationalism contain some similarities by which they can be, at least at some level, reconciled (see Kelemen, 2008, and, for a less supportive view, Rockmore, 1992). Lukács regarded irrationalism as an "international phenomenon," a "campaign" against Enlightenment philosophy and the ideas of the French Revolution, a response to class conflict, as opposition to modernity, against the bourgeois notion of "progress" and against movements toward socialism. The crisis in the bourgeois idea of progress, reached in Germany by mid-19th century, concerned the population's normative dependence on authority. Irrationalism was expressed, in part, as a "disappointment" in the masses' capacity to understand the gradualism of democracy: namely, their response to insufficiently realized expectations of equality of opportunity and participation in democratic societies (Lukács, 1980, pp. 16, 18-19, 68ff.).

There are a number of components of Lukács' meaning of irrationalism: its rejection of the notion that the external world can be known, its claim of limits to the scientific method, and its denial of social progress—in short, its rejection of Enlightenment values (see also Wolin, 2004, p. 3). The communicative style of hate propaganda, then and now, centers on what Lukács (1980) considered the "decisive hallmark" of irrationalism: the avoidance of answering questions raised by science and progress, but viewing such questions and the problems raised as unable to be resolved (p. 104). On this point he and Popper shared a belief in the positive relation of the rational and scientific attitudes, and the irrational as a rejection of them. But the most fundamental element of irrationalism, for Lukács, was its equation of understanding with reason, as if cognitive action need not go beyond the immediacy of understanding that is deemed to be legitimately self-limiting, but nonetheless of sufficient substance with which to conclude the process of thinking. Opposing this perspective, reason treats contradictions and limits to thinking as "problem[s] to be solved" (Lukács, p. 97) and

as "the beginning and sign of rationality" (Hegel, cited in Lukács, p. 98). Lukács noted,

> Irrationalism, on the other hand . . . stops at precisely this point, absolu-tizes the problem, hardens the limitations of perception governed by understanding into perceptual limitations as a whole, and indeed mys-ticizes into a 'supra-rational' answer the problem thus rendered artifi-cially insoluble. (pp. 97-98; see also Hodges, 1970, p. 67)

The crucial point is the decision to cease inquiry and settle for an emotion-ally satisfying explanation of reality. Lukács asked the question, what hap-pens "if thought . . . stops short of the difficulties and shies away from them . . . [or] hypostasizes the inability of *specific* concepts to comprehend a specific reality into the inability of thought . . . to master the essence of reality intellectually?" What happens, he continues, "if a virtue is then made of this necessity and the inability to comprehend the world intellectu-ally is presented as 'higher perception,' as faith, intuition . . . ?" (p. 100).

Adorno and Löwenthal analyzed the irrationalist basis of antisemitic and pro-fascist propaganda in the inter-war and post-war periods. Like Popper and Lukács, they insisted that irrationalism was compounded with rationality, the central organizational principle of modernity (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1982, pp. 309-310; Adorno, 2000, p. 29; Löwenthal, 1986, p. 185; Seymour, 2000, p. 301): that is, irrational in substance and effect, but nevertheless calculated, planned, and organized. On the other hand, Adorno (1994) remarked that fascist propaganda "builds up an imagery of the Jew, or of the Communist and tears it to pieces with-out caring how much this imagery is related to reality," using an oratorical style that "might be called an organized flight of ideas" (pp. 222-223). He referred in 2000 to irrationalist propaganda as a kind of "emotional plan-ning" (p. 29) that Löwenthal and Guterman (1987) argued was facilitated through the rationalization of values (p. 28).

For these theorists, as well as for Lukács, neither Nazism in Europe nor pro-fascist activities in America were spontaneous expressions of social outcasts, but manifestations of ideas that had long been present. Irrational-ism in mainstream philosophy and social science served to create a social atmosphere conducive to promoting racism and the support of fascist polit-ics. American propagandists such as Martin Luther Thomas, Gerald B. Winrod, and Gerald L.K. Smith, among others, grounded their hopes for a reactionary movement on social and economic insecurities widely exper-ienced during the Depression period. Löwenthal called this atmosphere a "social malaise," a condition which, as Adorno saw it, was of unquestioning dependence on a type of authority central to the legitimation of intolerance.

Such a dependence was, in effect, a self-imposed constraint on knowledge by an unreflective belief in a perception and experience of reality, and by dependency on the authority of the leader or the legitimacy of existing social relations, such as the division of labor and the hierarchy of social classes and status positions (Adorno, 2000, p. 45; Horkheimer & Adorno, 1982, p. 153; Löwenthal & Guterman, 1987, p. 117; Adorno, 1994, pp. 110, 159ff.; Horkheimer, 1982, pp. 53-55, 68-97). Dependence on authority requires no further investigation of reality beyond awareness that it is sustained, in part, by existing, normative relations (economic, political, and cultural), and partly on the preferred relations that once existed or might again in the future. In racist or pro-fascist agitation, dependence is manifested psychologically and socially in that leaders, listeners, group members, or loose adherents to a cause will give priority to eliminating the identified enemy rather than advocating changes in the social structure (Löwenthal & Guterman, 1987, p. 16). For Adorno, this problem of dependence was at the heart of the Enlightenment's hope for the liberation of the individual (Adorno & Becker, 1999).[2]

Propagandists and agitators[3] attempt to make their ideas popular as a new normative frame of meaning and social interaction, and as the sustaining values of institutional arrangements. To achieve this, agitators exploit the feelings of dissatisfaction, dislocation, instability, and insecurity. While the social theorists discussed in the first part of this paper focused on the public efforts of specific ideologues, the constant background to their analyses was the ideology of individualism, the competitiveness central to economic development and interpersonal relations, exploitation as a source of wealth-production, and the reduction of language and thought to the communication strategies of advertising. Many irrationalist philosophers and pro-fascist agitators held occupations of status in academia, politics, and religion, and as such Adorno and Löwenthal viewed them as some of the personnel underpinning capitalism's "culture industry."

In one of his most incisive literary critiques, Löwenthal (1986) identified irrationalism as "the pagan awe of unlimited and unintelligible forces of nature, the mystique of blood and race . . . the abrogation of individual responsibility [and] anti-intellectualism" (p. 185). Adorno regarded the limiting of knowledge to the immediate and existent as a "defamation of the intellect," a "resentment against" the intellect that throws the consumer of propaganda back to a perceived security of common sense (Adorno, 2000, p. 96).

Irrationalist propaganda arises from interests that are opposed to historically established and developing ideas, and social policies of equality and tolerance. Such opposition, however objectionable, also exists as a matter of public discussion in various media and established educational

contexts, as well as in the communication of groups dedicated to halting and reversing such progress. Thus, irrationalism, historically and in the present period, is a complex of rationality and irrationality premised on a limited historical perspective and a rejection of reason for a simplistic and passive common sense. Its practical focus is on attitudes, ideas, and proposals for action on issues deemed by propagandists as persistent or recurring and are, therefore, considered unsettled matters of public interest worthy of continued debate. This is especially true in contexts in which social and economic problems and personal insecurities can be explained in subjectivist and experiential terms rather than subjected to comprehensive, historical, and ethical examination by virtue of which such discussion would be of a different character. Research into contemporary hate groups has confirmed this (Cf. Blazak, 2002; Blee, 2002; Lanning, 2004). A way of thinking about and responding to such problems, irrationalism has the potential to create an affirmative atmosphere for hatred, even in philosophical approaches considered to be in the academic mainstream. Hence, Lukács (1980) warns

> that no philosophy is "innocent" or merely academic; that everywhere and always, the danger is objectively at hand that some global fire-raiser will again spark off a devouring conflagration à la Hitler with the philosophical tinder of "innocent" salon conversations, café discussions, university lectures, literary supplements, essays, and so on. (p. 90)

Following a brief account of aspects of critical theorists'[4] analyses, I discuss selected communications of contemporary agitators. I am concerned here with groups that form their attitudes and proposals for action around the rationality/irrationality complex that allows their ideology to encroach upon, or reduce the parameters of, tolerance presently accepted by mainstream attitudes.[5]

II.   The Rationality-Irrationality Complex in Hate Propaganda

Theorists of the Frankfurt School emphasized consumer ideology and the culture industry as social phenomena that provided a critical guide to irrationalism's attempt to account for the problems of modern society. For Löwenthal and Adorno, a major point of distinction between Europe and America was the different level of economic development, especially in the American context where individualized active participation in mass consumption was a stronger feature of the economic system. In America, the dominant social authority became the market and, ideologically at least, the individual consumer herself who internalized market rationale as the legitimate motor of social stability and progress, and as a necessary means of

constructing a self-image. On the one hand, it was necessary to attempt to manage the authority of the market; on the other was a claim about the individual as a fully independent entity exemplified through his or her consumer-related decision-making. From an irrationalist perspective, competitiveness, even in its most brutal form, is a natural feature of human society (Lukács, 1980, p. 375; see also Marcuse, 1968; Mills, 1963). Thus, the competitive atmosphere of a society sustains more than the structure of the market; it also generates differences among social groups.

Reliance on what the individual experiences and what she can learn from it reinforces the belief that sufficient knowledge is obtained through one's defense of existing social relations, and that a fundamental condition of truth is the absence of an imperative to discover it (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1982, p. 144). This means that people need not extend their interests beyond what they think they know of immediate circumstances or advocate alternatives to social conditions. Adorno referred to this as the adoration of the existent, the unreflective reverence for what is deemed factually existing at any moment in the minds of the consumers of propaganda. He considered this a psychological process that "may set the stage for the more obvious effects" (Adorno, 2000, pp. 44-45) such as the need to advocate for re-establishing social conditions that affirm a state of affairs perceived to have been the natural foundation of society, but which have been lost or usurped by others. In the period of Adorno's and Löwenthal research, these "others" were Jews, New Deal advocates, and European exiles, while in the contemporary period hate propagandists cite legal and undocumented immigrants, visible minorities, homosexuals, and advocates of multiculturalism.

The employment of irrationalism in hate propaganda contains an expected contradiction. The agitator gives priority to social relations relevant to an earlier or founding period: namely, conditions dominant social groups (of race, ethnicity, or class) established, the reasonableness of which the agitator projects forward to the present. The agitator also claims that the presence of and/or concessions to subordinate, inferiorized groups has already diminished or diluted those relations. The object of the agitator's concentration is a call for adherence to an imagined, ideal arrangement of culture that once existed, that was a pre-condition for social and personal stability, and that acquired its validity and reasonableness from the separation of social groups. Thus, a national or racial myth is created. For Lukács, creation of myths was an expression of irrationalism since myths were claimed to stand above reason and to represent truth only by way of analogy or symbol; the subjective character of myth allowed the believer to retreat into immediate experience as the primary source of knowledge (Parkinson, 1977, p. 69; Lukács, 1980, p. 414).

It is not merely an appeal to a selective tradition, but is moreover an attempt to constrain autonomous thought and action. Richard Wolin makes a similar point in his discussion of the new right in contemporary Germany, citing Botho Strauss' reassertion of myth as the essential antidote to modern society, its technology, consumerism, and formal rejection of violence. Consistent with the interests of fascist agitators discussed by Adorno and Löwenthal, Strauss argues against the autonomy of the individual and society as a whole to open a space for, as Wolin puts it, a "return to the values of the sacred and 'myth';" for, according to Strauss, the "self-determined individual is the most blatant lie of reason." Wolin remarks that for Strauss, "Myth, conversely, provides us with an experience of the ineffable" (Wolin, 2004, p. 145). Adorno (1994) addressed this theme, arguing that a major purpose of syndicated astrology columns in newspapers was "to satisfy the longings of people who are thoroughly convinced that others (or some unknown agency) ought to know more about themselves and what they should do than they can decide for themselves" (p. 52). The astrologist's and the agitator's message "rarely if ever adequately express social or psychological reality, but manipulate the reader's [or listener's] ideas of such matters in a definite direction" (p. 74). The astrology advice suggested to readers that they experienced situations they could not manage on their own; nor could these situations be explained beyond the level of understanding imputed by the astrologist.

This is consistent with the irrationalist denial of the knowability of the external world. The status of the individual is not determined or conditioned by specific and identifiable social conditions, but by fate. Giving priority to fate over relative autonomy facilitates the irrational dependence on an authority and on existing social relations, neither of which, it is claimed, has a knowable origin other than tradition or the immediacy of experience. To the agitator and his or her audience, social scientific investigation and explanation are of no help (Hodges, 1970, p. 89; Adorno, 2000, p. 43).

Löwenthal and Guterman (1987) discovered that while pro-fascist agitators argued for the dependence of the audience on the leader's message, the latter also encouraged the audience to accept that they required leadership to function adequately in society. The belief that people were incapable of developing comprehensive knowledge was a measure to legitimize dependence on the leader's claims to knowledge based on traditional relations. Adorno (1991) argues that the internalization of this dependence was a deception desired by the audience itself as a form of personal satisfaction (p. 89).

Reliance on the immediacy of experience is central to the success of propaganda, as it negates the need to reason through particular problems.

The experience of personal or social problems is not denied, but is appropriated for its "truth-functional" (Steiner, 1997, pp. 82, 86) value that affirms the dilution of or threat to traditional relations of a culture. Language that functions in this way is directed at the present, the immediate emotional experience, while an abstract of the past trims away aspects of history incompatible with the message. In this way *experience* is sufficient to identify and affirm the knowledgeable insiders whose expertise and whose cultural and ethnic backgrounds are consistent with the historical myth projected by the agitator.

One way in which the rational and the irrational in propaganda were connected was through the essential form of communication in modern society, the advertisement, "the elixir of life," which, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, facilitated economic and status competition. Advertising is a truth-functional mode of communication through which, in the case of propaganda, conformity to the prevailing ideology and emerging movements of reaction is managed. Hate propagandists employ the central features of this mode of communication: monotony, repetition, and a concentration on the essentials required to make a commodity marketable or an idea palatable to their audience of consumers. The advertising style replaces the potential interest for more comprehensive knowledge with the *experience* of consumption. As Horkheimer and Adorno (1982) argue, "Advertising today is a negative principle, a blocking device: everything that does not bear its stamp is economically suspect" (p. 162).

Communication or ideas that do not conform to the form and purpose of advertising to establish a relation of immediacy, factuality, and simplicity between the message and the market goal is treated as distrustful. A highly rationalized form of communication, the language and style of advertising is viewed not as an outright deception or manipulation of the audience or consumer, but as a manifestation of, as Adorno put it, the "borderline between advertising and reality [that] has become so fluent" in modern society. He cites Martin Luther Thomas's fundraising strategy as an example, an appeal "to the American sense of a good bargain, that everything has its price, that everything can be expressed in terms of its financial equivalent" (Adorno, 2000, p. 21). Löwenthal noted that advertising facilitates the identification of the message with reality—with the claim, for example, of specific quantities of adherents to the agitator's movement, in the same way the advertising executive promotes the product by citing the number of satisfied customers. As Löwenthal and Guterman (1987) explain, "The most obvious purpose of such assertions is to instil in the listeners the feeling that, just as they can't be wrong about a nationally advertised product, so they cannot be wrong when they represent a general political trend" (p. 118).

Similar to the advertising slogans and techniques that offer the public justification for consumer behavior, propaganda also communicates images and messages that appear rational in the context of a perceived threat to preferred relations. The common-sense rationale of the message attracts the attention of the person able to appreciate an argument (or a sales pitch) that makes a connection between its professed logic and the consumer's perceived needs and experience, such as frustrated opportunities and the encroachment of others onto previously secure social terrain.

The irrationalism of racist or pro-fascist ideas often involves an accommodation of normative, rational behavior consistent with social expectations, but simultaneously housing the intolerance, even ruthlessness of agitators. Adorno's analysis of astrology as an irrationalist backdrop to popular culture shows how superficial reasonableness of argument and the claimed neutrality of a crude sociology at once argue for social conformism and acknowledge at least two aspects of irrationalism discussed here, the limits to knowledge and the appeal to an authority, as noted earlier, who knows more than people do about themselves–

> an all-pervasive sense of self-alienation. It is in this connection that the concept of "understanding" crops up in the [astrology] column. Sociologically the stress on understanding, being understood as well as understanding others, probably reflects social atomization, the reverse and concomitant of collectivization (Adorno, 1994, pp. 130-131). (See also Lukács, 1980, p. 412.)

It is not that Adorno rejected the notion of understanding in the sense, for example, of standing in another's shoes–something unlikely to be promoted by hate propagandists. Rather, understanding, in this context, is equated with common sense, with the immediate moment, and is the threshold of knowledge, not its full realization. That goal is reason. Thus, propaganda gives priority to individually generated meaning consistent with Max Weber's original sociological definition of understanding: the "direct understanding" of the subjective meaning a person gives to an act, or the "explanatory understanding" of the subjective motive in relation to conditions under which it is pursued (Weber, 1978, pp. 8-9). So long as the causes of these conditions are not sought or the individual's own meaning not subjected to critical scrutiny, propaganda remains on the safe ground of common sense.

III.   IRRATIONALISM IN CONTEMPORARY PROPAGANDA

It is not the intention here to create a direct relation between pro-fascist propaganda of the 1930s and '40s and the organized racism of the con-

temporary period; nor is it the intention to show a direct analytical relation between the theorists discussed previously and the substance of propaganda in the present period. It is possible, however, to illustrate the continuity of irrationalist thinking with earlier theorists' critiques as a backdrop to the present problem.

What is it in the irrational that can be communicated or demonstrated to have some degree of "reasonableness" with which to capture truth-functional experience? In contemporary hate propaganda, one factor is its dual focus on authority. One aspect of this focus is the emphasis on the knowledge leading spokespersons claim to possess about social and individual problems that is intended to explain the audience's alienation, while the second is the historical authority of the white, European race in specific national settings, its rightful dominance by way of history, myth, and genetics. Leadership knowledge is ostensibly demonstrated by the level of education, expertise, and experience held by authors of relevant publications. Although I have not extensively detailed this matter here, of importance are their academic or professional credentials, particularly the status of some as university faculty that lends a degree of legitimacy for the consumer of their views. Two organizationally connected publications surveyed here are *Citizens Informer*,[6] the quarterly newspaper of the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), and *American Renaissance* of the New Century Foundation (NCF). Both are publicly accessible on the internet and/or through subscription. The CCC has several chapters around the United States and a foundation that produces occasional papers, the Confederate Monument Project, and a video series.[7] The New Century Foundation markets books by its founder, Jared Taylor, and others; Taylor is frequently featured in conservative and other media. A third publication, *The Occidental Quarterly* (TOQ), is, apparently, unaffiliated, although some authors of its articles appear in one or both publications noted above.

The CCC, the NCF, and TOQ have been classified as "hate groups."[8] *American Renaissance* (NCF) promotes what are essentially eugenicist views and racial separatism; the CCC has reinvigorated a mainstream representation of racial intolerance with its promotion of the Old South and, with *American Renaissance*, shares a preoccupation with legal and "illegal" immigrants, particularly people of Hispanic background, as problems for American society (crime, welfare, etc.) and a threat to its national cohesion. In 2008, TOQ's statement of principles included concerns for the decline of the white race, the loss of America's uniqueness, and threats to the nations' European character. A clearly irrationalist principle is TOQ's statement that the "perfectibility, let alone equality, of man is not possible and is not a legitimate political aspiration" (www.theoccidentalquarterly.com), an affirmation of Popper's view of the irrational limitation to cognitive ability.

Löwenthal suggested that irrationalism encouraged an identification with similarly situated others willing to ignore the traditional proscription against voicing private troubles publicly and admit openly that they "are disillusioned, ignorant and cheated" (Löwenthal & Guterman, 1987, p. 32). Such presumed common experience lent understanding to one's self-limiting practice and to a self-consciousness of what Löwenthal identified in pro-fascist radio as "the eternal dupe."

> The leader of a movement must first convince his audience that its ideas are inadequate for coping with the situation that produces its discontent. He cannot win adherents without in a sense humiliating them, that is, suggesting that they are inferior in knowledge, strength, or courage and that they need him more than he needs them. (Löwenthal & Guterman, 1987, p. 29)

The attribute of "dupe" is used not in order to alienate that audience, but to convince them that certain political ideas and social arrangements–liberalism and multiculturalism, for example–are promoted for sinister purposes, and that the solution to the problem is the genetic and historical right to a national space. This theme is illustrated in the contemporary propagandists' claim of superior knowledge, buttressed by credentials and occupational status. While claiming superiority, they clearly do not treat their knowledge as exclusive, but as something to be widely disseminated. Such knowledge can be internalized more effectively when their readers or listeners are at least curious about having been fooled or deceived about historical events or the rationale for social policies. The agitator raises problems–immigration, intermarriage–likely experienced by or known to the audience, but which they have been led to consider acceptable as social progress. Having raised problems in this way, the propagandist does not propose solutions; rather, the focus becomes exposing the falsehoods of liberals and radicals, and promoting the common sense myth of genetic nationalism and racial separation.

Propagandists argue that the deception developed over time, beginning at the point when liberal white people believed it necessary to extend Enlightenment values to others. Jared Taylor (2005a) argues that views of race in the early period of colonialism were characterized by confusion because there was a difference in experience between colonizers on the ground and observers in the colonial home who "were full of false piety, mouthing high-sounding nonsense they did not believe." In the period of colonialism, white people "who spent the most time overseas and who knew non-whites best were the ones who were least sentimental about them" (p. 1). One group, for example, were those who attempted to rationally organize South African society around apartheid ("perhaps the single

least understood issue of the 20th Century"), nationalism and ethnic pride, not only, so William Flax (2005) argues, for the sake of the white settlers, but for Africans as well. The common sense approach to the problem is to recognize that

> human history is that of people born into specific families, tribes and nations—sharing experiences in each generation among those whose ancestors had shared experiences and common achievements during many prior generations: people, moreover, whose first concern had always been the well-being of their own posterity. (p. 7)

Thus, Enlightenment ideas are not wholly dismissed or denied to colonized people. Rather, ideas that drove Western sentiments were better developed and experienced by the colonized on their own terms and in their own time. Again, a problem is raised and immediately "solved" by the reduction of its cause to the belief that interaction and integration serve common interests of different peoples so long as, in the end, distinct groups remain separate. One should think of one's race, Taylor argues, as if it were one's extended family, for it is normal and natural to consider the well-being of one's family before the family of another, and so it is natural to extend the same kind of consideration to one's race. This common sense is intended to illuminate the misinformation to which much of the public has succumbed:

> Can any of you imagine emigrating to, say, Cambodia, or Nigeria or Pakistan, and assimilating seamlessly to the point where you were indistinguishable from the natives? . . . It can't be done, and yet, the theory is, Cambodians, Nigerians, Pakistanis . . . can come here by the hundreds of thousands and assimilate without moving a muscle! (Taylor, 2005b, p. 21)

This is the irrationalist "racial doctrine" noted by Popper (1966) whereby "we 'think with our blood' or . . . we 'think with our race'" (p. 243).

As the argument goes, sentimental Westerners have allowed themselves to be deceived by the possibility of multiculturalism (the latter is assumed, generally in these arguments, to be synonymous with assimilation). Thus, the deception of those who thought equality and democracy could be taken to the colonized has been transformed over time into self-hatred. In modern liberal society, self-hatred manifests itself in the compulsion to avoid close bonds between people of European heritage. Sam Dickson (2005, p. 21) remarks, "Indeed, the liberal establishment dins it into the heads of everyone from infancy that the worst thing any White can do is to connect" with other white people. This attitude has been promoted by liberals, Marxists, and even wayward conservatives who have fooled people into

internalizing as normative an open approach to ethnic groups and cultures other than their own. Taylor (2003), reviewing Paul Gottfried's 2002 book *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt*, regards this internalized attitude as a "poisoned state of mind that makes whites not only hate their own history and identity, but commands them to glorify and feel inferior to 'victims' of all kinds: homosexuals, non-whites, foreigners, women, AIDS carriers, and essentially anyone unlike themselves" (p. 8). Taylor (2005c) laments that every ethnic or national group except whites or people of European descent take for granted the biological connection of people of the same heritage (p. 21).

This kind of argument is intended to confirm that which the audience already understands and which there is no need to think it through. It is an inward-looking affirmation of blood, race, and national soil intended to draw a focus on the failure of Enlightenment values and the mis-directed application of ideas and policies of social progress, such as the notion that the values of equality and freedom could be universalized and integrated so thoroughly into human societies that the rebirth of genetically defined national cultures would be counterproductive to progress. Rather, all attempts at universalizing progressive principles have only proven how gullible Westerners are about human improvement and responsibility.

An example of such gullibility is the Western value of altruism when enacted across racial or ethnic lines. The competitive feature of capitalism is not absent in this consideration. Europeans have, for the last couple of centuries, been caught up in "competitive altruism" and "competitive philanthropy" (Jobling, 2003a). Jobling (2003a) argues that "altruism is linked to social status" and "reputation-building;" it has been valuable for promoting charity and consideration for others and in affirming the Christian ethic (p. 3). However, for the "new class" that formed out of the well-educated and altruistic New Left of the 1960s and '70s, "What better objects of generosity than those groups who were furthest from the mainstream: non-whites, homosexuals, criminals and deviates of all kinds?" (p. 5). But, especially because this new class was highly socially conscious, they were deceived by their own altruistic values into addressing problems they thought were social in origin such as poverty, war, and low educational performance, but which were, according to this argument, genetic or biological in origin. Bill Gates is cited as an example of such self-deception: "Predictably, the richest man in the world has poured money into the most futile and therefore the most admired causes: eliminating the racial gap in educational achievement and eradicating AIDS in Africa" (Jobling, 2003b, "A New Form of Moral Superiority"). Gates' philanthropy and that of wealthy African Americans are peculiar forms of social interest among the upper class which, as a class, "separate themselves from the larger society

and could not care less about what goes on outside the walls of their gilded ghettos" (Nelson, 2005, p. 8).

Underlying this argument is its *reversal* of racial or ethnic self-hatred that has been a powerful psychological and political tool of dominant groups since the beginning of the colonial era, but having its historical origins in antisemitism. The basis of Gilman's 1986 definition of self-hatred is that it "results from the outsiders' acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group–that group in society which they see as defining them–as a reality" (p. 2). Historically, the "outsider" in this sense has been the colonized or otherwise subordinated group, while the "reference group" has been the colonizer, the imperialist, the overseer, the white European who possesses the financial and cultural power to aspire, to achieve, and to oppress. In the logic of contemporary propagandists, minority groups, "deviates of all types," and other historically subordinated groups have now become the reference group, while the propagandists and their audiences have become the outsiders. The propagandists' readers or listeners identify with the reversal of these positions, for it explains why their neighborhoods are, to them, less white than two generations ago, why the crime rate has soared and the welfare rolls have grown.

The backdrop of such discussions is the biological/genetic differences among people of distinct ethnic and national groups, and the extent to which these differences demand rigid boundaries and constraints on group interactions. Salter includes competitive altruism as one of the reasons people of European descent are losing their once-dominant status. He uses the term *ethny* to refer to a race, nation, or ethnic group; conceptually, these are meant to be identical terms. Like Taylor's race and family analogy, one's ethny can be compromised, diluted, fragmented only at the peril of the group itself. While intermarriage and adoption of children of different racial or ethnic backgrounds may be described as altruistic behaviors, they are excessive, misplaced indiscriminate acts that threaten one's ethny. Salter explains, "Indiscriminate altruism such as foregoing reproduction to aid nonkin to reproduce will weed out genes that code for such behaviour [i.e. the natural genetic interests of a race], if maintained over many generations" (cited in Taylor, 2005d, p. 8). The loss of genetic interests, it is argued, becomes increasingly detrimental to native populations and to the culture they have developed. Irrationalists will not articulate the motivation and complexity of relations attended by altruism; instead they shift the emphasis "from a defense of ethical values to a biological self-defense" (Löwenthal & Guterman, 1987, p. 106).

The use of science is conditioned by the prior interest of the genetic-nationalist myth, the idea that there is something distinctive and special about any national group that it is worth employing protective measures

against the dilution of its genes. In "A Letter from a Grandfather to His Genes," Anthony Hilton (2005), a retired academic from Concordia University in Montreal, attempts to draw the attention of younger generations to the destruction of their race. Like one branch of the KKK, Hilton cites "today's quasi-ideology of 'bio-diversity,'" a component of the more rational, less volatile racism that promotes a kind of inter-racial, inter-ethnic set of relations. According to Hilton and the Klan, true diversity occurs when all racial and ethnic groups accept their genetic uniqueness and separation becomes the chief means by which to guarantee racial survival and sustain a viable culture. Like others such as William Flax, Hilton's interest is not in the destruction of other ethnic groups or their cultures. The argument is a protective or defensive one. That is, protection of "ethnies" is possible not through policies of open immigration and the modernist acceptance of intermarriage; rather, the longevity of the group is secured through endogamy based on genetic necessity. What is good for one ethnic group is good for another. As Hilton expresses it,

> One never knows when or how another culture or ethny may turn out to benefit one's own, but if they go extinct, they are lost forever. Maybe there are some cultures you detest, but maybe you should hold your nose and hope they survive, too–someplace. (p. 53)

Such an approach redefines equality among races or ethnic groups (Boggs, 1993) so that equal treatment comes about through their separation as the only means to secure the conditions for longevity. In this way, there is not a direct assault on specific groups as in the "'problem' idea" promoted by more directly racist propaganda. Adorno noted the difference in some of the interviewees for the authoritarian personality study who expressed ambivalence or indifference about the Jewish problem in contrast to earlier Nazi propaganda that directly cited Jews as the problem, or in the present case, the more volatile line of attack directed at immigrants and visible minorities. Adorno argues that this approach was a "pattern of conformist 'sensibleness' [that] lends itself very easily to the defense of various kinds of irrationality" (Adorno et al., 1982, pp. 312-313).

One means by which contemporary propagandists promote their ideology is to exploit aspects of minority group histories as an illustration of how to best accomplish genetic, separatist, and nationalist goals. Here, again, a seemingly positive focus serves the irrationalist purpose. Kevin MacDonald, a professor of psychology at California State University, has written extensively on Jewish history in order to demonstrate, among other things, how Jews have enhanced their position in Europe and North America by asserting their self-interests. Properly understood, MacDonald claims, the

"Jewish model" of ethnic self-promotion can serve Euro-ethnic groups in their attempts to survive the encroachment of others. Jewish ethnic pride, hyper-ethnocentrism, Zionism, even the political radicalism of Jews have been successful means of securing their elite status in the West (MacDonald, 2004). For white, non-Jewish communities, the "Jewish model" is an exemplar of endurance of which, under present conditions of self-deception, people of non-Jewish European background can only dream. His analysis of the sources and consequences of Jewish activism at once acknowledges Jewish power and argues it is responsible for political ideas and social policies most detrimental to the security of other ethnic groups and elements of culture that have sustained traditional authority relations within the ethnic group.

Other minority groups have benefited equally through programs of self-promotion. While whites have promoted multiculturalism through values of inclusion and pluralism, other ethnic groups have exploited it to assert "an explicitly racial, Afro-centric or Hispanic history" (Taylor, 1992). Whites, according to Boggs (1993), were fooled into helping organize the Civil Rights movement only to find that after working together to achieve equality and integration, they were gradually excluded. For Boggs (1990), the lesson is that whites diluted their own racial (i.e. genetic) interests for the equality of all races; blacks, on the other hand, took advantage of the "waning white consciousness [that] left a clear field for the growing demands . . . of black consciousness" (p. 4). Like MacDonald, Griffin (2002) argues that whites should take their survival cues from minorities who are attuned to their ethnic (genetic) interests. He elaborates a 9-point self-help program for "living white" that focuses not only on the obvious "racial identity and pride," but also on such other characteristics as "courage," "positive mental attitude," and "personal happiness" (p. 35).

The contemporary hate propaganda discussed here concentrates on the special knowledge spokespersons possess that exposes a long historical project of deception, illuminates the application of misguided values to social policies, and conveys to the audience the social and psychological manipulation that has undermined its security and cultural well-being. The dissemination of such knowledge is intended to make consumers of hate propaganda authorities over a destiny forced upon them by those who have failed to adhere to the natural priority of racial and national exclusiveness. This propaganda is successful to the extent that understanding at the level of immediate experience is accepted as the path to the solution of perceived problems.

IV. Conclusion

What happens when there is a refusal to extend the pursuit of knowledge beyond what is claimed to be intuitively understood as a legitimate expression of experience? Such problems are expected and normal in the pursuit of knowledge. Goldmann (1997) made precisely this point in his sociological analysis of communication. It is only in the freezing of the refusal to develop further knowledge that communication turns toward the irrational, as it does in the contemporary hate propagandists cited here, as well as the pro-fascists and antisemites of an earlier time. It is, perhaps, the personal disappointments and insecurities, the crisis of declining economic opportunities, and a worldwide resurgence of nationalism that cause the concerns over the increased presence of racial and ethnic minorities to halt the process of thinking where emotional satisfaction can be secured immediately outside the complexity of the issue. Then and now, the failure or the refusal to go beyond immediate experience and simplistic sociological analyses is precisely the anchor upon which hate propagandists rely for an adequate reception of their messages.

Analyzing hate propaganda through its irrationalist basis makes sense if one first shares the philosophical orientations of Popper, Lukács, Adorno, and Löwenthal, that social issues and personal problems have historical origins and trajectories of development, and objectively possible solutions can be implemented through progressive humanist values and social policies. Their perspective is valuable as a critical approach to hate propaganda if irrationalism is accepted as *consciously* limited thought. Exploring critical approaches to irrationalism in propaganda and relating its premises to the present period is a further effort to move research toward knowledge of why attitudes of hatred can be appropriated by some with comparative ease and relative impunity. Historically, irrationalism has led to the affirmation of the complex of race, family, and nation as a guaranteed refuge against the intrusion of modernist behavioral expectations and progressive values. The exploration of irrationalism goes some way toward addressing this problem because it draws attention to the protected common-sense solutions buttressed by relatively open debate, limited historical perspective, and superficial understanding.

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NOTES

1. Some factions of the Klan and other organizations, such as the imprisoned Matt Hale's Creativity Movement, and Women for Aryan Unity (a part of Stormfront), among others, are committed to community-building around racial separatism, creating children's and youth groups, providing parental advice, and so on. See, for example, Lanning, 2004.

2. Relevant to Adorno and Becker's discussion is their source, Kant (1784).

3. Löwenthal used this term to distinguish reactionaries and fascists (or pro-fascists) from reformers and revolutionaries; see Löwenthal and Guterman (1987), pp. 15-21.

4. I recognize that it would be erroneous to include Lukács as a critical theorist if that term referenced only those of the Frankfurt School. Here the meaning is intended to be more of a general critical orientation to social analysis. I am also aware that writing of Frankfurt theorists and Lukács as if their orientations were entirely compatible will not hold. Nevertheless, the present context attempts to show similarities in their orientation to irrationalism and its manifestations.

5. Although I have not developed it here, this idea is clearly related to Herbert Marcuse's (1965) concept of "repressive tolerance."

6. Back issues of *Citizens Informer* were formerly included on the CCC website, http://www.cofcc.org but these have now been removed.

7. One video production titled The Frankfurt School Story purportedly reveals the way Marcuse and Adorno managed to "destroy the moral and social fabric of America" with their critical theory and leftist politics. The advertisement was retrieved from http://www.cofcc.org/foundation/frankfurt_school.html in 2006, but has since been removed.

8. Both the Council of Conservative Citizens and The Occidental Quarterly are identified in the Intelligence Files of hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center as White Nationalist. The SPLC once listed the New Century Foundation as a hate group, but no longer does; however, Jared Taylor, the Foundation's founder and most prolific author, is listed as a White Nationalist.

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