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Retrospective: Bernays' doctrine of public opinion

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The author of this article attempts to fill in the gaps in a public relations body of literature that is without a full-scale biography of Edward L. Bernays. In reviewing the numerous articles and books which analyzed Bernays' views on propaganda and public opinion, Marvin Olasky brings to life the wide range of reactions to Bernays' work. Indeed, this is a man who was no stranger to controversy.

Dr. Olasky describes Bernays as one who "not only rode the wave of popular psychology and desire for social contro, but who also became a seminal thinker concerning the means of synthesizing a new, Freudian perspective on man with the older practices of the publicists' trade. He proclaimed not just the inevitability but the centrality of propaganda techniques." The principles Bernays developed and expounded were radical in both their origin and application, and Dr. Olasky has carefully traced how they were received by business professionals of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.



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