

CLOSED-MINDED BELIEF AND INDOCTRINATION

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ABSTRACT

What is indoctrination? This paper clarifies and defends a structural epistemic account of indoctrination according to which indoctrination is the inculcation of closed-minded belief caused by “epistemically insulating content.” This is content which contains a proviso that serious critical consideration of the relevant alternatives to one’s belief is reprehensible whether morally or epistemically. As such, it does not demand that indoctrination be a type of unethical instruction, ideological instruction, unveridical instruction, or instruction which bypasses the agent’s rational evaluation. In this way, we can account for why indoctrination can occur for liberal democratic beliefs as much as it occurs for fascist, fundamentalist, or fanatical belief: for indoctrination is fundamentally a structural epistemic phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION

My question in this paper is:

What is indoctrination?

Indoctrination is a type of miseducation.¹ Miseducation is education gone wrong: rather than simply education which fails to meet its aims, miseducation has intuitively objectionable aims. It can have a corrupting influence on its subjects.² How, then, should we understand indoctrination as a type of miseducation? Epistemologists have had surprisingly little to say about indoctrination.³ I will argue that indoctrination is instruction which inculcates the agent with closed-minded beliefs in a particular way. As we will see, although indoctrination has been traditionally linked to instruction aimed at belief in or framed by an ideology, or instruction which bypasses the agent’s rational evaluation, my account of indoctrination does not

require that the cause of the belief be framed by an ideology or that it bypass the agent’s rational evaluation. In this way, it is able to accommodate intuitions about indoctrination in mundane cases, not involving ideology, overt force or coercion. What is essential to indoctrination is that the instruction causes one to closed-mindedly believe that *p* as a result of the *epistemic* structure of the cause of the belief. For this reason, my account is a structural epistemic account of indoctrination (more on this in §5). Although philosophers of education have linked indoctrination to closed-mindedness, we still lack a theory of indoctrination which explains exactly how the two are connected.⁴ By drawing on the resources of contemporary epistemology, then, we can enhance our understanding of what indoctrination is and how it is different from other types of miseducation.

Here is the plan for the paper. In sections 1–3, I consider the “unethical instruction,”

“rationality-bypassing,” and “ideological” accounts of indoctrination and argue that they fail. Their failure is due primarily to not giving an explanatory role to the *epistemic* outcomes of indoctrination. In sections 4–5, I consider two *prima facie* plausible views: the “higher-order epistemic” and the “structural epistemic” accounts and argue that they also fail, although they fail in a way which contains a key insight into what indoctrination essentially is. This sets up my defense of the *robust structural epistemic account* of indoctrination in section 6.

I. THE UNETHICAL INSTRUCTION ACCOUNT

Miseducation is a type of instruction which aims at intuitively perverse or corrupt epistemic objects, states, or dispositions (e.g., false belief, prejudice, or carelessness.) We can investigate miseducation at the level of the method of instruction, the intent of the instructor, the content of the instruction, as well as its outcomes, to see exactly where its corrupting features lie (Callan and Arena 2009, p. 102; Merry 2005).⁵ As such, we have four types of theories of indoctrination: method-based, intent-based, content-based, and outcome-based theories. As a starting point, let us begin with a simple method-based account:

The unethical instruction view: indoctrination is unethical instruction. That is, the instructor *S*’s teaching *T* the recipients that *p* is indoctrinatory if and only if *T* is unethical instruction in *p*.

For example, suppose Asha successfully teaches Li that *p*, such that Li comes to believe that *p* on this basis, but the way Asha instructed her is immoral. For example, perhaps Asha used coercive persuasion techniques in order to facilitate Li’s uptake of the instruction against her will.⁶ On the unethical instruction account of indoctrination, Asha has thereby indoctrinated Li into believing that *p*, irrespective of the content of *p* or its

epistemic status (i.e., as true or supported by the evidence).

What motivates the unethical instruction account is the sense that the charge of indoctrination carries *moral force*. In particular, that the indoctrinator is properly blameworthy for his instruction (see Sher 2006).⁷ When you say of someone or some group that they *indoctrinated* so-and-so, you seem to imply that what they have done is *morally wrong*. In this fashion, attributions of indoctrination have moral force. Callan and Arena (2009) make this point vivid with the following example. Imagine that you are teaching someone about some issue, and an observer asserts that you are indoctrinating the recipient of your instruction. Intuitively, you would be appalled by their accusation—or at the very least, genuinely concerned—in a way that is different from merely being told that you are not teaching them well or that the students aren’t learning.

The key problem with the unethical instruction account of indoctrination is that it seems both too broad and too narrow. Consider first the many and varied ways that teaching might be reasonably thought to be unethical without being indoctrinatory. For example, suppose that lying is wrong but the teacher lies to the students by intentionally teaching them the known falsehood that there are finitely many prime numbers. The students trust him and come to believe this as a result. In this case, the teacher’s instruction was unethical because it essentially involved lying to the pupils for no good reason, but it was intuitively not indoctrinatory. The reason why is that the students might easily change their beliefs. The interested student who looks up the proof or tries to work through it for themselves can learn that the teacher’s testimony was false, and thereby update their belief. Here is a second case. Consider the teacher who wants to teach the kindergarten students about war and so provides them with what is, unbeknownst to them, a detailed simulated

war scenario for them to participate in. The students plug into the simulation and come to believe that they are in war. This seems like morally wrong instruction—should such young students be unwillingly and needlessly exposed to the horrors of war (even simulated war)? Intuitively not. But they were not indoctrinated into believing anything, even if they nevertheless learn how a platoon forms or how soldiers evade gunfire as a result. The reason why is that no specific psychological profile was aimed at here: no belief, no disposition, no pattern of thinking. It would be no more indoctrinatory than putting on a VR headset and forming beliefs about your simulated environment. The fact that some environment *constrains* what you are primed to believe does not suggest that you are thereby indoctrinated as result. This shows that unethical instruction is not sufficient for indoctrination.

Second, we might think that although indoctrination can be a way of learning and acquiring beliefs, not every case of indoctrination *is* morally wrong. To see this, imagine that it is in the pupil's best interest to learn that *p*; that there are extremely good moral and practical reasons for why they ought to believe *p* and to act in accordance with this belief. For example, one such case might be:

Fascist Prevention: the state has an interest in preventing extremely subversive political groups, such as Nazis and other kinds of fascists from having public platforms to engage in political dialogue or outreach. Imagine the state has recently instituted this policy because unambiguously self-avowed Nazis are growing rapidly in the area. They have said that if they gain power, they will create deathcamps. Councils, townhalls, and politicians meet to discuss the issue of teaching students about the political philosophy of fascism, and unanimously agree that the schools will not cover this but will instead teach elementary school children the history of twentieth-century fascism and that fascism is morally wrong. As such, children in state schools are taught from an early age that

fascism is morally wrong with little offered by way of reasons for why this is until they reach upper secondary school, at which point teachers offer reasons for why fascism is morally wrong but there is no dialogue or debate about it.⁸

In this case, you might think that the teachers indoctrinate their pupils at an early age into believing that *fascism is wrong*. After all, not only are reasons not offered for why this is but there is simply no discussion about it. But it is not clearly morally wrong to inculcate such a belief in those circumstances. For the very young children are not able to grapple with or appreciate the moral and philosophical reasons for why fascism is wrong and yet it does not seem intuitively wrong to inculcate the belief that it is wrong independently of offering any moral or epistemic reasons at that stage.⁹ Perhaps they are exempt from the kind of doxastic respect we feel are due to persons who can critically evaluate moral reasons. Such cases might lead us to think that indoctrination, then, *can* yield true belief without the instruction which leads to this outcome necessarily being morally wrong. Indeed, we might think that early childhood *moral education*—education into what is morally forbidden and permitted—is precisely the sort of case in which the instruction is indoctrinatory but *not* (or not necessarily) morally wrong. It matters to our assessment of whether the indoctrinatory instruction is morally wrong exactly *why* the teachers engaged in that type of instruction. But if a necessary condition of indoctrinatory instruction were that *it is morally wrong* instruction, this kind of assessment would be groundless; perhaps even confused. The lesson we should draw from this account, I think, is that although morally wrong instruction is not sufficient for indoctrination—and not clearly necessary either—we should expect a theory of indoctrination to be compatible with the instruction being *prima facie* morally wrong. What the unethical instruction account highlights is that indoctrinatory

instruction is intuitively problematic in some way. It is a sort of miseducation. But it is not at all clear that it is essentially morally wrong instruction.

2. THE RATIONALITY-BYPASSING ACCOUNT

Consider Alex's aversion to violence at the end of *A Clockwork Orange*. To reconfigure the case, imagine that Alex went from disbelieving to believing that *violence is wrong* as a result of undergoing the Ludovico technique. There are two key thoughts here. First, that Alex's doxastic and practical change was due to a learning method which "bypassed" his rational evaluation. Second, it was a technique which *forced* him into a condition where the target belief would receive easy uptake. This strikes an intuitive chord: is not indoctrination necessarily coercive or forceful in a way which gets around one's rational evaluation? According to Kleinig (1982), indoctrination methods are those which "induce beliefs in a way which bypasses the reasoning process of the person to which they are applied, or coerce his will and are systematically applied over a prolonged period" (Kleinig 1982, p. 58).¹⁰ Compare with Cooper (1973), who explicitly links indoctrination to belief adoption on the basis of instruction without any appeal to evidence: "indoctrination will be identified . . . by the tendency of the activities involved to produce certain effects, e.g., to result in non-evidentially held beliefs" (Cooper 1973, p. 53). Call this *rationality-bypassing account*:

Rationality-bypassing account: S's teaching *T* the recipients that *p* is indoctrinatory if and only if *T* aims at getting the recipients to believe that *p* (i) independently of the recipients rationally assessing whether *p* or (ii) independently of the recipients considering any evidence for *p*.¹¹

For example, think of the infamous Jim Jones cult leader who solicited members into his church by "love-bombing" them with

praise and promise—of how his religious beliefs align with their own deep feelings and reflect profound insights—but later fostered retention of the promoted beliefs and practices through fear, intimidation, and punishment. Indeed, Jones isolated his members from their former epistemic communities. Outside information was forbidden and one's access to it was impeded. Jones would make them dependent on him for both emotional support as well as for basic necessities.¹² This can lead to traumatic bonding, an emotional bond that is resistant to change (Painter 1981). In this kind of case, the belief inculcation process seems to sidestep the agent's critical reasoning capacities. Consider also certain kinds of *nudging*. An *intentional nudge* is a certain kind of intentional influence on the agent's decision. To illustrate, consider the fact that a cafeteria might situate the healthier options closer to a desirable location, "nudging" people towards healthier eating options without eliminating the unhealthy options. We can imagine a totalistic series of intentional nudges. For example, imagine effective social media ads and fake news campaigns aimed at influencing the agent's *doxastic* states, bypassing their rational evaluation using subtle behavioral psychology as well as personalized push-notifications and text messages.

The problem with the rationality-bypassing account is that it trades on extreme cases which might be *paradigmatic* without being *representative* of indoctrination generally. After all, some indoctrinators will appeal to complex pieces of reasoning—think of religious fundamentalists who teach their followers the "five proofs of God's existence" or the "common fallacies of nonbelievers." In these cases, the agent's reasoning capacities are not sidestepped but engaged. Moreover, it need not be the case that one is forced, coerced, or manipulated into adopting the new doctrines (see Callan and Arena 2009). For example, although it is true that in paradigmatic cases

of religious fundamentalist teaching, where indoctrination seems to occur, some external threat *is* issued—eternal suffering for having the wrong beliefs or eternal separation from one’s loved ones for failing to convert them, say—but these threats need not be internally issued by the group. It can be the case that the group leaders or followers do *not* force, coerce, or even manipulate members into remaining in the group or into accepting the doctrines. Indeed, although a rule might be adopted (even if only implicitly) which leads the members to avoid or dismiss countervailing evidence, there is an important sense in which it is still *up to the agent* to follow the rule.¹³ The converted might make a conscious, reflective choice to follow the rule—perhaps it reveals their devotion—and this choice need not be irrational or even arational from a practical point of view. The point here is that indoctrination seems to occur even if the instruction does not appeal exclusively to the agent’s emotions or desires, bypassing their rational capacities in turn.

As a final worry, we might think that the rationality-bypassing account is too permissive. On the rationality-bypassing account, a belief- or practice-inculcation method *M* is indoctrinatory if and only if *M* bypasses the learner’s critical reasoning capacities. And the subject is indoctrinated if they come to believe that *p* in virtue of *M*. But now imagine certain cases of operant conditioning in which a subject adopts a certain practice or belief, such as when an addict, through learned positive and negative reinforcement, avoids cigarettes or cigarette-related contexts (bars, convenient shops, or other smokers). Let us imagine that part of their newly inculcated habit is forming the belief that *I shouldn’t smoke*. Was this belief indoctrinated? It is not clear. The problem is that the rationality-bypassing account seems to have the consequence that all cases of operant conditioning which yield doxastic changes *are* indoctrinatory, and *that* seems far too permissive. We do

not want *all* learning which does not primarily depend upon the agent’s rational capacities to count as indoctrination. This would be too revisionary. What the rationality-bypassing account has going for it is the implication that indoctrination is *epistemically defective* instruction. The key question is whether the epistemic defect is that the instruction necessarily *bypasses* the agent’s rational evaluation.

3. THE IDEOLOGICAL INSTRUCTION ACCOUNT

Let us now move on to a content-based account. Consider the idea that it is specifically the instruction of a *worldview* or an *ideology* which makes the instruction indoctrinatory. Ideology is pretheoretically associated with indoctrination. For we tend to see indoctrinators as motivated by their ideological interests: their instruction is *unbalanced* and *partisan*.

“Ideology” is ambiguous. I am using the descriptive sense of “ideology” here, on which ideology consists in “a set of interconnected beliefs and their associated attitudes, shared and used by members of a group or population, that relate to problematic aspects of social and political topics” (Fine and Sandstrom 1993, p. 24). These interconnected beliefs function to guide political belief, inquiry, and action. According to the descriptive sense of “ideology,” the mainstay -isms of the twentieth century—liberalism, socialism, conservatism, capitalism, and so forth—are all ideologies. A worldview is similar but more expansive: a worldview is any set of interconnected beliefs and norms, including religious worldviews (e.g., Buddhism), naturalistic worldviews (e.g., scientism), conspiratorial worldviews (e.g., Illuminati conspiratorialism), and so forth, insofar as they guide belief or action. This contrasts with the epistemic sense of “ideology,” on which ideology is not just any set of interconnected beliefs but ones that serve

a deformative epistemic function, such as concealing or misrepresenting facts about unjust social arrangements (Mills 2017; Shelby 2014; Eagleton 1991). For now, I will work with the descriptive sense of ideology since this the sense that defenders of what I will call the *ideological account of indoctrination* seem to be working with as well (see Flew 1972; Phillips 1989). According to this view:

Ideology account: S's teaching T the recipients that W is indoctrinatory if and only if T aims at getting the recipients to believe that W and W is an ideology or worldview (e.g., a set of fundamental normative or metaphysical commitments—a "package" of interconnected views that guides how one ought to evaluate individual cases).¹⁴

For example, consider the following case:

University teacher: Sammy is a theoretical physicist at a leading university. She has not thought much about politics, and thereby doesn't take a stand on most big-picture political issues. However, official state doctrine and Sammy's teaching of relativity theory are deemed inconsistent, and she must stop teaching it. Moreover, although Sammy is a Catholic and has not thought much about the relationship between Catholicism and political issues, she is deemed a political subversive for being a Catholic. She objects but her objection is seen as anti-state doctrine and stemming from latent counter-revolutionary beliefs. Sammy's physicist colleagues and friends are also deemed anti-state doctrine dissidents for failing to conform. Indeed, even the clothing she wears is interpreted as counter-revolutionary and her resistance to adopting state-ideas is taken as decisive evidence of her anti-state doctrine sympathies. Sammy is subsequently instructed in the state doctrine and its application to every part of her life. (see Taylor 2016, pp. 19–20)

In these sort of cases, entire worldviews are taught. According to the ideology account, it is this fact which makes the instruction indoctrinatory. Although the ideology account is plausible to some degree—for we tend to think that the instruction of ideologies, such

as Neoliberalism or fundamentalist Christianity, are indoctrinatory—it suggests that we are all indoctrinated because we've all probably gone through an education which inculcates a certain worldview or is framed by the prevailing ideology.¹⁵ If this is right, then a proponent of the ideology account faces a dilemma. She needs to demarcate (i) cases in which the indoctrination is problematic and why that is from (ii) cases in which the indoctrination is unproblematic and why that is. The problem, of course, is that we intuitively find indoctrination to be problematic in *some* way and thus the proponent of the ideology account will need to give a revisionary story here. Indeed, it threatens to collapse the distinction between indoctrination as a type of *miseducation* from education entirely.¹⁶

However, the proponent of the ideological account can motivate the difference between problematic and unproblematic indoctrination, corresponding to the difference between problematic and unproblematic *ideologies*. For she can say that some ideologies have epistemic and moral defects, and these defects are what explain the problematic features of some ideologies. For example, fascist ideology is false and immoral, whereas (arguably) social democratic ideology is neither.¹⁷ Of course, there are still unanswered questions here: whether ideologies are all *in principle* problematic for other reasons as well as what, exactly, the criteria are for evaluating an ideology as acceptable or unacceptable. I will set these questions to the side, because I think that even if the proponent of the ideology account can give us satisfying answers to them, there are other, perhaps more worrying issues facing the ideology account. The first is that the ideology account does not neatly discriminate between the following sorts of scenarios:

Intentional virtue-cultivating ideology instruction: S instructs their pupils in p, q, r, \dots , at t , such that they compose an ideology, and it is S's intention that the pupils adopt the target beliefs

and practices in virtue of learning the ideology they are instructed in at t .¹⁸

Higher-order intentional ideology instruction: S instructs their pupils in p, q, r, \dots , at t , such that they compose an ideology, but S 's aim is merely descriptive. The instructor lacks the aim of inculcating belief and practice at t , although it is the higher authority's S^* 's intention—who presides over S and determines the content they must teach—that the pupils adopt the target beliefs and practices in virtue of learning the ideology they are instructed in at t .

In the first case, the teacher intends for the pupils to adopt the ideology on the basis of their instruction, but this is not obviously indoctrinatory. It depends on *what* the ideology is. For what if it is part of the content of the ideology itself that you need not believe what your instructors say, or that you are encouraged to openly inquire into why the instructed views are correct using any resources available to you—that it might be true or false—and that it is neither morally right nor wrong to adopt the ideology? Intuitively that instruction would not be indoctrinatory but it would be instruction which aimed at ideological uptake. It might be built into the ideology that failing to adopt or to even reject it is permissible. In such a case, even though it is part of the instructor's intention that the pupils adopt the ideology, it is not clearly indoctrinatory instruction, for the pupils are free to do otherwise and even encouraged to do so.

In the second case, even if the higher authorities strongly desire and manifest their intention for the pupils to learn the sanctioned ideology on the basis of the teacher's instruction, this does not show that the instruction is indoctrinatory. First, the teacher might not intend this. Indeed, the teacher might not even accept the ideology.¹⁹ In such a case, you might think that the indoctrination flows downward vis-à-vis the higher authorities' intentions, but again whether it is *indoctrinatory* or not will turn heavily on

the actual *content* of the ideology and also on the *content* of the authorities' intentions, and thereby *not* on the fact that what is being taught is an *ideology*. Thus, the main problem is that the more weight we give to the instructor or the higher authorities' intentions, the more it looks as if the fact that what is being taught *is an ideology* will be superfluous. For what determines whether the instruction is indoctrinatory will turn on the instructor's intentions and the content of what they are teaching (irrespective of whether it is an ideology) and not necessarily on the fact that it is an ideology. For these reasons, we should pursue a different account of indoctrination.

4. HIGHER-ORDER EPISTEMIC ACCOUNT

The defects of the ideological account point to an intention-based account of indoctrination. To make space for a plausible intention-based account, consider why a *pure* intention-based account would be far too permissive. According to a pure intention account, you need to intend your pupils come to believe what you teach them on the basis of your instruction (and perhaps you need to manifest such intentions to your pupils—whether sincerely or not). But intuitively it cannot be that simply *having* or *manifesting* the intention that your students believe the content you are teaching them is what makes the instructions indoctrinatory, as then far too much of ordinary education would be indoctrinatory, such as elementary mathematical or scientific education. Indeed, this intuition stands even in cases where the content is *controversial*, such as ethics or politics. To see this, contrast the following cases:

Politics: Zelda instructs her pupils in political views p ("The U.S. is a democracy"), q ("The U.S. has a fair representative system"), and r ("The U.S. is not a political oligarchy"), such that Zelda strongly intends for them to adopt those beliefs on the basis of her instruction.

Additionally, Zelda takes no stand on whether her pupils should inquire into whether *p*, *q*, and *r* are true or why, and clearly indicates that they are free to do as they wish.

*Politics**: Zelda instructs her pupils in political views *p*, *q*, and *r*, such that Zelda strongly intends for them to adopt those beliefs on the basis of her instruction. Additionally, Zelda takes the strong stand on whether her pupils' inquiry into whether *p*, *q*, and *r* are true or why, holding that they absolutely should not question them—that doing so would be highly irrational or morally wrong—and she makes her views about this clear to her pupils.

A comparison of these cases suggests that it is not the intentions of the instructor *per se* that matters for our judgments about whether the instruction is indoctrinatory. Instead, it is whether the pupils are free to inquire and question the doctrines they are taught. That is what separates lecturing controversial material from indoctrinatory instruction in the controversial material. So, the proponent of the pure intention account needs to add that the instructor manifests their higher-order belief and intention that the pupils not question or seriously critically inquire into why the doctrine is true, whereby doing otherwise would be denounced as irrational or morally reprehensible (see White 1967; Degenhardt 1976 [2005]). Call this the *higher-order epistemic account*. More specifically, this account says that:

Higher-order epistemic account: *S*'s teaching *T* the recipients that *p* is indoctrinatory if and only if *T* aims at getting the recipients to believe that *p* and it is *S*'s plan or intention that the recipients not consider seriously whether or why *p*—*S*'s aim is for the pupils to be dogmatic about *p*.

The virtue of this account is that it does not take it that aiming for students to simply *believe* the content of their instruction is indoctrinatory. It also coheres with our pretheoretical idea that indoctrination involves *dogmatism* and *closed-mindedness*. For indoctrinatory instruction does not simply

aim at the fixation of belief but a certain way of holding the belief. In this case, the instructor is dogmatic or else plans for the learners to be dogmatic in their retention of the inculcated beliefs. An agent is dogmatic about *p* only if the agent manifests an unwillingness to revise or to seriously engage critically with their belief that *p*. For example, if you have ever engaged a global conspiracy theorist—someone who believes that there is a nefarious conspiracy of actors behind every major political event—you'll easily see that although they might be willing to engage with you in argument, they are not at all willing to revise their conspiratorial belief in light of the argument. This is a paradigm case of dogmatism: someone who is unwilling to conciliate even if they were apprised of evidence which undermines their belief. Another important note: although the higher-order epistemic accounts say that it is instructor's plan for the recipients to be dogmatic about *p*, this plan is *de re*. For the instructor can but most likely will *not* consider his or his intended audience's resulting attitude to *p* to be *dogmatic*—indeed, perhaps the opposite. The instruction takes places under a different guise.

Dogmatism is closely related to closed-mindedness but different. According to Heather Battaly, closed-mindedness is an “unwillingness to engage seriously with relevant alternatives” (Battaly 2018, p. 262). For example, it might be that the conspiracy theorist is dogmatic about *p* but *is* willing to consider seriously the relevant contrary hypotheses *q*, *r*, and *s* to *p*. The problem is that they are not willing to *revise* their belief that *p* even after carefully considering the relevant alternatives (which we can suppose defeats their belief). After all, they'll employ strategies to immunize their belief from the counterevidence. Now it might be the case that closed-mindedness implies dogmatism so understood. Perhaps it is part of what it means to be willing to consider seriously the

relevant alternatives to one's belief that one is also sincerely open to fully revising one's belief in light of those considerations as well. But at the very least they are different concepts. A dogmatic person is closed-minded in a particular sort of way. In what follows, I will suppose that the proponent of the higher-order epistemic account will permit that either dogmatic *or* closed-minded belief that *p* is sufficient for an indoctrinatory outcome.

The thorn in the higher-order epistemic account is, I think, the fact that it does not have the resources to deal with *accidental* or *unintentional* indoctrination. To see this, contrast the politics cases with:

*Politics***: Zelda instructs her pupils in political views *p*, *q*, and *r*, such that Zelda strongly intends for them to adopt those beliefs on the basis of her instruction. Moreover, *p*, *q*, and *r* are such that they contain the content that inquiry into why they are true, questioning them, and failure to believe them is irrational and morally corrupt. However, Zelda does not manifest any preferences about whether the pupils ought to believe *p*, *q*, and *r* or act in accordance with them. She simply disinterestedly teaches them as she would teach ordinary facts about geology or history.²⁰

We can imagine that the pupils come to believe and act in accordance with the doctrines because the content of these doctrines intimidate or put moral pressure on the pupils to believe the doctrines. This could result from cognitive dissonance, as the pupils might have the (possibly false) presupposition that the instructor deeply cares about their attitudes to the target doctrines, together with the conformity bias to act in accordance with people in positions of authority (e.g., the teacher or school). Indeed, conformity could equally result from the (possibly false) presupposition that the instructor would act aggressively to any perceived unwillingness to conform. Nevertheless, the instructor might lack or otherwise fail to manifest the relevant higher-order epistemic beliefs or intentions.

In these cases, the indoctrination would be accidental, for the instructors might only intend for the pupils to believe the doctrines but *not* forego critical inquiry into certain aspects of the doctrines—including the aspect that the doctrines should not be questioned or that doing critically evaluating them would be wrong. This would be strictly at odds with the higher-order epistemic account, but the instruction still looks indoctrinatory.

5. THE STRUCTURAL EPISTEMIC ACCOUNT

The deficiencies of both the method- and the content-based accounts we examined in the previous sections contain an insight into what can make a piece of instruction indoctrinatory. For it can be some fact about the *epistemic structure* of the instruction. Namely, those properties which preclude or incentivize one from seriously questioning or inquiring into it. As we have seen, however, this problematic epistemic structure need not be due to the higher-order epistemic attitudes of the instructors. For one can learn a view which says that inquiry is prohibited because it is irrational or immoral. This can lead one to become closed-minded with respect to the uptake of the view.²¹ This, I think, is the key insight we should extract here.

The recognition of the link between indoctrination and closed-mindedness is not novel. In their (2006), Barrow and Woods argue that “to be indoctrinated is to have a closed mind” and specifically that indoctrination is “causing someone to have an unshakable commitment to the truth of the beliefs in question” (Barrow and Woods 2006, p. 75). What is interesting about the view we are considering here is precisely *how* the agent's closed-minded beliefs arise. The thought is that an indoctrinated belief that *p* is a belief which results from the agent's endorsement of a proposition which contains a provision not to critically evaluate that *p*, or not to consider seriously the arguments or testimony which

seem to them to be incompatible with *p*. The closed-mindedness of the belief is “built into” the structure of the agent’s attitude in the sense that it is part of the *belief’s content* that one should not critically evaluate that *p* (more on this in §5.1).

Should we give these structural features of the content of the instruction the sole explanatory role in accounting for why a piece of instruction is indoctrinatory? On such a view, it has to be part of the content of what is being instructed (or its easily recognized implications) that one shouldn’t—whether for moral or epistemic reasons—engage seriously with relevant alternatives or a certain range of relevant alternatives. That doing so would make one liable to moral and epistemic condemnation. Once one sincerely accepts the doctrine, consistently believing the doctrine would require that one not engage in certain types of critical inquiry, namely, (i) critical inquiry which considers a range of relevant alternatives—such as the available counterevidence—to the belief as well as (ii) critical inquiry which permits unrestricted exploration of the reasons which support the view—such as inquiry which critically examines the epistemic basis of the belief or the reliability of its source.

To indoctrinate someone, on this sort of account, is to teach someone a doctrine which contains epistemically insulating content. Epistemically insulating content is content which contains a proviso that serious critical inquiry into the doctrine is forbidden; that such inquiry is either irrational or immoral, whether explicitly (e.g., “don’t ask those sorts of questions!”) or implicitly (e.g., the believer has evidence to believe that such critical inquiry will lead to punishment).²²

It is important to distinguish epistemically insulating content from content which only preempts you from rationally denying it. For example, you are rationally preempted from denying Cogito propositions like *I’m thinking* in the sense that you cannot rationally deny

them even if their denial were true. Epistemically insulating content is specifically content which preempts you from rationally engaging in inquiry which seriously challenges it or engages with relevant alternatives. This is what leads to the retention of the beliefs and practices when sincerely and consistently endorsed. Call this the *structural epistemic account* of indoctrination. More specifically, the view is that:

Structural epistemic account: S’s instruction *T* that *p* is indoctrinatory if and only if *T* aims at the recipients believing that *p* and *p* contains epistemically insulating content which, if sincerely and consistently believed, would normally cause the agent to closed-mindedly believe that *p*.²³

The structural epistemic account of indoctrination says that teaching someone a doctrine which contains epistemically insulating content is what indoctrination is, but what exactly *is* epistemically insulating content and in what way is this connected to closed-minded belief? In the next section, I want to spell this out in more detail before moving on to some of the important implications of the structural epistemic account.

5.1 Epistemically Insulating Content

Epistemically insulating content is a kind of epistemic defense mechanism.²⁴ Epistemic defense mechanisms include shifting the burden of proof, dismissing salient challenges, or intellectual inflexibility to the effect that any contrary view is considered irrational or even immoral, “neutralizing stimulations to learn what conflicts with it” (Médina 2016, pp. 182–183). It also includes broad argumentative strategies which might be “brought forward at some point to rescue the original theory from refutation” (Boudry and Braeckman 2011, p. 170). For example, consider a 9/11 “truther” conspiracist. This sort of conspiracy theorist is apt to deny the testimony of the 9/11 Commission Report as well as that the testimony from various experts counts

as evidence against the conspiracy theory. This immunizes the conspiracy theory from counterevidence. How could one bring evidence to bear against the theory if whatever evidence one might present will be counted as misleading? In this sort of case, the conspiracy theorist “inflates” the theory so that even counterevidence will count as misleading. Another sort of immunizing strategy is to “deflate” one’s belief to fit with disconfirming evidence. This happened in the late 1800’s with Jehovah’s Witnesses’ belief that the second coming of Christ was imminent. When Christ failed to return, the Jehovah’s Witnesses argued that Christ *had* returned as an invisible spirit (Zygmunt 1970; Boudry and Braekman 2011). As with the inflation of one’s belief so as to count apparent counterevidence as merely predictable misleading evidence, the tendency to deflate one’s initial belief to fit the available evidence seems to be an immunizing strategy one might invoke to preserve one’s belief as well.

Epistemically insulating content works to preserve one’s belief but not by invoking strategies that lie outside of the content of what is being taught, as with immunizing strategies. Rather epistemically insulating content situates the immunizing strategy *in* the content of the belief to be taught. Here is a simple example. Imagine someone instructs you in some proposition *P* and *P*’s content is that $\langle o \text{ is } F \text{ and do not engage in inquiry with anyone who doubts whether } o \text{ is } F \rangle$. This is epistemically insulating content because *P* contains the proviso that one should not critically engage with anyone who doubts that *P* and thereby anyone who would disagree with one about whether *P*. If the person consistently believed that *P*, they would be apt *not* to critically inquire about whether *P*, thereby *insulating* their belief from countervailing considerations if any were to arise.

For example, suppose Ben was indoctrinated to believe that the USSR was a state with communist socioeconomics as opposed

to a non-communist state ruled by a communist party. Imagine that Ben encounters a historian of the USSR who argues that the USSR lacked communist socioeconomics: that while it nominally had communist ambitions it was never a stateless classless society in which people commonly owned the land, resources and industry. Ben would thereby be apt here *not* to critically engage with this historian. He would instead be apt to maintain the disagreement *without* seriously critically engaging with the historian’s belief. Here is a second case. Imagine that someone teaches Sophie that *Q* and *Q*’s content is that $\langle \text{sex outside of marriage is wrong and seriously engaging with any alternatives to the view that sex outside of marriage is wrong is itself immoral} \rangle$. Certain religious fundamentalist groups espouse such a doctrine. Since Sophie has a standing reason not to be immoral, *Q* thereby contains epistemically insulating content for her: content which, when sincerely believed, deters the believer from undertaking certain types of critical inquiry related to *Q*, such as considering challenges to the view seriously. Epistemically insulating content with respect to a proposition being taught, then, is a property of the proposition’s content. In brief, a proposition *p* contains epistemically insulating content if and only if *p* contains a command, directive, or coercive reason for the agent not to doubt *p*, consider seriously $\sim p$, or consider seriously the relevant alternatives to *p*. It closes serious critical inquiry.

The structural epistemic account of indoctrination can thereby incorporate the source of certain intuitively intellectually vicious habits of its believers or instructors as part of the content of the belief that is being taught and, in this way, might be thought of as a content-based account of indoctrination. In particular, the content has a closed-minded *structure*; a part of its content is the provision not to undertake certain intellectual activities with respect to the belief. But unlike the

other content view we reviewed earlier, it does not take a stand on qualitative aspects of the doctrines—such as whether it is a moral, political, or religious ideology—and thereby leaves it open that it could be an ideology or a single thesis. Likewise, it does not take a stand on the truth-value or evidential status of the content either. It leaves open whether the doctrine is true or supported by evidence.

6. THE ROBUST STRUCTURAL EPISTEMIC ACCOUNT

Although I think the structural epistemic account is plausible so far as it goes, it is nevertheless lacking because it cannot deal with what we might call *content-safe cases* of indoctrination. These are cases in which the instruction is intuitively indoctrinatory—in line with the thesis that the recipient comes to closed-mindedly believe that *p*—but not *because* of the content of the instruction—that is, it is not due to the presence of epistemically insulating content within the instruction. Instead, it is due to the epistemically insulating content of the instructor's manifest higher-order beliefs or commands *about* the content of their instruction. To see this, consider the following case:

Geology: Lenny instructs his pupils in relatively uncontroversial geological facts *a*, *b*, and *c*, such that Lenny strongly intends for them to adopt those beliefs on the basis of his instruction. Moreover, Lenny manifests his strong preferences that his pupils must believe *a*, *b*, and *c* and to act in accordance with them. On this score, he manifests his belief that (i) disagreeing with *a*, *b*, and *c* is highly irrational and tantamount to being “crazy” or “stupid.” He manifests his belief (ii) that dissent in this case is morally corrupt or “backwards,” and that it is “better for them” and “society” to endorse them differentially. Finally, he manifests his belief that (iii) critical inquiry into any alternatives to *a*, *b*, and *c*—or anything he does not approve—will be met with vigorous reeducation.

This is intuitively a case indoctrinatory instruction, even though the content of what

the teacher instructs the pupils in is not epistemically insular and otherwise benign. Put another way, the *content* of what was being taught is not what leads the agent to closed-mindedly believe the content of what was taught. Instead, it is the instructor's manifest beliefs and directives that are epistemically insulating. With this point in mind, we should compose a theory of indoctrination which can account for the following phenomena:

Indoctrinatory closed-minded instruction of non-closed-minded content: cases in which the content of the instruction does *not* contain epistemically insulating content, and the instructor teaches the pupils that content, but the instructor has vicious higher-order epistemic attitudes with respect to her instruction of that content: that the pupils ought to endorse and retain it without critical inquiry, without seeking out positive evidence, without considering counter-arguments, and without engaging in critical dialogue when such opportunities arise, and so forth.

Indoctrinatory non-closed-minded instruction of closed-minded content: cases in which the content contains epistemically insulating content, the instructor teaches the pupils that content, but the instructor does not have vicious higher-order epistemic attitudes with respect to her instruction of that content.

We can get a satisfactory structural epistemic account which can accommodate these two kinds of cases if we widen the scope of the structure of the indoctrinatory instruction: the causal-explanatory source of the agent's closed-minded belief in *p* can be traced back *either* to the manifest epistemically insulating intentions, directions, or statements of the instructor or to the epistemically insulating content of the instruction itself. Put more generally, indoctrination aims at getting the agent to believe the doctrine closed-mindedly but the source of the agent's closed-mindedness with regard to the doctrine is the fact that there is a proviso that doing otherwise is irrational or immoral, whether the causal-explanatory source of this proviso is part of the content

of the belief itself *or* the instructor's manifest intentions and directions vis-à-vis the belief they are teaching. Thus, this revised account says that:

Robust structural epistemic account: S's instruction *T* that *p* is indoctrinatory if and only if *T* aims at the recipients closed-mindedly believing that *p* and this closed-minded belief is due to the content of S's manifest epistemically insulating intentions, commands, or directives for the recipient *or* to the epistemically insulating content of the instruction itself.

Some notes about this account are in order. First, the instruction might aim for one to closed-mindedly believe that *p* even if the instructor does not represent it as "closed-mindedly endorsing" the belief. The aim here is *de re*. To talk about the "aim" of the instruction is to talk about the proper goal of the instruction or its telos. The epistemic goal is closed-minded belief, and the function of indoctrination is to get the agent to believe the instruction closed-mindedly. This is compatible with the instructor not having this aim or with the instructor not representing the aim of the instruction *as* closed-minded belief. Rather, the instructor might represent the instruction as *education*—or even the outcome as *open-minded* belief.

Second, one might worry that the robust epistemic account is a *disjunctive explanation* and that such explanations are typically *ad hoc*. I reply: the reason it is not *ad hoc* is that there is some source for the agent's closed-minded belief in the instructed content, and the core concept of indoctrination is that there is a belief inculcation process which yields closed-minded belief in the instructed content. It looks towards the doxastic-dispositional profile of the agent with regard to some proposition *p* as the outcome of the process, and checks to see whether that outcome is due to epistemically insulating properties, whether those properties are found in the instruction or the manifest higher-order beliefs, intentions, or directives of the instructor. In

this way, indoctrination is essentially instruction which causes closed-minded belief—whether the belief is true or false—and what more narrowly causally explains the agent's limited closed-mindedness can be the instructor's manifest epistemically insular higher-order states or the epistemically insulating content of the belief instructed. The *essence* of indoctrination, then, is not disjunctive: it's that there's an epistemically insular *source* of the closed-minded belief.

So, the robust structural epistemic account of indoctrination takes insights from both the higher-order epistemic as well as the pure structural epistemic accounts of indoctrination. In particular, the theory implies that:

- (i) The intention of the indoctrinator is not always independent of whether the instruction is indoctrinatory, since the indoctrinatory-making facts can sometimes be traced back to facts about the intellectually vicious higher-order beliefs, plans, directions or intentions of the instructor. For example, if the students closed-mindedly believe that *P* because the instructor taught them that *P* but said "not believing that *P* will make you an immoral and completely irrational person," that would be a case where the indoctrination is due to the instructor's intentions. (This is consistent with cases in which the indoctrinator's intentions or goals do not line up with some overarching authorities' vicious goals for the instruction, such as to get the pupils to believe closed-mindedly, or where the indoctrinator is forced to engage in that kind instruction against their own convictions).
- (ii) The paradigmatic features associated with successful indoctrination—such as the fervor with which the indoctrinated person believes the view, or their appeal to an authority, or their termination of rational dialogue—need not be due to the instructor. That is, the instructor need not manifest genuine belief in the content *s/he* is instructing one in or prevent the recipient from critical inquiry by force, coercion, or manipulation, as the unethical

instruction account suggests. It need not be the case that the instructor taught them intellectual habits or even that the instructor endorses them. Rather, it can be part of the doctrine itself, in virtue of the fact that it is epistemically insulating content (e.g., when the content of what it is taught contains coercive provisions, like “only those destined for Hell would reject this” or “only the irrational and immoral would deny this.”

- (iii) Qualitative and partisan aspects of the content—such as whether it is a worldview or ideology—doesn’t figure as a central component of whether the instruction is indoctrinatory, *contra* the ideological account.

Moreover, certain epistemic properties, such as whether the doctrine is true or supported by evidence, is also not a central component of whether the instruction is indoctrinatory either. It could be that the doctrine is true or approximates the truth. Paradigmatic cases of indoctrination involve religious and political beliefs, like “God exists/does not exist” or “democracy is/is not just.” Certainly, they might be true.²⁵ There is no reason to think that a *true* closed-minded belief could not result from an epistemically insulating process. Relatedly, it could also be that the doctrine is widespread and believed by most (as is the case with “the U.S. is a democracy”). It could even be that the doctrine has some evidence which supports it; and it could be that adopting certain parts of the doctrine is not *per se* irrational. After all, one might come to closed-mindedly believe some banal truth, such as that *2 is an even number*, as a result of their teacher’s testimony that “only an idiot would not believe that 2 is an even number.” It is not clear that trusting their teacher in such a case, given the evidence they have about their teacher and their social role, would be irrational.

Now one might question the degree to which the content of instruction could by itself have the relevant kind of suasive force

over an agent—namely, in getting them to dogmatically or closed-mindedly believe that *p*. For example, we can reimagine the *politics*** case so that Zelda teaches her pupils the political views *p*, *q*, and *r*—such that this doctrine contains the relevant epistemically insulated content—but her pupils just *ignore* this aspect of the content and open-mindedly believe that *p*, *q*, and *r* anyway. If such a case is not indoctrinatory, doesn’t this tell against the robust structural epistemic account? *No*. The reason is that indoctrination can be successful or unsuccessful. In this case, it is unsuccessful because it did not yield its proper aim: closed-minded or dogmatic belief in the target proposition. After all, the recipients came to believe the relevant doctrine but not dogmatically. For they ignored the epistemically insulating directive, such as the mandate that inquiry into contrary hypotheses is irrational. Nevertheless, the instruction was indoctrinatory since it contained epistemically insulating content and the aim was for the recipients *to* endorse it, rather than to merely entertain it. In short: while the recipients were not successfully indoctrinated, the instruction was indoctrinatory.

One might also wonder: “why not say that indoctrination which leads A to believe that *p* is just an outcome. The outcome is that A is dogmatic or closed-minded about *p*?” The suggestion is that the robust structural epistemic account is excessive, for all that is necessary to account for indoctrination is that the pupils are caused to believe *p* closed-mindedly. Call this this *simple closed-minded account* of indoctrination. A recent proposal of this sort can be found in Callan and Arena, who argue that the “inculcation of closed-minded belief is indoctrination” (Callan and Arena 2009, p. 25). The problem with replacing the simple closed-minded outcome approach with the robust structural epistemic account is that one could be considering seriously whether *p*, get bumped in the head, and come to closed-mindedly endorse *p*. But it is

hard to see how being bumped in the head (in that way) could be an instance of indoctrination. Likewise, one might be considering seriously whether *q* before one falls asleep and wake up closed-mindedly endorsing that *q*. Perhaps their dream convinced them that *p* but they cannot remember it and never will. Here too it would be outrageous to think that dreaming that *p* (in that way) was an instance of indoctrination just because of its outcome. The simple closed-minded outcome account, then, suffers from the *problem of irrelevant causes*, on which any cause of one's closed-minded belief that *p* is indoctrinatory.

While the robust structural epistemic account is an outcome-oriented account (because it implies that indoctrination necessarily has closed-minded belief that *p* as an outcome), it does not run into the problem of irrelevant causes. This is because it links this outcome, contra the structural epistemic account, not to the epistemic structure of the content of *p* alone nor, contra the higher-order epistemic account, to the epistemic structure of the instructor's manifest higher-order beliefs for the recipients of their indoctrination, but to *either* of them. If the cause of one's closed-minded belief that *p* was some epistemically insular content—whether it is located in the manifest higher-order attitudes of the instructor or within the instructed view itself—then one's closed-minded belief that *p* is a case of indoctrination. It is still a structural epistemic view because it says that the epistemic structure of the source of the belief matters. It needs to advocate or promote closed-minded belief *de re* and is therefore not liable to the problem of irrelevant causes.

7. CONCLUSION

What is indoctrination? I have argued that indoctrination is instruction in a doctrine *p* which causes the recipients to closed-mindedly believe that *p*. Crucially, the cause must be the epistemically insular features of the instructed content or else the higher-order attitudes of the instructor with regard to their instruction. I proposed this view as an alternative to the unethical, ideological, and other epistemic accounts of indoctrination. As a result, we can explain why indoctrination can occur even in mundane cases where nothing of much moral or political significance turns on the issue. We can also explain why indoctrination can occur irrespective of whether the doctrine is true, supported by evidence, believed by many or few, or framed by a problematic ideology. For it can account for why instruction in certain liberal democratic ideals and received political views, such as that equality is a right, that the U.S. is a democracy, or that property relations are just, are no less susceptible to indoctrination than the instructed political views of totalistic societies such as Stalinist-era Soviet Union or North Korea. By connecting indoctrination to the intellectual vice of closed-minded belief resulting from insulating epistemic structures, we capture the key idea that indoctrination can be a pervasive form of miseducation, indifferent to the political or moral content of the doctrine.²⁶

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NOTES

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1. Other cases of miseducation include arguably *imbalanced* teaching (e.g., there are multiple legitimate perspectives on a topic, but the teacher unjustifiably ignores them in favor of only one perspective), *over-teaching* in a particular way (e.g., only content-based education where other forms of education seem necessary), or *under-teaching* in a particular way (e.g., the students require comprehensive instruction in such-and-such, but the teacher is willfully and unjustifiably selective). See Hamm (1989, pp. 96–97). Consistent with miseducation having perverse or corrupting aims is that (i) the miseducators would sincerely deny this and (ii) that it doesn't seem to the miseducators or miseducated that the aims of their instruction are perverse or corrupting. Indeed, the paradigm case seems to be one in which i-ii are satisfied.

2. See Kidd (2019) for this term. Kidd argues that epistemically corrupting education works by facilitating the acquisition of epistemic vices.

3. Although epistemologists have had little to say about the epistemology of indoctrination, analytical epistemologists have increasingly become interested in education, especially with the rise in interest in social epistemology and virtue epistemology. See Watson (2016) for a comprehensive overview.

4. For example, see Callan and Arena (2009), Barrow and Woods (2006), and Hare (1993).

5. Note that when I talk about “teachers” or “instructors,” this picks out anyone who fulfills an *instructive-role* for an agent. The instructor does not have to be a teacher in a school or school-setting. Parents, coaches, therapists, doctors, lawyers, ministers, priests, religious leaders, politicians, professors, and potentially non-agents, like programs or algorithms, can be instructors.

6. One example of such a technique is *manipulative identity regulation*. For example, in a traditional workplace an employee might regulate their beliefs about the company against the corporate authorities' assertion of the company's values at large: “this is not a job *but a mission*” or “we are a *community* and a *family*.” This has the effect of regulating the employee's identities in the workplace. Working long hours might be interpreted by employees as justified because it's “for the mission”; an employee's problem with upper management might be interpreted as “rebellious” or “childish,” and therefore not worth pressing, akin to the teenager-parent relationship. For an extended discussion, see Alvesson and Willmott (2002).

7. There is a delicate question here about whether the indoctrinator is at least *epistemically blameworthy* for engaging in indoctrinatory instruction. A related question is whether proper attribution of *epistemic* blame justifies a proper attribution of *moral* blame. I follow Brown (2018) in thinking that epistemic blame is a belief-desire pair which attributes that one did not conform to an epistemic norm and a desire for them to have done so. Let us suppose the indoctrinator is epistemically blameworthy. The problem is that, from the fact that one did not conform to the epistemic norm, this doesn't need to suggest that they didn't conform to a *moral* norm, as Brown points out (pg. 11). So, the attributability of epistemic blame for indoctrination is *prima facie* compatible with the denial of the unethical instruction account.

8. Educators in the 1930s were not necessarily against the use of indoctrination in order to promote anti-fascist ideas. See Kridel (2013).

9. You might think that deferring to an authority who believes *p* in order to believe *p* yourself is an epistemic reason to believe *p* that would replace any other reasons you might have. Zagzebski (2012) holds this position. If this is correct, then the children *can* have *epistemic reasons* to believe the fascism is morally wrong; they have epistemic authority-reasons available to them since the teachers are, we can imagine, authorities. The problem here is not the view but its application. Zagzebski thinks that for the beliefs of an authority to be genuinely authoritative for you, you need to be able to conscientiously

judge that by believing in accordance with the authority, you would do better with respect to your epistemic goals. But the children might be too cognitively unsophisticated to make such judgements conscientiously.

10. It is important to note that such instruction might be morally wrong, it is just that, on this methodological view of indoctrination, the fact that it's morally wrong isn't what *makes* the instruction indoctrinatory.

11. It is important to note that the rationality-bypassing account is not committed to the idea that the *instructor* aims for the recipient to believe that *p* independently of the evidence for *p*, but that the proper aim of their instruction is that the student come to believe that *p*, as a result of the instruction, without considering any evidence for *p*. That is, the instructor need not manifest the aim intentionally. (Compare with: the CEO's aim is to produce wealth for shareholders, even if this is not what she personally intends to do in her capacity as a CEO).

12. See Taylor (2016) for why this can be described as "brainwashing." Although I don't explore the links between brainwashing and indoctrination in this paper, I take "brainwashing" to refer to a specific type of indoctrinatory instruction: paradigmatically, cases involving agents situated in an epistemically hostile environment, where outside information, such as the testimony of others, is forbidden, whether by force, coercion, or manipulation. In other words, so-called "brainwashers" build a *social-epistemic environment* in which access to outside information is impeded.

13. Compare Peels (2017) on epistemic responsibility and doxastic voluntarism.

14. Alternatively, the ideology account can be framed in terms of getting the recipient to *reason* and *judge* in accordance with the ideology's principles, rather than to *believe* the principles which compose the ideology. For our purposes, it will not matter whether the ideology account is framed in terms of following epistemic and moral norms versus endorsing those norms.

15. Degenhardt (1976 [2005]) presents a deep disagreement argument for the ideology account. The argument is that instruction in science or mathematics is instruction in areas of inquiry for which disagreements can be rationally resolved since there is enough common ground to prevent persistent deep disagreement. However, instruction in morality, politics, or the arts—e.g., areas where worldviews or ideologies are at stake—is instruction in areas for which disagreements are not rationally resolvable, and thus not enough common ground to prevent persistent deep disagreement. So, the thought is that instruction in morality, politics, or the arts indoctrinatory because it yields persistent deep disagreement. See Degenhardt (1976 [2005]), p. 21. For an overview of the ideology account, see Copp (2016).

16. One problem in the philosophy of education is the *paradox of indoctrination*. The paradox, in outline, is that indoctrination is intuitively bad. And what seems to make it bad is that agents uncritically adopt and maintain beliefs independently of scrutinizing the evidence or the ability to do so. Yet it is hard to see how young children can critically adopt beliefs by scrutinizing the available evidence. But we tend not to think that early childhood education is somehow morally problematic (e.g., learning arithmetic, or facts about grammar, etc.). See Garrison (1986) and Siegel et al. (2018).

17. For critical theorists, however, the social democratic political worldview is ideological as well because it misrepresents employer-employee and ownership relations as just under capitalism. See Althusser (1976), Eagleton (1991), and Mills (2007). See Freeden (2003) for an overview.

18. Note that it need not be the instructor's intention here to *indoctrinate* the pupils. For the instructor might think that they are not indoctrinating the pupils (e.g., it's not the content of their intention that the pupils become indoctrinated on the basis of their instruction).

19. Cases similar to Lackey's (2008) creationist teacher case can arise here. Imagine that the teacher does not endorse the ideology that she's teaching and doesn't intend for the students to believe it or act in accordance with it, but the students nevertheless do so anyway: they adopt the ideology on the basis of her instruction. Were the students indoctrinated? I say intuitively not, but intuitions might vary here.

20. We can imagine accidental indoctrination *online*. This can happen when a viewer is exposed to a cascade of increasingly extremist content, whereby the doxastic upshot is that the person believes an extremist position as a result of an automated process that did not intend for them to believe any particular view. See Alfano, Carter, and Cheong (2018) for this sort of digital self-radicalization.

21. A more modest proviso is that *unsanctioned inquiry* is forbidden. Think about religious fundamentalists as paradigm cases. For they are encouraged to read their core holy text, for example, but not to go outside of the text for any other religious guidance.

22. For example, a statement might *implicitly* demand that you believe what is said by issuing a threat: "the Empire is just, and if you don't believe this, you'll be severely punished." In this sort of case, the content of the statement does not explicitly demand that you believe what is said, but it does demand it implicitly.

23. The definition here says that believing that P "normally causes" the agent to dogmatically believe that P, but this is compatible with failure, in which case there is a failure to indoctrinate. For a person might believe a proposition which contains epistemically insulating content but it doesn't cause them to dogmatically believe it.

24. See Boudry (2011) for a discussion of epistemic defense mechanisms.

25. This contrasts with van Woudenberg, who takes it that it's part of what indoctrination is that it's the inculcation of falsehoods. He writes: "To indoctrinate is to bring it about that someone acquires a false belief. If S's belief that p is occasioned by indoctrination, then p is false. No acquisition of a true belief can be a case of indoctrination. There can be no indoctrination into the truth" (van Woudenberg 2009, p. 382). Compare also Flew (2010, p. 67). As the *Geology* case illustrates, one plausibly *can* be indoctrinated to believe truths. Indeed, it's hard to see why not. If a cult follower is caused to believe that 2 is a prime number, whereby their belief results from their cult leader's testimony and their higher-order command that considering seriously any alternatives to it is immoral or irrational, such that the follower rigidly believes that 2 is a prime number as a result, van Woudenberg's account predicts that this was not indoctrinatory but intuitively it is. Replacing that truth with a falsehood doesn't intuitively change our verdict but it should on his view.

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