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The Nature of Indoctrination
and its Role in a Proper Education

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Philosophy

by

Michael Edward Lopez

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Nature of Indoctrination
and its Role in a Proper Education

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Calvin Normore, Chair

This dissertation offers three accounts as a way of answering three questions. The questions are: (1) What is indoctrination? (2) Why is it harmful? (3) Is there a role for indoctrination in a proper education? The three accounts that are offered are an account of indoctrination and its harms, an account of meaningfulness that grounds a life worth living in intersubjective value, and an account of education in which at least one of the more important purposes of education is coming to possess the tools for living a meaningful life.

Indoctrination has classically been characterized as something that necessarily is concerned with the instilling of *beliefs*. I argue that indoctrination, taken as such, is at least as much about values and deliberation as it is about the holding of beliefs, and that a successful indoctrination shapes the way in which a subject approaches evidence *ex ante*. I argue that indoctrination is harmful to the extent that it prevents a person from authentically expressing themselves, and in inhibiting that expression, prevents a person from living a truly meaningful life, but that any such harm is also

contingent on the particular pre-existing values of the subject and how those particular values relate to the facts of and content of the indoctrination in question. Finally, I argue that the living of a meaningful life is most certainly one of the proper ends of education, and that while indoctrination can certainly thwart that goal when it is employed in such a way as to cause its characteristic harms, indoctrination also remains the only way to accomplish that goal in the first place. Indeed, the very enterprise of institutional education is indoctrinative in its very conception.

The dissertation of Michael Edward Lopez is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2012

To my wife, with love and gratitude.

Without you, this would not have been possible.

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About the Author:

Michael Edward Lopez, first son of Edward Leo Lopez, first son of Edward Andrade Lopez, attended 10 elementary schools by the end of 5th grade. He was an exceptional but tragically inconstant student, and he miraculously graduated 86th in his class from Fullerton Union High School in 1992, and that only with the assistance of Karen Ede, Ted Kopacki, Jeff Sherwood, and many others. He attended Wesleyan University – the only college that accepted him – where he majored in Medieval Studies (History concentration) and Philosophy, graduating in 1996 in the bottom 22% of his class.

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He practiced law for six years at two prestigious Southern California law firms, whereupon he decided that the time was right to return to the study of Philosophy. He applied to a number of schools, but was granted admission to UCLA – the only school that he could realistically have attended in any case. He immediately accepted.

They told him it was a six year program. Turns out they lied. He seems to have been the first person in his cohort to finish, in six years and one quarter.

He currently lives in Fullerton, California, with his lovely wife (of whom he is totally undeserving), Tracey.

INTRODUCTION:

An introduction is supposed to introduce the subject, and to give the reader a sense of what is to come, and perhaps provide a few vital tools needed for the later reading. This will be my primary goal. Oftentimes, an introduction will also serve to position a work of Philosophy within the discipline as a whole. This is of far less concern to me. Finally, an introduction can sometimes serve as a sort of summary of the work. I've no interest in providing that at all, though it may be unavoidable. Accordingly, this introduction will be somewhat sparse, designed only to give the most general picture of what I am up to.

This work is, as the title would suggest, about indoctrination and its role in education. Which is to say that I think indoctrination – in what is typically the “bad” sense of the word – actually *has* a role in education, and an important one. And really, at the end of it all, that's my conclusion: that indoctrination has a role in a proper education. But like an Aristotelian syllogism, these two extremes can only be brought together into something interesting by the invocation of a middle term. Thus, there are really three main topics about which I am writing: indoctrination and education as the primary objects of inquiry, and meaningfulness as the bridge between them, or perhaps the ground upon which they meet.

My overall argument takes place within a picture of human nature that is constructed by way of offering first a basic account of each of these three topics, as well as a further account of where and how they intersect. The three basic accounts can be summed up as follows:

- **Indoctrination:** I argue that indoctrination isn't really about belief so much as it is about *values*, and even if it's a terribly dangerous sort of tool, it's also one that can be used “for good”.
- **Meaningfulness:** Meaningfulness is part of what makes life worth living, and as such it is critical to a life well-lived. Furthermore, its source of objective value is,

plausibly, a type of *intersubjectivity*. This second claim may be the most controversial claim of this dissertation.

- **Education:** Finally, I adopt a rather thin view of education (by which I mean herein something like “institutional” education) in which the educational process has as one of its primary, fundamental goals the *initiation* of a student into a particular sort of social discourse, the very sort of milieu in which intersubjective meaningfulness is possible.

This dissertation is arranged on an “as-needed” basis. Rather than assembling all of my basic accounts at the outset, and then working through their interactions, I provide the basic accounts when they are about to become indispensable to the argument as a whole. As a result, my account of the nature of education does not appear until the beginning of Chapter 3, nearly 70% of the way through the text. The dialectic proceeds roughly as follows:

Chapter 1 sets out the basic account of indoctrination, examining previous theories in an attempt to pin down the nature of the activity under discussion. I argue that a focus on belief alone doesn’t quite capture the phenomenon, and that a proper account of indoctrination requires a discussion of values. This Chapter also offers some broad previews of the sorts of conversations I will be having about education in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 sets out the basic account of what meaningfulness is, and then argues that the “objective” source of meaningful value is very likely to be intersubjective, that is, that it arises from certain types of interactions between people. I then offer a further account of how meaningfulness and indoctrination relate to each other. Specifically, I attempt to show that the real harm of indoctrination – when it *is* harmful, taken as such – is played out in terms of harms to meaningfulness, and in the undermining of a person’s authenticity.

Chapter 3 sets out the basic account of education in terms of its aiming at a sort of meaningfulness, and then offers a further account of the role that indoctrination, as it has been discussed, has to play in that process. Explicit discussion of meaningfulness slips somewhat into the

background here. Finally, I deal with a number of objections to the picture of education that I am trying to advance.

Were I to try to sum up in a sentence what I ultimately hope to prove by the end of all of this, it would be something like, “Indoctrination is not inimical to education, but critical to it.” Such a sentence, though, would at this early stage, be less than useless: it is likely to be at least confusing, and at worst affirmatively misleading. Someone who had talked with me extensively might know exactly what I mean by these words, but anyone else is likely to think that I’m advocating religious instruction in schools or somesuch – which I’m not (although I am arguing indirectly that religious instruction in schools isn’t necessarily a bad thing). I could, of course, elaborate and rephrase, adding more and more detail to the sentence. Perhaps something like the following:

Because education, strictly construed as such, has as its goal the production of students who are able to engage meaningfully with their communities, and because such engagement requires an introduction into a system of intersubjective value in which meaningful interaction is possible, education must necessarily have among its goals the inculcation or alteration of the student’s values, which is to say, education must involve indoctrination.

Now a reader might have a general sense of the ballpark in which I’m operating, but the danger of misdirection is, I think, still considerable. It’s not at all clear what I mean by “a system of intersubjective value”, for instance, and the prose is starting to sound positively wretched. Even were I to continue this process of elaboration into several paragraphs, I am not convinced that this would make for a good introduction. While it is certainly *possible* for a reader to take away my intended meaning from those sentences, doing so would seem to require that the reader first be properly positioned within a certain way – my way – of talking about both education and indoctrination.

Often, this sort of interpretive difficulty is handled by writing within established discourses – “inside baseball” of the academic variety. We can often position our work squarely within one tradition or another, flagging our commitments by using certain terms and citing to certain bodies of

work. Rawlsian conversations about “Justice”, for instance, don’t have to belabor fundamental issues: it can be taken for granted what people are talking about. This dissertation is not written strictly within any particular established philosophical discourse: it is not a work of conceptual or ethical analysis, nor of hermeneutic theorizing about value, nor of pragmatic educational theory, though it draws heavily on each of those traditions. Had I the luxury of being firmly so situated, I could just employ the language of those conversations in a clear and unambiguous way to explain what I’m up to here. But since I don’t have that luxury, there will of necessity be a great deal of expository acclimatization that goes on.

This is all by way of explaining – and it’s really the only “explanation” I intend to afford in this introduction – why I’m not summarizing my entire argument here. The bare-boned schematic of my argument offered above will have to suffice. The reader will not be left entirely to his or her own devices, however: each Chapter has its own substantial introduction to frame and advance the discussion. But before we get underway in earnest, however, there are two cautionary notes that I think bear mentioning, and which the reader should keep in mind. These will, I think, prevent certain parts of the dissertation from being misunderstood.

The first is that I have worked very hard to strip out a great deal of the value-laden content that is typically present when talking of such things from my discussion of education. There are many types of education: a religious education, a warrior’s education, a modern scientific education, a liberal arts education, the “education” of a *gamin* on the streets. A great deal of work over the last century has been aimed at explaining “what education is,” specifically as it is taken to ideally operate within a particular cultural or social context. As a consequence, in much of this work the discussion of what education as such is *functionally* gets hopelessly intertwined with what education *should be*, and often the normative issue quickly takes over (if it wasn’t given primacy in the first place). Education that doesn’t fit the author’s normative vision, then -- a warrior’s education in ancient Sparta, for

instance – gets relegated to a sort of second-class status – barely worthy of the name “education” at all insofar as it is ruthlessly indoctrinative, forcing each and every citizen into a narrowly prescribed role.

In a sense, I am interested only in the functional question, though it strikes me that even in its most stripped-down form, “education” is a concept that must have *some* normative structure (if not necessarily any particular content). The *gamin* on the street may learn something growing up in those conditions, and he may be said to have had an “education” by way of analogy, but it is only if there is a teacher (someone like Fagin, perhaps) saying, “Do thusly” that I think an education, as such, is properly said to be taking place. This sort of education is to be distinguished from, say, “learning” by virtue of its being organized towards some particular goal. My concern here is less with which goal is the best, and more with what the various possible goals have in common.

The second thing to keep in mind is that I have tried – with varying levels of success – to observe what I take to be perhaps the most important fundamental rule of “good Philosophy”, by which I mean that I’ve been trying to talk about things and activities rather than words. I really would like to avoid engaging in debates about terminology. I spend a lot of time talking about “indoctrination”, for instance. But I’m interested in figuring out what sorts of actions in the world are being talked about when philosophers debate about it, and drawing some conclusions about those particular sorts of things; if at the end of the day someone else wants to say “But that’s not really indoctrination,” well, that’s fine. I will eventually present two different types of indoctrination: “deviant” indoctrination and compatible indoctrination. If someone wants to claim that what I’ve done is isolate not two forms of indoctrination, but rather indoctrination and something else, that’s fine, too. The same goes for my analyses of “education” and even “meaningfulness.”

One might think that this second caveat should go without saying, but a great deal of the disagreements that I’ve seen in the reading done in preparation for this dissertation have arisen, I

think, because this cardinal rule is *hard to follow*. So I ask the reader to please forgive me if, at times, I slip into the rhetorical and appear to be laying some sort of not-quite-perfected claim to some particular semantic territory with which, in my hopefully clearer moments, I am not concerned. I pray, by the end, it will be clear at least *what* I have been discussing, even if the reader is not convinced that the words “education”, “indoctrination”, and “meaningfulness” really apply at all.

Finally, I close this dissertation with two Appendices, codas really. These are not intended to be rigorous philosophical documents. They are intended to preview how the picture of human nature that I am presenting in this dissertation might play out with reference to (1) how teachers can go about the business of teaching, and (2) how we might think about commercial consumerism and advertising. They are ruminations only.

So, having provided you with the roadmap I’ve given and the two qualifications above, let me offer you my account of what indoctrination is, how it operates, and why it is important to education.

CHAPTER 1: **The Nature and Permissibility of "Bad"** **Indoctrination**

1.1. Introduction

Philosophers interested in such things tend to agree that the word “indoctrination”, in modern parlance, refers to something bad, that it is a sort of evil cousin of "education". Whereas education is good and expands our powers, indoctrination is bad and limits them. Although the two words have from time to time been used almost interchangeably to describe any sort of formalized learning, they have now definitively parted company. The modern sense of Indoctrination now occupies the same sort of moral space as coercion and manipulation, and is sometimes seen as a species of the latter.¹ Indoctrination is often used as a term of moral criticism. The charge, “You’re indoctrinating your students!” is likely to arouse defensiveness and seems to demand either explanation or justification. But indoctrination is also a famously fuzzy notion with unclear boundaries – we seem to know it is bad, but not exactly what it is.

This chapter has two tasks: (1) to provide an account of this modern and morally suspect notion, and (2) to argue that even this pernicious type of indoctrination is not necessarily as dodgy as everyone seems to assume. Now, I do not mean to invoke the inconstant but widespread agreement that indoctrination of some sort is necessary in the education of very young children (though we will discuss that more in Chapter 3). Rather, I want to argue that there is a perfectly permissible role for indoctrination to play in helping fully-reasoning, emotionally mature adults reach important goals in

¹ Richard Gatchel, "The Evolution of the Concept", in *CONCEPTS OF INDOCTRINATION* 9 (I.A. Snook ed., Routledge 1972) at 11-12.

their lives. In Sections 1.2 and 1.3, I will look at what others have said about indoctrination -- both what it is and why it is thought to be so bad. I will also present my own account, one that clarifies the important role that values play in the process of indoctrination. I should clarify at the outset: I am not intending to offer an exhaustive analysis of the concept; when I am done, there will likely be instances where the word could be used colloquially that fall outside of my description.² Rather, I will be arguing that in practical terms, talk of indoctrination and its effects must include a discussion of how a subject's values are changed through the process. I will also defend indoctrination against the charge that it cripples its subjects' reason; specifically I assert that by altering a subject's values in the way it does, indoctrination does not necessarily change the ability of people *to* reason well, but rather affects *how* they weigh and evaluate what they are willing to accept as evidence.

This focus on values contrasts with traditional accounts of indoctrination, which almost always start with the notion that indoctrination, whatever it is, concerns instilling *beliefs*. Because of this traditional starting point, the explanations of indoctrination and the sorts of moral objections that typically arise focus on the type of beliefs that are instilled and/or the way in which those beliefs come to be held. While there seems little doubt that indoctrination often (and perhaps always) involves beliefs,³ the traditional focus on belief is, I think, a distraction from the question of what separates an act of indoctrination from, say, a lie -- which when successful also produces a belief in its subject.

Later, in Sections 1.4 and 1.5, I argue that indoctrination (as I've presented) it doesn't have to be bad, because it can serve as a tool for one's own self-guided values development. In other words, it can be used as a technique for helping us to become the sort of people that, for various

² I suspect this may be because the word is often used haphazardly as a rhetorical tool that expresses disapproval of a wide variety of practices.

³ This is particularly likely if one takes as granted that most "values" can, at least in some sense, be boiled down to evaluative-type beliefs the belief "that X is good."

good reasons, we want to be. It is not my intention to show merely that indoctrination can produce instrumentally good results, or that some specific instances of it can be adjudged permissible on some consequentialist analysis where the harm is real but outweighed by the benefits. Most moral objections to indoctrination are intended as objections to the practice of indoctrination *in principle*. I intend to argue that these objections are overbroad and that there are instances of practices that are indoctrination under any reasonable use of the word to which those objections simply do not apply in the first place, for there is no harm that takes place.⁴

1.2. What Indoctrination Is

Let's start by ruling out that indoctrination is just a matter of taste. This restriction isn't trivial, but I think it is necessary. When people use the term "indoctrination" colloquially, it seems that they are often just saying something like, "teaching those damn lies from the other side." It is, essentially, a type of name-calling. While this is both a common and legitimate use of the word, I don't think that it invokes anything philosophically interesting, and it is certainly not what writers such as Snook, Green, Hare, and Wilson have had in mind when they were discussing the topic.

By "indoctrination", I intend to pick out a set of practices identifiable on the basis of something other than the fact that I don't approve of them. While I will not twist myself in circles attempting to pin down the exact extension of the word, I'm going to take it as a given that it has one, and that we're generally pretty good at figuring out what is and isn't indoctrination, even if we're foggy on the borders.

⁴ Alternatively -- and perhaps more plausibly -- what I may end up offering is not an argument that indoctrination, as such, is permissible, but rather a different way of distinguishing two types of activity: one permissible insofar as it aids in the exercise of the subject's autonomy, and one impermissible insofar as it interferes with the same. Perhaps only the latter deserves the name "indoctrination", but I've said I want to avoid debating terminology.

Now, in one sense, we know exactly what indoctrination is. We're familiar with the "easy" cases, the sorts of things that spring instantly to the mind when we use the word. These easy cases include things like:

1. Initiation into religious cults of personality like Koresh's Branch Davidians;
2. Fictional situations like Winston Smith's being forced to love Big Brother; or
3. the programmatic teachings of groups like the Hitler Youth.

Whatever indoctrination is, it pretty clearly either includes (or is at least substantially involved in) those examples. They also all seem to be out of some sort of hellish nightmare. Some philosophers have tried to work a sense of moral disapproval into their definitions of indoctrination: I.A. Snook, for instance, excluded from his analysis of indoctrination, *inter alia*, things like "teaching young children correct behavior" and "teaching facts by rote."⁵ These practices were "unavoidable", and thus, he reasoned, did not capture indoctrination's assumed immoral character.⁶ I think it is an odd move to build moral evaluation into the concept of indoctrination *ex ante*.⁷ If indoctrination is itself a bad thing, then it should be bad because of what it is, and not the other way around.

This strikes me as particularly important when there is deep-seated disagreement as to whether certain practices are morally impermissible or not. "Teaching facts by rote", for instance, isn't always above moral suspicion; educational progressives often condemn the practice.⁸ So if

⁵ I.A. Snook, "Indoctrination and Moral Responsibility", in Snook, *supra* n.1, 152 at 152.

⁶ *Id.* at 152, 158.

⁷ In his introduction to his INDOCTRINATION AND EDUCATION, *supra* n.1, at 4, Snook identifies this question as one that underlies the entire debate over the nature of indoctrination, and one which is "perhaps of greater significance" for educational theory than the nature of indoctrination itself. Nevertheless, in practice he comes down squarely in favor of building in the morality from the start.

⁸ *See, e.g.*, John Dewey, DEMOCRACY & EDUCATION (Free Press, 1966) (esp. chs. 12 and 18); Jean Jacques Rousseau, EMILE (Bloom trans., Basic Books 1979) (esp. Book II at pp. 109-110); Alfred North Whitehead, "The Aims of Education" (The Free Press, 1929) at pp. 1-2.

indoctrination includes rote education, and if rote education is a bad thing, then indoctrination includes some bad practices. But if indoctrination includes rote education, and rote education turns out to be a good (or at least unavoidable) thing, then maybe indoctrination *isn't* universally terrible. It seems plain to me that we should first figure out whether rote education is a type of indoctrination, and then pass our moral judgments based on our having better knowledge of what indoctrination entails.

I take it as given that indoctrination is a somewhat vague concept, blending around the edges with education, initiation, coercion, and the like.⁹ In light of this, I suggest we search not for stark edges but, accepting that it is a blurry thing, look for the general contours of the practice instead. Now, one thing that virtually everyone agrees on is that indoctrination involves the instilling of beliefs of some sort or another. Under that assumption, philosophers have historically taken three basic approaches to explaining the concept of indoctrination:¹⁰

1. Explanation in terms of the *aims* of the indoctrinator (e.g., Snook, R.M. Hare, Kilpatrick, Green);
2. Explanation in terms of the sort of beliefs instilled -- that is, by the *content* that is taught (e.g., Flew, Wilson); and
3. Explanation by the *methods* employed by the indoctrinator (e.g., Crittenden and some progressive educational theorists).

Additionally, Harvey Siegel has suggested a fourth way of looking at indoctrination – one that focuses on the results. For reasons described below, I am unconvinced this distinction is useful.

My own inclinations are that insofar as indoctrination is seen as a sort of *intentional* activity – something one person does to another on purpose – it must be explained or defined (and I shall use these terms interchangeably) in terms of its aims. (This is particularly true if one believes both that

⁹ See, e.g., Thomas F. Green, "Indoctrination and Beliefs", in Snook, *supra* n.1, 25.

¹⁰ See, Snook, *supra* n.5, at 152; see also R.M. Hare, "Adolescents into Adults", in AIMS IN EDUCATION: THE PHILOSOPHIC APPROACH 47 (T.H.B. Hollins ed., Manchester University Press, 1964) at 49-51.

indoctrination is a term of moral condemnation, and that such condemnation requires a sort of intention – though I don't happen to think either of these things.) But while I don't think that any of these attempts are thoroughly successful, focusing too much perhaps on what can be found *wrong* with indoctrination rather than on what it is, I believe that taking a closer look at each of these accounts will show us the sort of practice that these philosophers were considering in the first place, and will thus give us a better understanding of our subject.

1.2.1. Traditional Accounts

1.2.1.1. Aim and Results Theories.

As I just indicated, there's a certain common-sense appeal to defining indoctrination in terms of the indoctrinator's aims. Snook takes such an approach, defining indoctrination as the "teaching of any subject matter *with the intention* that it be believed regardless of the evidence."¹¹ This definition invokes one of the few things about indoctrination on which virtually everyone agrees: that the subject (one way or another) comes to believe something in a particular way.¹² It also sets forth indoctrination as a species of instruction, specifically focused on bringing about the result. In this way, Snook characterizes indoctrinators as actors who are morally responsible for the results they intend, while at the same time casting indoctrination as something that cannot happen by accident.¹³

¹¹ Snook, *supra* n.5, at 154 (emphasis added).

¹² I should, at this point, make a distinction between two very different senses of the word "indoctrinate". On the one hand, there is an active sense of the word, as when we say of a bad teacher that "he indoctrinates." On the other, there is a very different, passive sense of the word, such as when we say of someone that "they have been indoctrinated", even when we are unsure if there actually is an indoctrinator behind the scenes. In any case, I will focus on the active sense of the word herein. Given that what I am concerned with in these early chapters is the permissibility and/or impermissibility of indoctrination, it would make little sense to focus on something that could just "happen" to someone.

¹³ *Cf.* Gideon Yaffe, "Indoctrination, Coercion, and Freedom of Will", 67 PHIL. AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH 335 (2003) (discussing the relevant differences between indoctrination by another agent and the identical states brought about through neutral causal forces). *See also* Chapter 2, §5, *infra* (dealing with the differences between indoctrination and similar psychological changes brought about by "neutral causal forces").

On Snook's picture it seems that the belief in question may be either true and useful or false and pernicious; what really matters is that the indoctrinator desires that the subject treat the belief as a sort of unquestioned premise in their thinking. The qualities of the belief itself are, at best, of secondary concern. Thomas Green offers an almost identical definition: the beliefs should be intended to be held "independent of any subsequent inquiry and therefore secure against the threat of change."¹⁴ Thus, on both accounts the aim of the indoctrinator is to provide the subject with a sort of unquestionable belief capable of withstanding any sort of questioning or contrary evidence. As I will explain below, I think that this definition probably is mistaking the most extreme or effective cases of indoctrination for the category as a whole, and that indoctrination doesn't always have to involve *unquestionable* beliefs. Nevertheless, this definition seems a good place to start.

Two other writers, William Heard Kilpatrick and R.M. Hare, also (separately) argue that indoctrination is defined by its intended ends, but they differ as to what the end is. Hare sees the end of indoctrination as the subject's being prevented from coming to "adult reason".¹⁵ Kilpatrick sees the end result as the subject's thinking as the indoctrinator chooses.¹⁶ There is obviously some overlap between the two: what makes one an "adult", after all, is in great part the making up of one's own mind. One additional feature that both of these approaches have in common is a focus on *ultimate* ends. This is critical: actions that look, on Snook's account, like straightforward cases of indoctrination may, on Hare's and Kilpatrick's account, be only a prelude to or first step in what is intended to be genuine education, where the earlier-imposed limitations are subsequently removed, thus vitiating any moral concerns about the first steps. So what determines whether an act is

¹⁴ Green, *supra* n.9, at 34-35.

¹⁵ R.M. Hare, *supra* n.10, at 47-60. This definition strikes me as somewhat heavily rhetorical.

¹⁶ That is, for the thoughts of the subject to be dictated by the will of the indoctrinator, rather than by some other grounds for belief. W.H. Kilpatrick, "Indoctrination and Respect for Persons", in Snook, *supra* n.1, 47 at 51.

indoctrination or not are the ultimate ends sought by the instructor, not any intermediate states or results. Presumably this would hold even if the process were interrupted or aborted and the subject left in an inflexible, intractable mental state. To the extent there were *moral* culpability in such a situation, it would likely lie not with the action of bringing the subject to that state, but with the omission of leaving him there.

Harvey Siegel suggests that perhaps indoctrination could be better characterized by cutting aim out of the picture and looking at the results directly. He argues that indoctrination is “a matter of the *results* or *upshot* of the aims, intentions, methods, or content of instances of belief inculcation.”¹⁷ The results he has in mind are similar to Snook’s aims: the “students’ believing non-critically” or “developing non-evidential styles of belief.”¹⁸ For my part, I think that the distinction here collapses once a little pressure is applied. To have an aim, of course, is just to wish to bring about certain results; or put another way, aims differ from each other in virtue of the results that serve as the object of desire. Separating aims from results in the context of indoctrination is problematic on at least two counts.

First, it suggests that someone might (at least theoretically) be hit on the head with a stone and become “indoctrinated” insofar as they are thereby brought to hold some appropriate belief non-critically. This strikes me as wrong. While we might think upon meeting such a person that they have been “indoctrinated”, what we seem to mean in thinking that is that someone did this to them. If we knew that they had in fact been hit on the head with a stone, we’d probably find ourselves thinking that it really *seems* – but just seems – that they’d been indoctrinated.

¹⁷ Harvey Siegel, “Indoctrination and Education”, in FREEDOM AND INDOCTRINATION 30 (Ben Spiecker & Roger Straughan eds., Cassell Educational Ltd., 1991) at 31.

¹⁸ *Id.*

Second, Siegel's account itself undermines the distinction between "aim" theories and "result" theories insofar as it explicitly involves issues of permissibility – something not applicable to cases of indoctrination-by-accident. He specifically endorses the sort of distinction made by Hare and Kilpatrick between bringing about non-critical, non-evidential belief "temporarily" and having it as the end goal of one's operations, although he is open to the notion that we could easily call *both* situations indoctrination, so long as we were willing to accept that one might be permissible while the other is not.¹⁹ The results do matter, of course. But what seems to matter are the results *intended*. And what is an aim-based theory if the various aims are not differentiated in terms of the results that they wish to bring about? It is not, of course, crazy to think about indoctrination as a passive state rather than an activity, and to morally criticize that intentional activity which is aimed at bringing about that passive state on the grounds that it is not a good state in which to be. But that's a different conversation about a different (albeit related) phenomenon. As I indicated before, I think that – as a general framework – aim theories are the better approach simply because we tend to think of indoctrination as a sort of activity engaged in by people.

Intention- or aim-based theories also do a very nice job of discriminating between cases of merely mistaken instruction (which we might hesitate to call indoctrination) and the easier cases discussed above. Consider the following example:

The Medieval Naturalist: Imagine a medieval scholar who, on the basis of available evidence, firmly believes that the earth is the center of the universe, and seeks to so instruct his students. He is aware that geocentrism is a central pillar of the dominant theology, but is indifferent to such matters. He quietly hopes that his students will mirror his attitudes towards scientific inquiry, but for the moment just teaches them the theory as fact to be learned.

Despite the fact that the naturalist is imparting a false and ideologically charged teaching to his students, it does not seem that he is "indoctrinating" in any bad sense. Intent-based theories

¹⁹ *Id.* at 35.

nicely explain why that is: he doesn't *want* his students to grow up to be zealots, although there's certainly a non-trivial chance that they will, given the environment they are in. Results-based theories would, if taken seriously, have to conclude that some of his students were indoctrinated while others were not, even though both the teacher's goals and the actual instruction itself were the same for all students. Content-based theories have even more difficulty with problems like this.

1.2.1.2. Content Theories.

John Wilson and Antony Flew have probably been the two leading voices for the view that some specific type of content is the hallmark of indoctrination. Flew's more sweeping account proposes that indoctrination is the instilling of beliefs "of a certain sort... that are either false or not known to be true."²⁰ In addition, he emphasizes that these beliefs must be "doctrinal" in some sense, that is, they must involve ideology to a greater or lesser extent. Merely instilling negative or positive opinions towards, say, smoking (i.e., a belief "that smoking is bad") would not necessarily be indoctrination, though it may were the belief part of some broader ideology.

Wilson argues that indoctrination is the teaching of a belief for which there is no publically acceptable evidence.²¹ To avoid indoctrination on his account, one needs to teach beliefs that are "rational", that is, beliefs backed by "the general weight of evidence," whether that makes them certain, probable, or just "likely on the whole." The evil of indoctrination on Wilson's view just is the evil of inculcating certainty "where there is no real certainty." This reliance on *certainty* -- which could be seen as more of an epistemological state than one based in external objectivity -- raises the possibility that one may not be able to determine whether or not some practice is indoctrination *just*

²⁰ Antony Flew, "Indoctrination and Doctrines", in Snook, *supra* n.1, 67 at 85.

²¹ Wilson, "Education and Indoctrination" in Hollins, *supra* n.10, 24, at 28. It is worth noting that that Wilson is quite open to defining indoctrination in other ways, and that his definition as treated here (and in Flew's essay) is specifically with the negative sort of indoctrination, that "area whose frontiers, if we only knew where they were, we do not want to cross." *Id.* at 26.

by looking at the content in isolation. An alleged fact could be thought certain in one age, but seen as obviously false in a latter age. How that content fits into underlying social views of what is known and how it is known becomes central.

Wilson's view seems to me to be closer to the truth of the matter, as Flew runs squarely into the problem of the medieval naturalist whose view is without question false, and also is ideologically charged.²² Wilson evades this problem because even an obviously false belief could have publically available and acceptable evidence in its favor.

Snook, however, offers criticisms of both of these content-based theories. He claims that Flew's take fails to "pick out" as indoctrination instances of teachers who teach as true (or certain) those *non-ideological* propositions that the teachers actually know to be false (or uncertain).²³ Second, Snook claims that Wilson's sort of view (that indoctrination traffics in *uncertain* propositions) does not adequately differentiate between the (non-Cartesian) philosopher – whose bread and butter is the uncertain proposition – and the indoctrinator. Furthermore, if an attempt is made to add a requirement that the teaching of the uncertain be undertaken "as if certain", then methodology has been added to the mix. In any case, on virtually any content account, it becomes impossible to indoctrinate that which *is* certain, which Snook thinks must be a possibility.²⁴

²² Although the Naturalist is not teaching the belief *as* part of an ideology, that does not seem to matter on Flew's account. If we were to try to fix this by requiring that the indoctrinator be aware of the nature of the evidence, or asking whether the evidence plays a role in the indoctrinator's motivations, I think that the line between content and intention starts to blur.

²³ Snook, *supra* n.5, at 153. It's not clear to me that these really are instances of indoctrination -- but we'll discuss that more below in Section 1.2.3 in the context of a discussion of an example of J.P. White's.

²⁴ Id. Snook's counterargument to Wilson seems to me to miss out on the fact that Wilson is *entitled* to take for granted that in talking about indoctrination, we are already talking about a form of instruction or teaching. Because of that, we can take for granted that such instruction is done "as if certain"; it's not a method-based definition at all. Even in teaching that something is uncertain, one is at least asserting that it is certainly uncertain. It thus seems forgivable to think that indoctrination can be usefully described by setting it apart from *other* forms of instruction, without having to build its entire definition up from the ground floor.

But it is not as if Snook thinks content has no role to play. He assumes, for example, that "[t]eaching propositions which are false and known by the teacher to be false" must always be an instance of indoctrination.²⁵ Whether this is true or not (at least as an empirical matter) is going to depend in great degree on what we mean by "teaching". Surely just telling students that Socrates was a Roman isn't indoctrination: it's just a lie; if teaching is taken to involve something more substantial than conveying information, well, then maybe Snook's position is defensible. But even if Snook is right as an empirical matter, I suspect that there would still be something else going on in such cases that is responsible for *making* them instances indoctrination. Possible candidates include an emphasis on trusting what the teacher says, a focus on a student's doing what they are told, etc.

My initial sense is that Snook and the content theorists are talking about two slightly different groups of activities -- one of which is taken to sometimes involve the teaching of true facts and one of which clearly does not. They are, in effect, arguing about which one of those things gets to be referred to by the word "indoctrination". To the extent that it matters, I am inclined to think that the Aim theorists have the better of this argument insofar as it is plausible that teachers could impart the "right" -- e.g., the actually correct and true -- political or religious ideology in an indoctrinative way. Such indoctrinators could, despite having access to ample evidence for their beliefs, nevertheless instruct their students in such a way that the evidence doesn't come into play at all. We would likely call such students "indoctrinated", and rightfully so. They would be zealous believers, counterfactually indifferent to contrary evidence, even though no *actual* evidence exists to threaten their entirely correct beliefs.

Despite the disagreements, there are still important similarities to be found in aim- and content- based theories that may help us zero in on what indoctrination actually is. Indoctrinators don't just try to instill beliefs for the moment; they seek the *persistent* holding of some belief over

²⁵ *Id.* at 152.

time. The belief needs to be held in such a way that the believers are untroubled by either contrary evidence or the lack of any supporting evidence. The range of eligible beliefs on content theories may be narrower, but the underlying operation seems to be the same: the bringing about of beliefs held without regard to evidence. On aim theories, the intractability is a purely psychological result; on content theories, it is more intimately bound up with what is taught, and how that content must be understood by the subject.

1.2.1.3. Method Theories.

A third way of thinking about indoctrination is to think of it as a particular *type* of instruction or teaching, one set apart from "genuine" education by the methods employed. Brian Crittenden offers a fairly clear picture of such a criterion, in two stages. First, he uses a broad, content-based definition to describe indoctrination as the teaching of beliefs that are part of a "world view or comprehensive 'philosophy' of life".²⁶ In this case, he is close to Flew's view that the content must be doctrinal. But Crittenden further specifies "mis-educative" indoctrination (the sort with which we are presently concerned) as obtaining if either (1) the presentation of the content "violates the criteria of inquiry", or (2) if the teacher "uses any pedagogical method... inconsistent with the requirements of the general nature of inquiry and moral principles."²⁷ In this way, content determines if we're talking about indoctrination in a very general sense, but the method of instruction determines whether we're talking about the bad kind.

One immediate appeal of method-based criteria is that they do a **very** good job of lining up with almost any imaginable example. Try it: any example of indoctrination that you can think of will

²⁶ Brian Crittenden, "Indoctrination as mis-education", in Snook, *supra* n.1, 131 at 145.

²⁷ *Id.* at 146. These criteria and moral principles are the sorts of things you might assume: justifications, relations to evidence, a ban on teaching falsehoods or deliberately impairing reason, etc. See *id.* at 139.

surely involve "violating the criteria of inquiry." Yet I am not convinced. There is something circular about what's going on with such theories.

The problem is that Crittenden's account relies on a substantive notion of what qualify as "the criteria of inquiry"; that substantive notion is itself informed by what *works* as indoctrination as a matter of contingent fact, in virtue of the way that human beings respond to certain types of instruction. The definition of indoctrination, then, seems to require that we are first able to identify the indoctrinated subjects. That doesn't make for a very satisfying definition. Flew, in critiquing Wilson's view, raises an issue which makes my objection to a method-based criterion clearer. As this issue will come up again later (particularly in Section 1.5.3) I quote it here in full:

[T]he criteria of understanding refer to the present and to the future, not to the past. What settles questions about whether people do or do not know and understand is what they can or could do or say *now*; and not at all how they have got themselves, or been got, into the position of being now able or unable to say or to do the appropriate things on the appropriate present occasions.... On the other hand it is as well to emphasize, as being of enormous practical importance, the contingent fact that many -- perhaps most -- of the most admirable educational ends cannot be produced by a constructive, authoritarian, and nonrational pedagogy.²⁸

Flew is essentially arguing that either you understand something or not, and that it doesn't matter if you learned it the old-fashioned way, or had it downloaded into your head like in *The Matrix*. But for method-based theories of indoctrination, the methods prescribed or approved under the criteria of inquiry achieve their status on the basis of their connection to certain empirical *results*. An example: a teaching technique which runs electricity through students' heads in order to produce perfect, reflective, thoughtful understanding -- so long as it does in fact produce perfect understanding (and was not painful or otherwise harmful) -- could easily satisfy any criteria of inquiry. Indeed, the fact that such a feat was possible would almost certainly change what counted as the accepted criteria. In other words, it is the results that determine the acceptability of the

²⁸ Flew, *supra* n.20, at 86.

criteria, not the other way around. And if what we end up focusing on is results, then as we saw above it seems that once again the Aim theorists have the best of matters.

More interesting, I think, is Crittenden's identification of indoctrination with teaching "a world-view or comprehensive 'philosophy of life'." What is important about this sort of limitation for our purposes is that such a "philosophy" is, by its very nature, fundamental to one's understanding of both the world and one's place in it. Such a fundamental belief at once shapes (1) how one reacts to other propositions; (2) what one takes to be reasons for action; and (3) what one perceives to be legitimate evidence in deliberation. World-views and "philosophies of life" are the sorts of things which serve as contexts for interpreting one's experience; they function as starting premises for one's conclusions about the world, and are thus by their nature quite resistant to change. (Flew and others may have something similar in mind when they write of "doctrines".) It doesn't seem right to think of a "world view" as *just* a belief – and it also seems to be more than just a set of beliefs. "World-views" are more like "styles" of thinking or believing; they are the way in which one's beliefs operate and change.

My purpose in going over these theories has not been to advocate for one or the other – at least not yet. Nor do I wish to decisively disprove them all. I just want to provide a strong sense for what these philosophers are concerned with. And from these discussions a common thread emerges: on any theory, indoctrination involves the creating of a sort of primitive mental state (most are happy to call it a "belief") in which the subject holds some type of unquestioned -- and if the indoctrination is a complete success, practically *unquestionable* -- position. That position functions as a sort of "first premise" in the subject's deliberations, the sort of thing that can serve as the basis for ruling out, *reductio*-style, any propositions that would contradict it. We can talk about this premise being "resistant to evidence" or "held despite evidence." And perhaps that description could be taken as a sufficient explanation for what's going on.

But in the next subsection I want to look closely at why indoctrinated views are resistant to evidence and what we mean when we say that. I think that this discussion is intimately caught up in the disagreement between the aim and content theorists about whether indoctrination must involve "doctrines", or, put another way, whether indoctrination necessarily involve some sort of ideological system. I don't think full-blown ideology is necessary, but neither do I think that just any old belief will do. In fact, I'm not convinced that thinking of indoctrination in terms of "beliefs" is particularly helpful at all.

1.2.2. Belief vs. Values

As I said earlier, indoctrination is almost universally taken to consist in the instilling of beliefs. Maybe it's a special type of belief, or maybe it's a belief instilled or held in a particular way; but it's going to be a belief. In this subsection I argue for two points: that indoctrination is aimed at controlling a subject's reasoning and deliberation, and that this is accomplished by changing the subject's values, not just their beliefs. Values alteration is thus an essential requirement for indoctrination to take place.

1.2.2.1. Indoctrination is aimed at controlling a subject's reasoning and deliberation.

Intuitively, we know that indoctrinators aren't generally content with just controlling the beliefs of their subjects. Nor are indoctrinators, as such, looking to create lifeless automata (though that may sometimes be the particular result when things go awry). They seek to control their subjects' actions not directly, but by controlling what the subjects themselves think they *ought* to do.²⁹ This type of project can be explained in terms of belief easily enough: the subjects in the "easy

²⁹ Specific motivation alone does not characterize the way we talk about most activity; one can successfully rob banks without being motivated by the acquisition of money, and presumably one can indoctrinate without being motivated by establishing control. But the taking of money is nonetheless an essential part of robbing a bank, and the establishing of the sort of indirect control I am describing is characteristic of indoctrination -- every bit as much as the instilling of unshakable beliefs. This is true whether the indoctrinator specifically seeks such control or not. If the indoctrinator has not gotten the subject to act and deliberate in the chosen way, the indoctrination has not been a success.

cases" mentioned above surely could be said to believe certain propositions as a result of their indoctrination. For example:

1. That David Koresh is the Messiah;
2. that *der Fuehrer* is the glorious leader whose every word is to be obeyed; or
3. that Big Brother is worthy of love and whatever he says must be the truth.

These examples are not, of course, sterile facts like "the sky is blue." Each qualifies as "doctrinal" in the sense that they are foundational parts of larger structures or systems of belief. Doctrines have been described as "intimately related to action and purposive activity," and with the status of "universal, unfalsifiable truths",³⁰ and each of the three examples above seems to match that description. And they all certainly seem to qualify as an example of at least the foundations of a "world view" or a "philosophy of life" in the larger sense that Crittenden proposed.

In other words, each of the above propositions provide reasons for believing subsequent parts of some larger ideological structure. If you believe #2, for instance, you will do what *der Fuehrer* asks when he asks it. And if he says the Russians are evil, then you're likely to believe that, too. With the easy cases, the ideological systems are pervasive and powerful: their beliefs tend to squeeze out all other ways of thinking. Once someone is indoctrinated to believe that Koresh is the Messiah, that view will shape the way in which that person approaches nearly every aspect of his or her life, and in a way that believing something more mundane like, say, "My employer should generally be obeyed in matters pertaining to my job" just won't.

This power and pervasiveness, though, does not seem to be a necessary component of indoctrination. Thorough, near-brainwashing indoctrination may be the first sort that comes to mind (and the easiest to spot), but it seems possible to be subjected to, say, religious indoctrination that doesn't quite turn you into a puppet. One's religious indoctrination may be limited to certain spheres: Sundays and Holidays, for example. You could be religiously indoctrinated but still not

³⁰ I.M.M. Gregory & R.G. Woods, "Indoctrination: Inculcating Doctrines", in Snook, *supra* n.1, 162 at 168.

think that your priest's tax advice is worth following. Nevertheless, if someone were to try to convince you that you shouldn't bother with Confession, you are likely to react by digging your heels in, and no amount of "evidence" is likely to change your mind.

In each of these cases, the authority of the foundational belief changes the way that the indoctrinated subject reasons and deliberates; if that change takes place, the indoctrination seems to have also taken place. This suggests that it is the instilling of the foundational belief that really is the indoctrination, and not the subject's later coming to hold subsequent beliefs. The subsequent beliefs of the ideology do get instilled, true, but many of them are obtained directly through the operation of the subject's rationality (in a fairly thin sense of the word) seemingly by syllogism:

1. If Big Brother says something is true, then it is true.
2. Big Brother says that $2+2=5$ is true.
3. Therefore, $2+2=5$ is true.

The foundational belief (for lack of a better term) might be held regardless of evidence, as many theorists have suggested is necessary, but I think that there's more to it than that. That same belief also affects what *counts* as evidence. I indicated above that one might take an indoctrinated belief as the basis for rejecting other beliefs through a sort of reduction. I have in mind something like the following.

4. $2+2=5$ (From 3, above)
5. Emanuel Goldstein speaks the truth. (Premise for reduction.)
6. Emanuel Goldstein says that $2+2=4$.
7. From 1 and 2, $2+2=4$.
8. From 4 and 7, $2+2=4$ and $2+2=5$.
9. Therefore, $4=5$. A contradiction!
10. By reduction, Premise 1 must be false. Emanuel Goldstein does not speak the truth.³¹

³¹ This is overly simplistic, of course. What is in fact proven is that Emanuel Goldstein does not *always* speak the truth. But there's plenty of room for Big Brother to declare anyone who disagrees to be utterly untrustworthy. Also, I don't mean to imply that people explicitly think in terms of syllogisms. That's pretty obviously false. But I do think that we tend to act in ways that are generally consistent with particular principles (whatever they may be), and that many, perhaps most, of our deliberations can be effectively, albeit artificially, *represented* as essentially syllogistic.

In this way, the belief that Big Brother speaks the truth serves as a sort of “logical safeguard” against contrary beliefs. But would it safeguard against *any* contrary belief? That depends on how deeply the believer believes. Also, simply in virtue of their content, not all “first premises” are going to be of equal scope and applicability. A belief that David Koresh is the Messiah, for instance, will influence far more decisions in one’s life than a belief that one shouldn’t wear white after Labor Day, even if both beliefs are implanted with the same degree of efficacy. Yet even in the latter case, it seems that the subject would still evaluate evidence in light of the instilled belief, going through something of a reasoning process: The shirt is white; one shouldn’t wear white after Labor Day; therefore I should not wear that shirt after Labor Day.

What I am trying to make clear here is that people who have been indoctrinated don't just believe something to be true; they think in particular ways, towards or away from particular types of conclusions. They make conclusions that can seem odd, or even totally illogical – *if you don't share their first premises*. That indoctrination affects deliberation in this way can help resolve what I see as an ambiguity in Snook's claim that an indoctrinated belief is held “regardless of the evidence”.

There are (at least) two ways we can take Snook’s claim. On the one hand, there's a sort of blind, heedless, akratic assertion in the face of contrary evidence. A person who recognizes that there is evidence that Koresh is just a man, that he has made mistakes, may nonetheless insist that he is the Messiah, and flawless. I'm willing to accept that this can be called indoctrination (and frankly I suspect it's probably what Snook has in mind). But it's a strange state – one that is rare if it ever actually obtains at all. It requires being capable of holding, with total sincerity, explicit and obvious contradictions in one’s head – not in the disconnected way that I might say my mother is in Texas because I’ve forgotten that she’s in Ohio, even as I’m addressing a letter to her in Ohio. The contradiction is explicit in a very conscious way. (One could think that a subject so indoctrinated would be drifting towards insanity.)

Contrast this with a case where the process of indoctrination changes what the subject is willing to accept as evidence, where when faced with what seems like evidence, the subject instead decides that someone is trying to trick her. Now the subject is not just holding stubbornly firm to a belief (though it may *appear* this way from the outside). Instead she is rationally (after a fashion) *rejecting* the conclusions towards which we think the contrary evidence points. In such a situation, if the foundational belief is instilled with sufficient strength and permanence, then any evidence that contradicts it will be, by *modus tollens*, mistaken.³²

Indoctrination in this sense can be said to hobble the reason of the subject, but it doesn't completely block it in the way that, say, brainwashing does. The brainwashed or conditioned subject is something like a marionette: when you see the Red Queen, you do what Angela Lansbury says as a sort of passive vessel. What you might *think* about what you're asked to do is irrelevant. You just do it. The indoctrinated subject, by contrast, still "freely" deliberates towards choices and conclusions based on his or her values. The indoctrinator quietly urges the subject, "Reason to these conclusions over here... the ones consistent with these foundational principles. Stay away from those conclusions over there." The aim of the indoctrinator is not just for the subject to *believe* as the indoctrinator wishes, but to deliberate, reason, and act as the indoctrinator wishes. That's what makes indoctrination such a nasty piece of work (most of the time): when it's successful, you not only end up eating what's given to you, but asking for seconds with a smile and thanking the chef.

The question remains, though, what sort of beliefs need to lie at the root of indoctrination. I agree with most commenters that not just any belief will do. And it's tempting to say that

³² Charlene Tan, invoking Popper and Plantinga, has argued that there is no neutral perceptual data, no "pure" evidence, and that "all evidence is reflective of the underlying ideological structures that make certain facts 'evidential' and 'rational'. See Charlene Tan, *Michael Hand, Indoctrination and the Inculcation of Belief*, 38 J. OF PHIL. OF EDUC. 257, 259 (2008). I don't know if I would go so far as to assert that, but it's remarkably close to what I am asserting, which is that indoctrination doesn't so much destroy a subject's capacity for reason as it does change, fundamentally, what it is that people are willing to take *as* reasons.

indoctrination requires "doctrines" or "ideology." Ideologies are pervasive and powerful, and they touch on broad swaths of human activity; they make excellent foundations for indoctrination. They may be more or less rigid, more or less broad in scope. But they are ways of looking at the world, or as Crittenden said, "world-views". But, *contra* Crittenden, I don't think that indoctrination must be about ideology or profound philosophies; it just happens to be that it usually is.³³

Admittedly, it may also be the case that we only really *care* about indoctrination when it is deep, far-reaching, or particularly upsetting in terms of content. But that it is usually thus is not a definitive reason to generally proclaim that it must always be thus. Why should it be impossible to indoctrinate someone to believe, without any reservation, that one absolutely should not wear white after Labor Day? The reasoning process is still hijacked after a fashion; the conclusion against wearing the shirt is inescapable. Now, I can certainly understand that some might be hesitant to call this "indoctrination" precisely because it seems harmless. But just because we use it as a spice in small doses does not mean that the statement "Nutmeg is a poison" is false. It is a spice, and it is a poison – and in either case it's still nutmeg.

Perhaps shaping someone into a Labor Day Fashion fanatic is a meager and even whimsical sort of indoctrination, but I see no reason to exclude as a different process *in kind*. The difference is one of degree and scope. So while the easy cases clearly involve instilling ideologies (or at least their foundations) it seems at least plausible that one can indoctrinate using normative beliefs that don't quite reach the level of full-blown ideologies.³⁴ The normativity, though, seems indispensable to the

³³ It may just be that we notice it more in such cases, but even if indoctrination really is more commonly charged with ideology, there are a few reasons for this, I think. First, indoctrinating another person is a fairly serious and involved undertaking; it likely takes substantial motivation to want to control the way another human being deliberates. Ideology provides such motivation. Second, it can be difficult to explain certain ideologies to people on the basis of objective, publically acceptable evidence. There's just not that much *scientific* evidence that Koresh is the Messiah. So ideologues often turn to other methods to convince people.

³⁴ We may not notice or care about "lesser" instances, but perhaps we shouldn't include our taking notice of something's moral offensiveness in our considerations of what makes that thing what it is. If the same sort of process is

process. If the goal of the indoctrinator is control of the subject's deliberations about action and belief, then the sort of reasoning in which the subject will have to engage will necessarily involve "oughts" and "shoulds", though it may be enough for these purposes that it involve "goods" and "bads". To evaluate evidence, one needs a standard.

1.2.2.2. Indoctrination is aimed at the subject's values.

I think we have a word available to us that captures the particular type of normatively-charged belief that is peculiar to indoctrination: "values." It is not my intention to have a lengthy metaphysical discussion about what a value is. "Value" is a word that we use all the time with amazing success despite not being able to clearly articulate what it means. When we talk of a person's values, we're talking about the things that a person cares about, particularly how those cares are expressed in deliberate, intentional action. You could think of values as "habits of decision-making" (this is my preferred formulation) or as a type of preference, if you like. But at the most mundane level, if a person consistently chooses vanilla ice cream over chocolate, then in the absence of extraneous conditions we say that he values vanilla more than he values chocolate. And if a person is willing to lay down his life for his country, we say that he values his country – quite a lot. Our values, however, are expressed in our *choices*, not through our mere behavioral habits. If you mindlessly (or capriciously) reach for the vanilla without thinking about it, it may reflect some sort of *de facto* preference, but because there is no real deliberation involved, such reaching does not seem to involve values as such.

So when someone chooses to give their daughter to David Koresh, to turn in their parents for disrespecting Hitler, or even to accept as true that we've always been at war with East Asia, he or she is expressing a value through, in, or by way of that choice. We say that he values David Koresh,

at work in, does it not make more sense to say that there are instances of indoctrination about which we are morally concerned, and incidents of indoctrination about which we are not?

or Hitler, or Big Brother. And on a smaller scale, when someone chooses to wear their blue shirt after Labor Day because they are mindful of the tradition, we could say that they value the tradition, or perhaps that they value “being the sort of person” who follows tradition.

Values don't just show up in preferences and goals, though; they also show up in terms of trust, in terms of what people are inclined to take as evidence or reasons. Values can be, I think, a shorthand for talking about the "priority" that we give things in our deliberations. If you value your mother's advice, you're inclined to take her advice as a reason for action. If you value Big Brother *very* highly, then even when the calculator says that $2+2=4$, when Big Brother says it's five, you will take five to be the answer.³⁵ You may think the calculator broken, or you may even destroy that source of infernal lies. Our values not only help us determine what is true in this way, they also help us evaluate competing or alternative values, whether moral or otherwise. A firm, literal conviction that "Thou shalt not kill" will have an important role to play in whether you think that there is a moral duty to respond to your country's call to arms or not.

You could still describe this sort of valuing as belief if you were so inclined, but it is a bit more like “believing in” (e.g., Jesus) than merely "believing that" (e.g., it is raining). When one believes *in* Jesus one accepts not only a large body of alleged facts about a certain Nazarene gentlemen, but also sees in Jesus something (or someone) worthwhile and wonderful. Believing in Jesus is (or perhaps "provides" is a better term) a reason to take certain types of action: giving to the poor, going to church, forgiving your enemies, or maybe even giving the nonbeliever a good smiting. Believing in Jesus might also give you reason to accept the Scriptures as evidence.

³⁵ At some level we might think that we've passed out of the realm of indoctrination and moved into the realm of brainwashing. There seems to be a sense in which the natural, *a priori* appeal of a proposition like $2+2=4$ is so strong that it's impossible to distrust its evidential truth and the only option is the blind sort of assertion that Snook seems to advocate.

It's fairly obvious that there is a relationship of some sort (perhaps causal) between the "beliefs that" and the "beliefs in". Mindful of the problems inherent in "is" and "ought" relations, it's plausible that you could "believe in" Jesus because you believe that He is the Son of God, for instance.³⁶ A value might very well be a species of belief -- a belief loaded with some sort of normative content, perhaps -- but the two words are not fully synonymous. And however it runs, the relationship between the "belief that" some predicate obtains for some given object and the "belief in" that object is not a necessary one. One could imagine, for instance, that the Christian Satan believes all the relevant facts about Jesus, including the propositions relating to his divinity and resurrection. Of all creatures, who, other than God himself, would be in a better position than the Devil to know the truth of these matters? But regardless of his factual beliefs, Satan doesn't believe *in* Jesus at all.³⁷ Indeed, Satan, by all accounts, seems rather to resent him. Whatever else he may be, Satan has not been indoctrinated.

Likewise, one could imagine that through all manner of insidious and coercive means a person might become convinced of the mere factual belief that David Koresh is the Messiah sent by God but nonetheless remain unmotivated to act on that factual belief. Perhaps such a person would be akratic (if you are inclined to think that the belief of someone's being the Messiah *just is* a reason to value him), or perhaps his passions are unresponsive to the factual belief (if you're of a more Humean bent). Regardless of how you characterize the situation, though, the following seems true: ***if an indoctrinated subject's factual beliefs are not taken by the subject to be a reason for behaving in the desired way, then his indoctrination hasn't been successful.***

³⁶ Though in that case, it seems like it the valuing of *God* that is in the first place causing you to evaluate Jesus' being his son in a positive way, so I don't want to be taken as saying that, if there is a causal relationship between beliefs and values, that it flows in any one particular direction. That's an empirical question for Psychologists to answer. It seems as likely to me that you believe in Jesus because of the Scriptures as it is for you to believe in the Scriptures because of Jesus.

³⁷ I can hardly claim to be the first to draw this distinction, or even to have used this example. *See, e.g.,* Alvin Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Rational?" in *RATIONALITY AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF* 7 (C.F. Delaney ed., Notre Dame 1979).

Indoctrination, then, is about creating the conditions for motivation. If a potential subject of indoctrination is the sort of person who would turn out akratic or unmoved in the face of indoctrinated beliefs -- that is, if the subject would hold the beliefs you desire them to hold but wouldn't act on them -- then part of successfully indoctrinating that subject is going to be getting around that akrasia, or moving those passions. If you don't figure out how to do that, you're not going to be a very good indoctrinator. You have to make them care.

In short, a successful indoctrination doesn't just instill a belief; it makes a *believer*, and it causes the subject to value something.³⁸ That valuing affects the subject's actions. Indoctrination is often thought to be a form of manipulation,³⁹ after all, and manipulation is (at least colloquially) what you do when you're trying to control or influence someone else's actions. This isn't to say that successful indoctrination *requires* action, but it requires at least the potential or disposition -- whatever you want to call it -- to act on the values and beliefs that have been instilled. One can imagine, for instance, an indoctrinated Nazi sleeper agent who is never activated, but who lives out his life peacefully without ever having heard from the *Fuehrer*. He has certainly been indoctrinated, even though he lives a life in which his indoctrinated values never come into play.

So it seems like indoctrination is the changing of someone's values in such a way as to affect their deliberation and action. It's a change that is both intended, and intended to be either permanent or at least persistent in the way that we typically take our values to be (at least

³⁸ There is a sense of the word "indoctrinate" which still has some purchase in modern conversation that does not necessarily involve valuing. Someone might be indoctrinated into the tenets of a faith, for instance, without actually becoming a believer. It seems, though, that all we mean by "indoctrination" in that sense is that a certain belief system has been intellectually apprehended. It doesn't seem to involve values, though, and more importantly it does not appear to be the same, inherently problematic sort of indoctrination currently under discussion. Nevertheless, it seems a perfectly appropriate use of the word; I might be said to be doing some "indoctrination" of my own in this thin sense insofar as I am trying to make it possible for my readers to see the "picture" I'm sketching of how indoctrination works, so that even if they don't *agree* with it, they can at least *see* it. I am grateful to Professor Brian Copenhaver for his help in making this distinction.

³⁹ See, e.g., Yaffe, *supra* n.13.

aspirationally) constant. We should, however, qualify what it means to "change" someone's values for the purposes of indoctrination. A subject of indoctrination has their newfound values in a 'genuine' sense: they value the object of their valuing directly, not instrumentally or contingently. If you hold my wife hostage and threaten to kill her if harm befalls you, I might be said (in a sense) to now value your life. I might act to protect you. But I don't value your life directly; in fact, I'm likely to try to kill you if I get the chance.

Indoctrination, unlike coercion or fraud, is about getting the subject, with full knowledge of the relevant facts, to "freely" choose to do what it is the indoctrinator wants them to do, to respond to reasons in particular ways. Big Brother doesn't just want fearful obedience from Winston Smith, he wants to know that Winston is his creature without reservation or resentment. The term I'd like to use to describe the sort of value involved here (more specifically the way it is held) is *freestanding*. A value on this account is freestanding if the object of valuing is valued for its own sake, and not derivatively of some other value. Indoctrination, I think, requires either the creation of new, freestanding values, or the alteration of the relative weight or priority given to other already freestanding values.

If this requirement of "freestandingness" is not met, then what we are not discussing indoctrination at all, but something more like the coercion example above. What's really doing the motivational work there is that I value my wife's life, not that I value yours. My valuing of your life is derivative of that.⁴⁰ In such a coercive situation, you also have to go to the trouble of maintaining the credibility of the threat lest I rebel and retaliate. Indoctrination, by contrast, sets things up so that the subjects "look after themselves". That's one of the reasons it's so creepy.

⁴⁰ I'm perfectly happy accepting that values, in order to be values at all, must necessarily be "freestanding" in the sense that I'm advocating here. I introduced the distinction merely to head off the confusions that would result if values were not subject to such a requirement. I thank my colleague Adam Masters for pointing out this issue to me.

If we combine the notion that indoctrination is aimed at controlling reason and deliberation with the notion that indoctrination creates and/or changes freestanding values, I think we now have a fairly vivid picture, suitable for a block quote:

Indoctrination involves the intentional working of a persistent or permanent change in a subject's freestanding values in order to thereby determine (or at least influence) how the subject deliberates, and what sorts of choices he or she otherwise freely makes.

The traditional view of indoctrination -- that it implants beliefs that are resistant to or held regardless of evidence -- can be seen as falling out of this statement, but as a symptom or effect of what is really going on, not as an essential characteristic.

1.2.3. Counterarguments: White's Teacher and Socrates

So far I've argued that indoctrination isn't about instilling mere beliefs, and that it's not necessarily about ideology, either. I've asserted that it involves changing values, and that it is necessarily concerned with getting people to do things, to deliberate in certain ways either about actions or conclusions. But there are potential counterarguments that need to be addressed.

1.2.3.1. White's teacher.

First, there's at least one line of thought that runs *directly* counter to this picture. In the course of arguing that indoctrination doesn't involve "doctrines" (and urging an aim-based theory) J.P. White suggested that a teacher might implant a false factual belief in a student "just to show that it can be done."⁴¹ At the outset, White concedes that an indoctrinator's successfully instilling a false belief about some common factual subject -- that Melbourne is the capital of Australia, for instance - - would as a practical matter involve putting the belief into the context of a broader ideology; there

⁴¹ White, "Indoctrination and Intentions", in Snook, *supra* n.1, 117 at 124. White elaborated in a later paper a difference between what he called his weak claim -- that the beliefs need not be part of a systemic ideology -- and his strong claim -- that the beliefs can be any sort of belief whatsoever. White, "Indoctrination Without Doctrines", in Snook, *supra* n. 1, 190. I am aiming somewhere in between these two claims.

is simply so much competing evidence that in order to successfully hold the belief over any period of time, a student would have to be taught to mistrust books, mistrust maps, etc.

But to show that the broader ideology is *not* necessary to indoctrination's taking place, White invites us to imagine a situation "where the pupil is not likely to find counter evidence": a student and a teacher on an isolated island. The teacher instills in the student the false belief "that Uranus has seven moons". The boy has no access whatsoever to astronomical data. White asserts that this is indoctrination. I see two reasons to reject this claim.

First, White starts out by asserting that indoctrination can be defined in terms of intent: it is one person's "trying to get [another] to believe that a proposition 'p' is true, in such a way that nothing will shake that belief."⁴² But it seems obvious to me that indoctrination is not defined by the contingent failure of things to shake a belief, but rather by the belief's being inherently resistant to things shaking it whether such challenges arise or not. The "such a way" must directly concern the style or mode of believing, not just the external conditions surrounding it. By moving the subject to an area where "he is not likely to find counter evidence", White no longer seems to be talking about indoctrination at all. What he's talking about is mere lying, which in these isolated circumstances happens to produce a belief that *will not* be shaken, not one that *cannot* be shaken.

Nor does this scenario really involve "non-evidential" belief, as White would have it; the testimony of the teacher *is evidence* (and undisputed evidence at that!). The testimony of teachers is, all things considered, pretty good evidence in most cases, the very sort of evidence that children the world over rely on all of the time. White's teacher is just lying to the student without the slightest possibility of getting caught. Indoctrination should be distinguishable from mere deceit. If there was any indoctrination going on, it was in the setting of the initial conditions of the student-

⁴² *Id.* at 120.

teacher relationship; White establishes that "[t]he boy trusts him utterly."⁴³ Utter trust? Let us assume it's so; it sounds like the boy's already been indoctrinated *ex ante*.

If White's student ever *were* to encounter counter-evidence, then the student would either ignore or accept that counter-evidence. If the counter-evidence is accepted, then the "indoctrination" must have been a failure. Yet if the evidence is ignored or discounted, how is this any different than the Melbourne example, with its requirement that the student be taught to mistrust maps and all other sorts of evidence? Is it not more accurate to say that if there is indeed indoctrination at work, then it lies in the values which govern what the student accepts as evidence?

My second criticism -- and this isn't so much an argument as a rhetorical observation -- is that while it is certainly possible to instill a mere factual belief in someone without there being any value-laden consequences, I don't think that this is properly called indoctrination, any more than a workout on a rowing machine in a gym is an instance of rowing, or drilling footwork is an instance of fencing. It bears a startling resemblance, true, and a lot of the moving parts are undeniably the same. But the context that makes it a genuine instance of the activity is missing. By instilling a merely factual belief that has no relevance to deliberation of any kind, one may be going through all the right motions for some necessary steps in indoctrination, but it really seems to me to be just a facsimile, or maybe practice, for the real thing.⁴⁴

So I don't think White's argument stands. As a result, for now I feel safe saying that indoctrination involves the instilling of a value, perhaps along with or even through the instillation

⁴³ *Id.* at 124.

⁴⁴ To be fair, I am perhaps, in this objection, guilty of that sin White warned against when he said that "One might deny that the imaginary case described above was really a case of indoctrination... [b]ut in that case... the supporter of the 'content' criterion wins his case by making it trivially true." But I'm not merely denying; I think I've also given a credible explanation for distinguishing his counterexample from actual indoctrination.

of, a belief. I'm willing to cede to White that it needn't be a component in some *broader* ideology. But as I indicated above, values can be much narrower than ideologies.

1.2.3.2. Socrates.

The second, and thornier, counterargument I have to deal with is that the definition I've proposed is arguably broad enough to include instances of genuine factual learning. Consider a classic example of education: Socrates' instruction of the servant in the *Meno*.⁴⁵ Socrates is pointing out various features of the world to the servant, bringing them to his attention and asking him to think about them. Strictly speaking, there does not seem to be any question at all that what Socrates is doing is directly interfering with how the servant interprets evidence and deliberates. Armed with this new knowledge, the servant will now go about his life differently – at least to some limited extent. For example, if asked to bring a square plate of grapes double the size for his master's table, the slave will now reach for the plate that is double the size rather than four times the size.

We may be tempted to think that Socrates is also changing the servant's *values* in a very general sense. Not only is the servant's pattern of action potentially changed, but if Meno himself were to tell the servant that the double-sized square had sides twice as long, the servant would now be inclined to doubt his master's claim. Plausibly, he would (plausibly) instead look to his diagrams - - either real or imagined -- to determine the truth of the matter. This suggests that the servant might value the authority of his master much less than he did before Socrates got to him, even if he might not be willing to say so.

⁴⁵ A brief recap: the boy initially believes that a square's size may be doubled by doubling the length of its sides. Socrates then methodically presents various sorts of geometric facts to the boy. The boy follows along, first coming to the conclusion that doubling the size yields a square four times as large, and then that adding 50% to the lengths of the sides still gives too large a surface. Eventually, the boy agrees with Socrates that he does not know the exact length of the side of a double-sized square. Through yet more questioning and demonstration, Socrates brings it about that the boy understands that the exact length of a side of a double-sized square would be the diagonal of the original square.

To make matters even worse for my account, there does not seem to be any question that Socrates is doing this all quite deliberately. True, his overall purpose is to demonstrate a theory of recollection for Meno, but Socrates clearly *intends* the result that he gets, and would be pleased if the servant were to bring mathematical excellence into his day-to-day affairs. So why isn't this an instance indoctrination? And for that matter, why isn't *all* education -- no matter how wonderfully true and based on evidence -- a sort of indoctrination on my account? I will explain in Chapter 3 how indoctrination of a sort is actually indispensable to education, but for now I think there are two ways to escape this problem.

The first is to characterize what is going on as the servant's coming to understand the geometric truths *for his own reasons*. Socrates is presenting certain facts. That the servant takes these facts as reasons for reaching certain conclusions is based on the servant's pre-existing beliefs and values and on the operation of his intellect. So to the extent that his new attitudes towards geometric evidence can be properly described as "valuings" (a stretch, but not unreasonable) they are not "freestanding" because they are dependent on what he already values: the reliability of his senses, his knowledge of basic arithmetic, certain rules of logic which may or may not be innate, etc. The servant presumably already wanted to get the "right" answer to mathematical problems; what Socrates has done is show him how to do this. So there has not really been a change in values at all. What there has been, however, is a change in beliefs, and perhaps the acquisition of some skill.

Things would be different if the boy did not already value right answers, mathematical understandings, and the like. If the servant did not already have such values, then Socrates likely would not have been able to accomplish what he did using such a light touch (and his argument regarding recollection would have failed). Yet if Socrates were to bring about a change in the servant's values such that he now saw mathematical truth as something to be valued and pursued, I

think we *would* have an instance of indoctrination on our hands (assuming that this was Socrates' intention). That does not seem to be the case.

The second way of avoiding this problem is to perform the exact same sort of analysis, but with respect to Socrates' intention rather than the servant's state of mind. Because Socrates doesn't want to actually change the boy's values, what Socrates is up to cannot be considered indoctrination any more than can the Medieval Naturalist's bit of misguided instruction. Now, it may happen that the servant happens to end up with an extremely dogmatic view of squares and sides; this is surely psychologically possible just as the Naturalist's students might end up as dogmatic theocrats. But that is not, we should think, Socrates' goal, and if it is not his goal, then he is not *indoctrinating*. He may be causing a certain intractable state of mind to develop, and that state may be unfortunate; Socrates may even be morally culpable for being reckless to the possibility. But that is a different sort of moral transgression than seeking control over other people's actions and deliberations.

I think I've managed to avoid both of these counterarguments: one that would threaten to find my statement about indoctrination too narrow (White's teacher) and the other that would threaten to find it too broad (Socrates). I will then, at least provisionally, take my claims about indoctrination's involving the changing of values to be true.

1.3. Why Indoctrination is Bad

Explicating the morality of indoctrination has, historically, run into one of two problems. On the one hand, one can find many, many discussions about what's morally problematic about certain practices – such as religious education, moral education, and values education – which may or may not be indoctrination. These discussions tend to be somewhat fast and loose with the term, using it only as a way of describing the particular practice in which they are interested. For instance, an otherwise worthwhile article on moral education by Dr. Charlene Tan defines indoctrination as "the paralysis of one's intellectual imagination -- characterized by the absence of any rational

justification for one's beliefs or values, the inability to justify one's beliefs and values, and the inability to consider alternatives."⁴⁶ Whatever indoctrination may be, it pretty clearly is not "the paralysis of one's intellectual imagination", although some instances of indoctrination may produce a state amenable to such a description. And even if we took those three characteristic features as the basis of a definition, we would still be looking at something far broader than just indoctrination.⁴⁷

On the other hand, philosophers who are more specific and exacting in their definitions of indoctrination -- writers like Snook, Wilson, Flew, White, and Hare -- tend to simply take as a given that it is morally impermissible, and don't dwell long on why it happens to be so. The fact of impermissibility is used not as a ground for further inquiry, but as a stick with which to beat the bounds of what shall and shall not fall under the concept.⁴⁸ It is thus very difficult to find a clear account of what is wrong specifically with indoctrination. So... what exactly is wrong with indoctrination?

I take it that the moral objection to indoctrination, whatever it may be, boils down to the unsurprising fact that indoctrination harms its subject in some way. And these harms typically seem to fall into three general categories: harm by content, harm by impairment of reason, and harm against autonomy. These are not rigidly distinct categories by any means. There is surely play and overlap among them. But they are, I think, useful ways of approaching this issue.

⁴⁶ Charlene Tan, "Indoctrination, Imagination and Moral Education", The 2nd International Conference on Imagination in Education, Vancouver, BC, Canada, 14-17 July. Available: http://www.ierg.net/pub_conf2004.php.

⁴⁷ Without meaning to be flippant, dead and sleeping people are apparently indoctrinated on this account.

⁴⁸ See Flew, *supra* n.20, at 78 ("[I]n so far as indoctrination is to be taken as essentially bad, normative disagreements involving this notion are likely to appear as disagreements about the instances to which it may be properly applied. People will agree about the connotation, but dispute over the denotation.").

1.3.1. Content

First, if you think that indoctrination by its very nature involves the teaching of false and/or otherwise destructive beliefs, there's an obvious harm in receiving and holding those beliefs. If you believe that David Koresh is the Messiah, and in fact he isn't, you are going to make decisions that are not nearly as justified as they might seem to you. Similarly, while it's a matter more uncertain than false, if you were indoctrinated to believe that cigarette smoking was the thing to do, there are obvious ways in which this could be counterproductive to living a good, flourishing life.⁴⁹

It is also possible to have a content-based objection to indoctrination even when you don't think that indoctrination is characterized by that content. I think that much of the moral objection leveled by Bertrand Russell against indoctrination falls into this category, despite the fact that it is facially concerned with the operation of reason.⁵⁰ Russell's advocacy for "critical thinking" and for what he takes as liberalism's universal skepticism seems to be rooted in the notion that dogmatic instruction will result in an inability to abandon one's beliefs if they prove mistaken. The objection seems to be grounded in the way indoctrination interferes with the *process* of reasoning – suggesting that it may be a worry about the impairment of reason. But I think that what's really driving Russell's concern is the possibility that one could end up with false beliefs and be unable to do anything about it. That would obviously be bad. By contrast, if one were able to become indoctrinated at the knee of God, to have access to unqualified truth, dogmatic belief would not pose so much of a danger in this regard. It might even be affirmatively good.

⁴⁹ It's arguable that the premise, "Smoking is something you ought to do" is, in fact, false, but I do not want take sides in that debate here.

⁵⁰ See generally, A.D. Irvine, "Russell on Indoctrination", 20 INQUIRY: CRITICAL THINKING ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES 20 (2001). I am singling out Russell on this issue, but his view is representative of very large swaths of philosophers who see indoctrination as problematic on procedural grounds.

I do not find arguments for impermissibility-from-content to be compelling. The problem is that if the falsity of content is where we hang our hat for moral criticism of indoctrination, we end up being unable to effectively differentiate the harms of indoctrination from the harms of lying. Whether we are objecting because the indoctrination teaches something false, or because it interferes with truth-arriving processes, the bottom line is that we are concerned that indoctrination interferes with the victim's ability to deliberate and pursue practical success. This is not an argument against the permissibility of indoctrination as such, but rather is either an argument against indoctrination-as-lying (which already seems to be ruled out by moral norms relating to honesty). It is essentially a *prudential* argument against indoctrination, one that succeeds only because we are creatures prone to mistakes in judgment.

This is also true even if you think that indoctrination involves (as Wilson suggests) propositions that are merely uncertain rather than false. If the uncertain proposition is false, then the harm to the subject really is the same harm as from lying. Yet if the uncertain proposition happens to be true, then the content-based harm is found in believing the uncertain to be certain, which is itself a falsehood. And we are back at lying once again. Furthermore, if the belief is one that is both uncertain and completely unfalsifiable --say, a pure matter of aesthetic taste or maybe certain theories about God -- then the harm can't be merely because the belief is held, because the belief by definition does not interact with practical success in any way. (Or if it does, it is only in a Jamesian pragmatic way, in which case the permissibility of indoctrination is swallowed entirely by the moral theory.)

None of this is to say that subjects of indoctrination *aren't* harmed by the content of the beliefs; they surely are, and perhaps even in a large majority of cases. Very little good will come of being seduced into the Branch Davidians, and that is a direct consequence of the lunacy of their beliefs. I am not a relativist in this regard: I think that there are "bad" values. But looking at the

deficiencies of the particular beliefs not the same as looking at the harm of indoctrination itself, a practice which is supposed to be broadly impermissible. Theories of harm-by-content are, essentially, consequentialist. For various reasons I will address in the next chapter, I don't think that consequentialism is a useful way of approaching the problem of indoctrination's permissibility.

1.3.2. Impairment of Reason

Second, indoctrination can be seen, in various ways, as inimical to the operation of reason, as impairing it. On such accounts, indoctrination is condemnable not just because of the results of indoctrination-influenced reasoning, but because indoctrination actually limits the scope of one's capacity for reasoning in the first place. Hare and Kilpatrick are good examples of this type of thinking. In Hare's view, the damage of indoctrination is in preventing the subject from being able to critically appraise, consider, or even revise his or her beliefs. "Indoctrination," he said, "only begins when we are trying to stop the growth in our children of the capacity to think for themselves."⁵¹ (A good analogy for how this is different from a content-based objection might be someone whose foot is cut off. Such a person is harmed consequentially because they are unable to walk, to be sure. But there is also a real sense in which they are harmed simply by virtue of having lost their foot. They are incomplete in an important way.)

There's something intuitively off-putting about one person's preventing another from thinking for themselves. Indoctrination places limits on where our reason can lead us. If we assume that we each have a right to seek out and to know the truth, then what the successful indoctrinator seems to have done, to a greater or lesser extent, is not just keep me from the truth, but also keep me from *looking* for it. To the extent that one sees the human capacity for reason as important to flourishing, as the basis for the good life, or even just "The Good" straight-up, one will consider damage worked upon this capacity extremely harmful. Because reason enjoys a favored position in

⁵¹ Hare, *supra* n.10, at 52.

philosophical discussion, indoctrination's impairment of reason thus seems a prime candidate for the source of its impermissibility.

This moral criticism of indoctrination is made even more poignant by the fact that indoctrination's reason-limiting nature seems to be self-reinforcing. Just as a person whose foot is cut off will have less opportunity for exercise and so suffer harm throughout their body, so a person whose reason is limited in one respect may well find that they are unable to think critically in other respects. The indoctrinated subject may become an easier target for manipulators writ large. Looked at in this way, an ancillary (or even the primary) harm of indoctrination is that it establishes a sort of vulnerability, a point of weakness in one's rational faculties.

But does indoctrination really destroy or prevent the operation of reason? What I've been arguing up till now is that indoctrination doesn't prevent the operation of the subject's reason: it *hijacks* the subject's reason towards particular ends. The subject of indoctrination, I have argued, is not prevented from reasoning full-stop, but rather is prevented from reasoning in particular ways. Viewed in this light, it might seem as though theories that ground the harm of indoctrination in the impairment of reason run into a problem quite similar to that faced by content-based objections: they don't apply when indoctrination instills the truth. For instance, if the subject is indoctrinated to believe that "I should follow the categorical imperative" -- and if we allow that this is the truth -- then implanting that belief/value in such a way that it does not get questioned doesn't seem to prevent reason's full, healthy operation in any way. Indeed, indoctrination in such an instance would almost seem to function as a sort of safeguard -- a way of being *more rational*.

To continue analogizing indoctrination to restricted mobility: if the properly functioning reason would never walk into that dark thicket of mistaken confusion over there, then there doesn't seem to be any harm in putting a high fence around it. True, we're limiting the ability of reason to wander where it will, but if reason were functioning well, it wouldn't go over there anyway. "Stay

here and bathe in the light of the categorical imperative," whispers the indoctrinator. Of course, there may be some separate harm in not being able to arrive at the decision to follow the categorical imperative through the *free* operation of reason, but that seems less a harm based on the impairment of reason, and more one based on autonomy.

There's another sense in which indoctrination could be seen as an offense against reason, and that is that you might think that indoctrination "bypasses" the subject's reason and, in so doing, fail to properly engage with something that is vital to the full, excellent functioning of a person. For reasons that I discussed above, I don't think that this concern is well-founded. The question of how a person comes to their values and beliefs is fundamentally a different question of how they hold those values and beliefs, or which values and beliefs they are. If I could hit someone on the head with a magic wand and thereby bestow perfect, balanced, non-dogmatic understanding of things upon them, I don't see how it is that my failure to engage with their reason would constitute a sort of harm. Rather, to the extent that there is a harm in such a situation, it seems to be grounded in a lack of respect for the subject's autonomy.

1.3.3. Autonomy

The third type of harm that one could see worked through indoctrination is a harm to autonomy, broadly speaking. This is a fairly intuitive way of responding to the issue, one that I think lies at the heart of most moral critiques (or at least those not of the Russell variety). While it is not a definition as such, R.S. Peters gives a decent statement of what autonomy involves when he says that it "implies the ability and determination to regulate one's life by rules which one has accepted for oneself."⁵² Indoctrination might be thought to harm autonomy, then, either (1) to the extent that the indoctrination itself is not part of the subject's own regulation (i.e., it is occurring against his or

⁵² R.S. Peters, *ETHICS AND EDUCATION* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1966) at 197.

her will in some sense) or (2) insofar as the indoctrination gives “rules” to the subject that are not “accepted” by the subject in the relevant way.

Though this third type of moral objection is in many ways similar to the second, it takes a much broader view of where the harm lies; one that need not be concerned with the fact that indoctrination is (supposedly) either non-rational or harmful to rationality. Instead, the basis for moral disapproval is that indoctrination represents an inappropriate exertion of power by one person over another. Continuing the mobility analogy once more: while there may not be any consequential harm in erecting a fence to pen in someone's well-functioning reason, the fact is that you've got no right to put up a fence in the first place. Autonomy-based theories have the advantage of being able to find indoctrination offensive even when it involves true beliefs. Such a subject may still be harmed insofar as the indoctrination itself is an affront to one's autonomy.

Looked at this way, indoctrination does not merely interfere with the operation and scope of the subject's reason, but instead places substantial limits on the subject's freedom of will, self-expression, or self-determination. The indoctrinator inhibits the subject's natural growth and activity, imposing instead his own designs. Wilson alludes to this sort of harm in terms of self-realization:

[W]e value the human personality, and *do not want it to be diminished*. Our love of freedom and dislike of interference is rooted in the desire to expand each individual to his fullest extent: and to inculcate certainty where there is no real certainty is one form -- and a very serious form -- of preventing this expansion.⁵³

The expansion Wilson is writing about isn't just raw growth, but expansion of that individual in particular. It is an expansion into the “fullest extent” that is genuinely his. Looked at from this perspective, while a subject who falls under the spell of an indoctrinator certainly grows in some sense, he doesn't grow into *himself*. Rather, he grows into something of a shadow of his

⁵³ Wilson, *supra* n.21 at 33 (emphasis in original).

indoctrinator. (There is something to this and it will be taken up in the next chapter.) Kilpatrick makes this same sort of point, quoting Raphael Demos, who said, "We do not mould human beings, and do not wish to do so. That way lies indoctrination, propaganda, the worst tyranny of all, because it is tyranny over the human mind."⁵⁴ Autonomy harms can be characterized in a lot of different ways -- infringement on freedom, usurpation of self-determination, impinging on dignity -- but they all reduce down to a simple claim: indoctrinators have no business turning other people into their puppets.

Siegel also discusses autonomy-based objections to indoctrination. His picture of indoctrination's harm is striking and vividly stated:

What is so awful about indoctrination anyway? * * * * If I have been indoctrinated... I have been significantly harmed. My autonomy has been dramatically compromised, for I do not have the ability to settle impartially questions of concern to me on the basis of a reasoned consideration for the matter at hand. I am in an important sense the prisoner of my convictions, for I cannot decide whether my convictions ought to be what they are, and I am unable to alter them for good reasons, even if there are good reasons for altering them. Indeed, lacking the disposition to seek reasons, I am doomed to an unawareness of the desirability of aligning my beliefs and actions with the weight of relevant evidence.⁵⁵

There's an awful lot packed into that paragraph. It seems to characterize the impairment of reason (the inability to impartially settle questions) as an assault to autonomy. This is an impairment, I take it, because the content in question is somehow false or not useful; otherwise why would you have *good* reason to change one's convictions? One could be forgiven for thinking Siegel had momentarily become a content theorist about indoctrination. But perhaps he is basing his moral objection on the view that we are rarely, if ever, absolutely certain of the truth of our views. It would be a cautionary position, then, to always hold things tentatively. The sin of indoctrination

⁵⁴ Kilpatrick, *supra* n.16, at 48

⁵⁵ Siegel, *supra* n. 17, at 37.

under that interpretation, however, would just be instilling certainty about what is not certain at all – in this case everything – which would bring us back to Wilson’s content theory, albeit in different clothes.

These three types of harm -- content, impairment of reason, and autonomy -- all seem like plausible and even *probable* results of many instances indoctrination. And surely if a particular act of indoctrination causes any such a harm, it should be at least *prima facie* impermissible on that basis. But that they are plausible harms does not mean that indoctrination is impermissible *per se*. I've offered some preliminary critiques of why content and reason-based theories of harm might not apply to at least corner case scenarios of indoctrination. And as I said at the outset, my purpose here is to argue that indoctrination is *not* necessarily impermissible.

I have, of course, been quite general in my descriptions of these theories, lumping together a wide variety of sometimes ill-defined harms and moral objections into three broad categories. But my purpose in this half of the paper is not to exhaustively catalogue all of the various possible harms of indoctrination, but rather to show that indoctrination, even of the bad sort, need not be impermissible. I think that these three broad categories do exhaust the types arguments that have been made against indoctrination as a general practice. And if I can show in principle that none of these three types of harm necessarily applies to some specific instance of what is unequivocally a case indoctrination, I will take myself to have accomplished my goal.⁵⁶

In the next section, I will attempt to sketch a picture of two cases of indoctrination that, I believe, avoid inflicting any of the broad categories of harm outlined above. Later, I will use these cases as the basis for arguing that indoctrination can be used as a tool for good ends.

⁵⁶ If there is an instance of indoctrination to which none of the three types of harm applies, I will also have implicitly rejected theories that hold something like this: "Indoctrination doesn't necessarily cause any one of these types of harm, but it is impossible for indoctrinators to avoid inflicting any of them, and so indoctrination is impermissible on that basis." I am unaware of anyone who actually holds a view like this, but it strikes me as a more worthy opponent.

1.4. The Moderate Cases

The two cases I want to look now at are things with which I have personal experience: military indoctrination and law school.⁵⁷ The military fully admits that basic training is about turning people into soldiers and is paradigmatically held up as an example of indoctrination; law school professors the country over proudly proclaim that they will "make you think like a lawyer", while students at many schools report feeling as if they are being indoctrinated. Both military training and law school are also immersive, intensive programs in which the people in charge (drill sergeants in the former, professors in the latter) take it upon themselves to see that their charges come to think and act in sometimes profoundly different ways than when they first came in. So not only is there plausibly indoctrination going on, but there are easily identifiable indoctrinators present as well.

1.4.1. Becoming a Soldier: Military Training

"Boot camp" is an immersive experience, and it is intended to be. You may have an hour to yourself here and there (more often towards the latter stages), but by and large every waking (and sleeping) moment of every day is structured and controlled. How you dress, what you eat, where you go, what you do, and with whom you associate are all determined for you.⁵⁸ You are also seldom alone: almost everything is done with your unit, or at least with other members of your unit. The course of training has a very pronounced confrontational edge and can be quite intimidating. But if boot camp is to be an instance of indoctrination, then it must consist at least in part of the

⁵⁷ I could probably write a comparable section about philosophy graduate programs, but it's always more fun to pick on attorneys.

⁵⁸ Obviously this course of indoctrination includes both elements of conditioning (as Wilson used the term) and coercion. That a complex process like indoctrination may employ a wide variety of techniques should not prevent us from identifying it when it occurs.

instilling of values (and perhaps beliefs) into the subjects. So what values and beliefs are needed to "make someone into a soldier"?⁵⁹

The easiest thing to do if one wants an answer to that question is to look at recruits entering, look at soldiers leaving, and see what's changed. Some effects of training are physical: recruits lose fat, gain muscle, and get spiffy new haircuts to go with all of their new calluses. Soldiers usually have a distinctive physical bearing as well. But these changes are the result of exercise and drill, not indoctrination. Some other effects of training are mental, in the sense that they have to do with the acquisition of skills and knowledges; when a recruit completes training, he may know how to operate and clean a rifle, and he may have memorized both a litany of "General Orders" and the process of folding hospital corners. But these effects are not really what we are looking for in the effects of indoctrination, either; a zealously anti-military pacifist could learn and master all of the same skills without becoming either indoctrinated or a soldier. We know from Section 1.2.2 that indoctrination is going to change the way the soldier deliberates about things. It will give him a new frame of reference for evaluating evidence and reasons for action.

To see exactly what is going on, it might be useful to consider the following example of the sort of thinking that the military wants from its recruits: Every barracks has a fire guard whose orders are (1) to watch for fires and (2) to control the entrance of the barracks by challenging (and refusing entrance to) those not explicitly listed on the authorization roster. Here is a common training scenario: the fire guard is summoned to the door by a loud knocking. There he sees a captain in full dress uniform: shiny bars on his shoulders, rows of ribbons upon his chest. The captain is someone familiar; he has been seen about the barracks talking with the drill instructors.

⁵⁹ I must stress that at this point I am limiting my discussion to basic training in the military of a modern, Westernized democracy. Obviously, not all military organizations have such an 'enlightened' approach to individual autonomy. What functions as military indoctrination in North Korea or even Russia is likely to be very different than the indoctrination experienced by Americans, British subjects, or even Israelis, who have universal conscription but whom I include in the Western tradition based solely on hearsay.

The captain demands entrance, but is not on the roster. If the fire guard properly refuses entrance, the captain begins yelling and threatening all manner of horrible punishments if he is not granted immediate access. The pressure continues to mount until either the drill instructor comes up the stairwell and lets the captain in, or (far more likely) the fire guard uses his own common sense about things such as the authority of captains, the lack of any real danger, and the unpleasantness of being yelled at, and opens the door for the familiar, highly-ranked captain who is demanding immediate entrance. If the poor recruit yields to the authority of the captain and opens the door, he is punished — quite severely — and so, usually to a lesser extent, is his entire unit along with him.

Now why would that be?

Obviously the fire guard has done something wrong -- something at odds with the desired thinking and behavior of a soldier. But what is wrong with using one's common sense? The thinking behind this exercise is, I believe, that people's using their own "common sense" tends to get members of the service killed in combat: your common sense isn't applicable because, oftentimes, you don't have a complete picture of either what is going on or why you are being asked to do something. One of the purposes of basic training is to degrade that reliance on your own common sense in favor of carrying out your orders *exactly* as they are given.

Now this is starting to sound more like the familiar, easy cases of indoctrination. The fire guard exercise is obviously not just designed to teach recruits the limited lesson of not opening doors except for people on a list; that wouldn't make a soldier out of anyone. The point of the fire-guard ruse (and situations like it) is to instill over time a new type of problem-solving process that gives priority to following orders over the application of what we have come to see as common-sense solutions. The recruit is different than the soldier, because the soldier will ignore, or at least diminish, his reliance on his "common sense" where that sense conflicts with an order. The change that occurs in training is thus in how the recruit weighs reasons: reasons like orders and his own

judgment.⁶⁰ That's what it means to be indoctrinated as a soldier: you believe that it is generally best to follow orders, and you will not be swayed by what the average person -- or even what perhaps *you* a few weeks ago -- would take as reasonable evidence to the contrary.

Over time, after being subjected to set pieces like the fire guard ruse and dozens of smaller, less vivid practices,⁶¹ following orders becomes a sort of habit -- but not a habit of behavior the way one might compulsively check one's email. Those sorts of behavioral habits are what Green, Snook, and others would recognize as the product of conditioning rather than indoctrination. There are certainly conditioned behavioral habits aplenty to be found in the military -- coming to attention when you hear "Attention", popping out of bed at the sound of Reveille, and saluting higher ranking officers. But the indoctrinating aspects of the training are about instilling habits of deliberation and decision-making, not in conditioning reflex.⁶²

The Fire Guard Scenario clearly isn't about just blindly following orders -- otherwise the "right" action would be to let the captain in. It's about engaging in reasoned deliberation about which orders obtain, and what the proper course of action is in the circumstances. Soldiers can, after a time, salute and stand at attention by reflex, but they follow orders because it's what they think they *ought to do*. This belief (if we want to call it a belief) is designed to be highly, highly

⁶⁰ Obviously I'm not suggesting that we have the sort of analytical tools necessary to determine and track the amount of "weight" that different people give various factors in their deliberations. But it is pretty clearly the case that the decision-making processes of the recruit and the soldier are different, because the *choices* that they make are sometimes different.

⁶¹ There is, for example, no reason to fold your T-shirts in the particular 8-inch by 8-inch square that the drill instructor demands -- at least not any reason rationally related to end of folding T-shirts. The point isn't the shaping of the *cloth*.

⁶² A habit of decision-making could easily be viewed as nothing more than a belief -- the sort of thing indoctrination is traditionally thought to impose on its subjects. If one habitually places greater weight on one factor of the decision-making process, it doesn't seem controversial to say that one believes "that factor *x* is relatively more important" or perhaps even a number of various propositions to the effect of "that factor *x* is more important than _____".

resistant to the sorts of things that non-soldiers take to be evidence to the contrary, and indeed it shapes what the soldier sees as evidence; the change is intended to be permanent.

It is, in other words, indoctrination.⁶³

There is also a second way in which the indoctrinated soldier is startlingly different than the un-indoctrinated recruit, and that is in their strong identification with the unit. It's a natural and reasonable human reaction to look out for one's own interests. It's not the *only* natural reaction that people have, of course: parents often look out for their children's interests at their own expense, and friends have been known to take a bullet without having been turned into a soldier first.

Nevertheless, people most often pursue their own, individual interests in a way that they don't pursue the interests of, say, their co-workers. Basic training's second major goal -- insofar as it is specifically indoctrinating -- is to shift this priority of interests away from the individual and towards the military unit. This is, in some ways, just an amped-up version of what happens on high school sports teams. But it also is not necessarily of the "throw-yourself-on-a-hand-grenade" variety. Certainly such behavior is thought of quite highly, but it isn't *expected*; that's why the military gives out medals to such people.

These reorderings of priorities represent a substantial change in the decision-making process of the typical (modern, Western) individual, and the recruit has been successfully indoctrinated when he or she has adopted the new approaches to the extent that this privileging becomes habitual, becomes part of how the person makes choices.⁶⁴ However we characterize it, when a recruit has

⁶³ Perhaps indoctrination really just is the same sort of action as conditioning, but in the medium of thought and deliberation rather than mere behavior. I would have no issue with admitting this to be the case.

⁶⁴ There are other "values" at work in military training, of course -- lesser changes worked on recruits. Recruits often come to value a sort of Spartan cleanliness, for instance, for reasons not connected at all to efficiency. There is also a certain degree of indoctrination involved in becoming accustomed to killing. Overcoming a natural reluctance to kill and engage in violence is also something that must be done with respect to certain recruits (though not all). That particular bit of indoctrination, though, may just be a reaction to a certain sort of indoctrination that has already taken place earlier in the recruit's life -- whatever made the evolutionary monster that is humankind feel like violence is something to be avoided.

internalized soldierly values, it is then that he becomes a soldier, and not merely a brave person with knowledge of weapons and a neat haircut.

1.4.2. Becoming a Zealous Advocate: Law School

The military isn't the only place where people become indoctrinated in order to assume a profession. Law school can also be a fairly intimidating place, although in a slightly different way than basic training. The professors tend to the authoritarian and Socratic and one's class experience often consists in being questioned on a subject in front of one's peers. Competition is intense, and usually built into the institutional fabric by way of fixed grading curves. There are thus all of the set pieces in place for indoctrination to occur. We should approach law school the same way we approached the military: by asking how "finished" lawyers differ from law students. As before, we can discount the physical changes: pallor, squinting, etc. And we can similarly exclude the factual knowledge and technical skill that students gain.

Yet there *is* indoctrination that occurs -- but unlike in the military, it's not quite central to the project of legal education. The issue is complicated by the fact that for some professors, thinking like a lawyer really is just a technical skill, and indoctrination never enters into it at all. Law school is also much less *successful* in its indoctrination than military training is. But there is at least one identifiable mindset -- a set of values that pervades not just law school but the legal profession generally -- that many professors attempt to instill in their students, and which can be fairly said to be the object of indoctrination. That mindset can be summed up roughly as follows:

Your professional obligations as a "zealous advocate" take precedence over your personal moral priorities, and behavior that would be unreasonable in any other setting is perfectly appropriate when advocating on behalf your client.

This principle (let's call it the "zealous advocacy principle", or ZAP) shows up regularly in law school, and it is at first difficult for many law students to accept. (Some, of course, take to it like fish to water, having spent their lives looking for an excuse to act unreasonably.) ZAP runs counter

to many students' moral instincts and even their express moral principles. There may be other such principles being instilled, but let us be content with one.

ZAP is most obviously put forward in the Professional Responsibility courses that all law schools offer (and which most schools by regulation make mandatory). In those courses, would-be attorneys led by their professors discuss, among other things, how an attorney may be *required* to undermine the apparent credibility of a witness that the attorney strongly suspects, on the basis of his client's privileged communications, is telling the truth.⁶⁵

In Civil Procedure class, students studying discovery practice may be told that they are expected to interpret opposing requests not in accordance with common sense, but as narrowly as possible without risking sanction. Professors do things like tell stories of how a hapless attorney forgot to include a definition of "Documents" in a request for production, and how the opposing attorney saw that as a reason to exclude highly relevant photographs from the ensuing production. The lesson of such tales is clear: it is the careless, foolish attorney who failed to specify everything to the *n*th degree who is at fault and who is the villain of the tale, not the attorney who looked at a piece of highly relevant evidence and said to himself, "Well he didn't specifically *ask* for pictures...."

Yet in our non-professional lives, if someone asked for relevant documents and we had a photograph, the reasonable thing to do (at least on many accounts) would be to give the photographs over, for we know damn well that it's the sort of thing he was intending to request. But law school teaches you to ignore these reasonable sorts of interpersonal relations, and to instead adopt a set of values that can be quite alien to the values with which you arrived.

⁶⁵ I say "strongly suspects" because, in what has to be one of the great legal fictions, law students are often told that their client's confessions, made in confidence, aren't conclusive evidence, and that they don't actually *know* that their client is guilty or liable. Perhaps your client is attempting to protect their wife, or perhaps he is being blackmailed. After all, it happens on TV all the time.

Students who object to this mindset may meet a variety of responses. On occasion, a professor may take the time and effort to offer some sort of reasoned defense for the zealous advocacy principle. Such arguments usually involve an explanation of how clients need to be able to communicate freely with their attorneys, or how zealous advocacy is an integral part of the adversary structure of our system of justice. But even these reasoned responses are just going to be arguments that there should be zealous advocacy generally, and abstractly. They are never arguments that this *particular* student should give up what he or she sees as right and wrong in favor of that zealous advocacy, as one might expect if somehow zealous advocacy were a universal moral truth.

Other students might be gently mocked ("Are you sure you're in the right profession?") or told that this is simply the way the law is. This is, of course, assuming that the student is of the mind to say anything at all. Often it's made clear that discretion is the better part of idealistic valor. I recall one class where a student suggested that the zealous advocacy principle, as it played out in a specific context, was wrong; the professor's response was to ask how many people in the class agreed with the student: only one other student raised their hand in a class of around 150.⁶⁶

It's made obvious dozens of times that the zealous advocacy principle is fundamental to the predominant view of what attorneys are like, and what they should value. The message that one should follow ZAP is transmitted through the examples and stories of the professors, through the studying of the law that underlies such attitudes, and through the examples that are held up of what an ideal lawyer is like. Nor is law school necessarily the end of this indoctrination: the attorneys that one works with in one's early career may well continue this process.

So now we have a picture of how law students can come to be indoctrinated. They might come to law school with one set of values: a set that holds that one should avoid misrepresentation,

⁶⁶ To be fair to the professor, I strongly believe that he was honestly curious and not attempting to intimidate the student. But one can easily imagine the same situation taking place with very different goals in mind.

that one should act reasonably or that one should do what one's conscience demands. Over a few years, through constant reinforcement by way of grades, by expressions of approval and disapproval by authority figures, by all sorts of ways that don't need to involve reasoned arguments, many of those students come to believe that they ought to misrepresent, ought to behave unreasonably (as a normal person would see it), and ought to ignore the naggings of their conscience when they are performing their professional duties. Good attorneys don't let these sorts of things get in the way, and you do want to be a good attorney, don't you?

Notice, however, that becoming a soldier or a lawyer in this way is a *very* different sort of process than learning to be, say, a plumber. Perhaps I am simply betraying my lack of familiarity with plumbing (the extent of my skill is sink replacement), but it strikes me that learning to be a plumber is simply a matter of learning *how* to do something that someone wishes done anyway. Maybe there is an element to proper plumber training that involves values somehow -- overcoming squeamishness about what is *in* the pipes perhaps. But my general point is just this: there is a difference between training programs that involve a type of indoctrination, and training programs that just seek to provide technical proficiency and/or factual knowledge. Military training and, arguably, law school are of the former type. They are indoctrination, at least to an extent.

1.5. Permissibility of the Moderate Cases

Now, if traditional theories about indoctrination are correct in thinking indoctrination is always something morally impermissible (save perhaps in the unavoidable case of young children), then what drill instructors and professors do to the soldier and the law student must necessarily be wrong. And surely one can imagine particular cases of military or legal indoctrination that would be wrong. Yet I cannot shake the feeling that the indoctrinators in each of these cases are not doing anything *inherently* impermissible. Or if they are, then at least their moral failings do not stem from the fact that they are indoctrinating. In this section, I'm going to attempt to sketch a picture of why

the indoctrination in the moderate cases is acceptable by eliminating from consideration the various ways in which the subjects of indoctrination might be said to be harmed.

1.5.1. The Harm of Bad Values

The first harm we should rule out is the harm of "bad values" -- that is, the harm that results when someone is indoctrinated with beliefs that are false or values that are seriously debilitating or immoral. I suggested above that attempting to describe the harm of indoctrination in terms of bad content made it difficult to separate the harm of indoctrination from the harm of lying,⁶⁷ but let's put that issue aside for now. Both of the moderate cases involve a set of values that are believed necessary for functioning effectively within a specific professional community. These values are, in a sense, *constitutive* of what means to be a member of the community (this is another theme that will be taken up in Chapter 3). If the values themselves are harmful, false, or otherwise morally suspect, the professions will also be morally suspect. And lawyer jokes aside, it seems unlikely that it's simply wrong to become a soldier or an attorney.

Soldiers, after all, seem to be a necessary part of any civilization that wishes to survive. And in pursuit of that survival, the particular type of indoctrination that we're talking about -- an emphasis on following orders and identification with group interests -- has an *excellent* pedigree in terms of its practical success. Armies composed of skilled but individualistic warriors who don't learn to think like soldiers -- such as those in the Scottish Highlander tradition -- tend, no matter how skilled at arms, to fare quite poorly against "soldier" cultures in the long run.⁶⁸ And it doesn't seem that we (or our soldiers) would be better off if the Army lost its engagements. The values of the soldier are thus *positively* valuable: they promote survival and a certain type of excellence.

⁶⁷ See Section 1.2.3, *supra* (discussion of J.P. White's hypothetical teacher).

⁶⁸ There is a difference to be found between a warrior tradition and a soldier tradition. I want to make it clear that I'm talking about militarily effective *values*, not about militarily effective tactics. The Viet Cong were pretty clearly soldiers, even if they didn't stand in ranks.

It's also pretty clear that, at least on some level, our society requires attorneys to operate the "wheels of justice" and to keep civilization from falling into vigilantism and the chaos. And if we're going to have an adversarial system of justice -- something for which there are many good arguments -- it seems like the best attorney to have in such a case (at least from the point of view of the parties) is the more unyielding, and perhaps less reasonable attorney who will go to great lengths to protect and vindicate your interests. People who come to the courts seeking justice should, we might think, be able to feel like they were able to get the best shot at justice. That just wouldn't be possible if the attorney were seen by the client to be helping the other side.

It's plausible, then, that soldiers and attorneys are necessary to our society's functioning and survival. And if that's so, then the values critical to excellence in those professions will also be derivatively necessary to our society's functioning and survival. Because I think it can be taken for granted that our society's functioning and survival are goals worthy of being pursued, I find it extraordinarily difficult to imagine that the values involved in being a successful soldier or attorney are bad values to have, *simpliciter*.

Additionally, it seems quite unlikely that either the soldier's values or the zealous advocacy principle can be said to be "false". Surely if you want to be a soldier, then it's true that you ought to follow orders. And if you want to be a lawyer, it's true that you should ascribe to the zealous advocacy principle. So without going as far as to say that these are good values to have flat-out, they certainly don't seem to be either false or harmful, at least not so long as they are kept in their limited place.⁶⁹ (Of course, attorneys often blur the line between when it's appropriate to be a zealous

⁶⁹ Even if you were of the mind that these are not good values to possess, though, it's surely possible to imagine some sort of similar training that promotes and instills values that aren't objectionable. So to the extent that you find the zealous advocacy principle or a principle that privileges lawful orders over 'common sense' offensive, it is certainly possible to imagine something else in their stead, with all the same sorts of methods and effects as either military or legal training.

advocate and when it's not, hence much of the widespread antipathy for a profession that is often seen as caustic and argumentative even in personal relationships.)

None of this is to say that these values don't get twisted, corrupted, or otherwise warped, abused and misused. It may be extremely hard, as a practical matter, to get the soldierly values or the zealous advocacy principle instilled in just the right way so as to promote soldierly excellence while not causing some sort of deleterious effect in some other aspect of the person's life. But it seems at least theoretically possible, and we all presumably know a lot of soldiers and attorneys who seem to have struck the balance just right, even if we also know some attorneys who haven't.

1.5.2. The Harm of Impairing Reason

I indicated earlier that I didn't think reason-based theories of harm worked for all cases of indoctrination, because they didn't seem to obtain the right result for cases where the indoctrination did not involve a false sort of idea. As just discussed, neither military nor legal training seems to be concerned with instilling a false idea. The training is concerned with changing values, yes, but not in any way that is demonstrably wrong. Rather, there seems to be at least some justification for people who want to come to those values.

Now structurally, it's clear that the moderate cases do, in fact, involve limiting the types of conclusions that can be reached through the operation of reason. After all, the values imparted in basic training and in law school determine (in part) what the soldiers and attorneys will take as evidence for their subsequent decisions; "common-sense" factors such as risking the loss of one's life don't necessarily have the same weight that they once did, and so once you become a soldier, it is extraordinary difficult to convince yourself that you oughtn't follow lawful orders.

But this type of limitation is hardly something unique to the effects of indoctrination, and in the absence of some problem with the content of the values, it is not at all clear that it's really a *harm*. Many, perhaps all, of our strongly-held values operate exactly the same way, whether we've been

subject to indoctrination or not. I value my friends very highly, and so I take various facts about their welfare as evidence for what I should do. Arguably, no one indoctrinated me to hold this value, but it would require a great deal of time and effort to change my mind about it, and I'm likely to be quite intractable even in the face of evidence that, say, my friends are undeserving of my loyalty.

Nor is my particular attitude towards my friends one that is held universally: many reasonable people I know do not feel the same way about their friends. Reason does not get impaired simply in virtue of having some starting premises not widely shared; *everyone* must start somewhere, and that starting point will necessarily tend to inhibit or prevent reasoning towards certain contrary conclusions. What makes the easy cases so repellent is that they are hard to change *and* consist of obviously false and/or destructive views. But this is simply not the case with the moderate cases.

The intended scope of control established by the moderate cases is also narrower than the easy cases; it is confined by its own terms to a limited professional context. Soldiers in the modern Western tradition are bound by the law, and cannot be ordered to do something illegal.⁷⁰ The properly indoctrinated soldier, it is hoped by the indoctrinators, will ignore the screaming captain at the door because he has his orders and intends to follow them; but he isn't (ideally) going to slaughter a village full of innocent people just because his commander tells him to. If he does, the military sees this as a *failure* of indoctrination. When things do go awry, we tend to think that soldiers who commit such acts have done something wrong. Soldiers are keenly aware of this (even

⁷⁰ I use "cannot be ordered" here in the sense of "cannot be given a lawfully binding order." Obviously soldiers can be and sometimes are ordered to do illegal acts, and sometimes they perform those acts. The relevant question to ask is whether the carrying out of these illegal orders represents a *success* of the indoctrination or a failure, and it's at least ostensibly a failure if one takes the military at their word. Presumably arguments could be made that there is an implicit "but we don't really mean it" when recruits are told about how to react to illegal orders, but I am not going to engage with those arguments here other than to say that the moral status of such training would be very different than what I am describing here, whether or not it exists.

if some forget it in the heat of the moment)and they know that "just following orders" isn't something most people accept as an excuse for atrocious behavior. It's not that the Western militaries couldn't "step up" the indoctrination if their goal was to make mindless fanatics; there are plenty of armies around the world that do just that. But that sort of complete control isn't their goal.⁷¹ So it's not clear that the limitations placed on reason in the moderate cases are any more strict than the sorts of limitations that we have simply by being the sorts of creatures that we are.

Because of this, there may be a temptation to think of these more moderate cases as a separate sort of phenomenon than the easy cases, and perhaps not indoctrination at all. After all, in the easy cases, the subject is (if indoctrination is successful) completely dominated by the indoctrinators, and their reason is restrained to a *considerable* extent. The value/belief that is implanted is strong, intractable, and potent; it is completely immune to evidence, and the subject's reason is helpless. The moderate cases, by contrast, involve a much less deeply-instilled value that seems to be more balanced by the subject's other values and beliefs. Does this make them not an instance of indoctrination?

I don't think so. I think it may make them less *effective* in certain ways, and it obviously makes them less extreme. But once again, this seems to be a difference in degree, rather than in kind. I see no reason to think that indoctrination either has to be completely pervasive or utterly unshakable to be what it is. After all, people often speak of "deprogramming", or "breaking" someone's indoctrination. Surely it makes sense to talk about doing such things. Yet if indoctrination were required to be all-encompassing and utterly unshakable, we could never say such

⁷¹ We can see something very similar in the attorney's indoctrination: they are supposed to become zealous advocates. But the attorney is still supposed to deliberate and use reason with respect to his or her decisions. He or she is not, for instance, supposed to file papers that intentionally mislead the court, no matter how much it might help the client. That some lawyers do these things is, in fact, a failure of the attempt to create zealous advocates, not a success.

a thing, because to succeed in "breaking" the indoctrination would be proof that the indoctrination never took place at all.

My point is just this: in supplying a sort of first or foundational premise, where that premise isn't false, it's not clear that reason is "impaired" in any significant sense. Particularly in a pluralistic democracy such as the United States, it is important to recognize that there are large parts of life that aren't subject to a "right" rule, areas where values can differ without being objectively wrong. There are many sets of values that can lead to the "good life", and each of those sets of values will have its characteristic ways of reasoning about things, its characteristic interpretations of evidence. Just because a person cannot easily reason to *any* non-false conclusion whatsoever does not mean that their reason has thereby been impaired.

1.5.3. Indoctrination as reason-serving

I indicated earlier that I didn't think that arguments which based the impermissibility of indoctrination on a failure to engage with the subject's reason in terms of method and process were likely to be successful. I argued, essentially, that if two people came to identical mental states, that *how* they got there didn't really matter. If one person arrived through deliberation and reasoning, and the other was hit on the head, so long as the states were absolutely identical there didn't seem to be any harm in "bypassing" the subject's reason.⁷²

Let's assume for a moment, though, that my response (that is, Flew's response) is not persuasive, and that it really is, *ceteris paribus*, better for the subject to arrive at their belief and values through the operation of reason than to have beliefs or values thrust upon them in various non-rational ways. Now, because indoctrination deals with the installation and modification of freestanding values, it does seem to bypass reason in an obvious way: the value in question is not

⁷² See n.28, *supra*, and accompanying text.

arrived at through the logical operation of other values. If it were, it would be derivative of those values and so not freestanding. So if we assume that it's better to engage people's reason, this gives us a basis for morally criticizing the indoctrinator.

I'm willing to accept *arguendo* that, given two options of coming to hold a value -- one using direct indoctrination methods and the other using an "educative" process of reasoning from one's preexisting values in light of certain facts -- that the educative rather than indoctrinative method is morally to be preferred. What I will deny, however, is that the educative method is always an available method for instilling the sort of values that we're talking about. It's commonly thought that conforming one's belief to what one thinks one's belief should be is fully transparent: if you think that you *should* believe that the Constitution was ratified in 1787, then merely by accepting that, you therefore *do* believe that the Constitution was ratified in 1787 (barring some sort of severe akrasia). And this seems true, at least as far as mere factual beliefs are concerned.

But values don't always function like that. As human beings, it is within our power to attempt to guide our own development. We go about this in many ways: we deliberately set out to change our bodies, health, social statuses, financial conditions, intellects, and skill sets, just to name a few things. Additionally, we can, and often do, go about consciously working to change our values in various ways, molding ourselves into the type of people we'd like to be. But the actual coming into possession of a value or set of values does not always happen with the transparent ease of merely arriving at the factual conclusion that one *should* possess them. In other words, our pre-existing values might point to another value that we ought to hold, derivatively, but this does not mean that we will thereby just come to hold those derivative values. You might characterize this as 'weakness of the will', or perhaps just the inertia of someone's character -- but we don't get to just wake up and decide to be someone else. Hume had a point when he said that such a person would be insane.

What I want to suggest is that where our present values determine that we "ought" to have some other values, and where we are unable to attain holding those values derivatively, sometimes what we need is an indoctrinator to come in and place those new values in our heads as freestanding. That's all very abstract, so let's look at two fairly innocuous situations that might lead me to seek out the services of such an indoctrinator:

The Derivative Opera Scenario. One of the things in life that I've come to value a great deal is my wife. Let us imagine that she loves opera, while I reject it. I might come to endorse it derivatively, at the level of reason and practicality, just because my wife endorses it. I might go to the opera because she goes, or listen because she listens; I could support the local company because she loves it, and *that* makes it worthwhile to me. But let us imagine that I find the entire experience excruciating, and when the time comes to turn on the radio, I opt for Willie Nelson. I just don't really *value* opera. What am I to do in such a circumstance? Should I suffer in uncomfortable silence for the rest of my marriage? I might, in such circumstances, *want* to value opera, to be the sort of person who really values it for its own sake, who genuinely enjoys it. My life would be better.

The Direct Opera Scenario. One can also imagine that I could come to this position because I was convinced by the arguments put forward by aficionados that loving opera really is the thing I ought to do. I thus would hold that I *should* believe that opera is the best form of music, but I nevertheless would fail to actually believe it "in practice", no matter how much I might profess to believe it in theory.

Given either of these scenarios, I might undertake courses of action designed to bring it about that I come to hold certain opera-regarding values. Those steps could (and perhaps must) include things that would qualify as indoctrination: submitting myself to hypnotherapy, or asking all of my friends to increase the amount of opera in their lives as a coordinated effort, maybe even asking my friends and family to guilt me into attending even more performances. I might join opera-themed social clubs, hoping that the social bonds I make will create additional pressure that will cause me to come to love opera for its own sake. It's a team effort (assuming everyone is aware of my goal and is working towards it) but what we're up to certainly seems like a sort of

indoctrination, one designed to produce opera-regarding values. And we're doing it for *very* good, rational reasons.

While mere rational conviction of the value of holding a value-laden belief may in some situations be enough to get you to *choose* to pursue those values, and while a simple interior resolution might be sufficient for coming to possess them, this is surely not the universal case (and I suspect it may not even be the usual case). We know that our values (or value-laden beliefs) are quite difficult to change, whether they are the product of indoctrination or not. I suggested earlier that they are something like first premises in our reasoning process, or maybe "habits" of decision-making. The fact of the matter is that habits can be awfully difficult to break. By analogy, often you can't just *will* yourself to stop biting your fingernails; sometimes you have to bring out the hot sauce.

At least some of the military recruits and first-year law students who have, for various good reasons, knowingly and voluntarily decided to become soldiers and attorneys, want to come to have the professional values needed for success in their careers for good reasons that are morally unproblematic. And of those, some may not be able to get there without the help of a little indoctrination; they need the cognitive, indoctrinative version of the hot sauce. Perhaps it would be "better" in some strange, abstract sense if they could be simply swayed by the logic of their position to come to really *believe in* the principles that they admire. But for some -- perhaps the majority of us in the majority of cases -- that's simply not an option. Indoctrination, rather than serving as a source of harm, can serve as a tool -- perhaps the only tool -- for the accomplishment of their entirely proper and rational ends.

Now at this point a Kantian or neo-Kantian moralist might wish to object and say that, at least in the Derivative Opera Case, the subject is not really pursuing rational ends because his or her wish to appreciate opera is instrumental to another goal, and does not reflect a rational sort of engagement with the reasons for liking opera inherent in opera itself. In other words, I might be

likened to the man who does what is right just because he wants to be thought of well by his peers. There are two reasons to think this sort of thinking is not right, however.

First, we shouldn't mistake a desire based on good reason for a desire that is arrived at through a particular rational process. In the derivative case, I have good reasons for wanting to enjoy opera: I wish to reduce the suffering and maximize the joy in my life while I continue to participate in my wife's favorite activities. My desire is thus a perfectly good and rational one to have -- the very sort of thing that I could will universally without contradiction.

The problem with pursuing virtue because one wishes the esteem of others does not lie in the fact that one is pursuing virtue instrumentally, but rather lies in the fact that one is pursuing the esteem of others -- something that is itself of questionable moral worth. Seeking enjoyment while performing those activities that I have a moral duty to perform, however, does not have the same moral shortcomings, nor does working to strengthen my relationship with my wife. To put things more plainly, while we shouldn't pursue good ends for bad reasons, that does not entail that every end viewed as good under the rule of reason has only has a *single* good reason which points to it. If you have good reasons to come to be the sort of person who likes opera, and indoctrination is the only way to accomplish that goal, then the indoctrinator is not subverting reason, but serving it.

Second, and more fundamentally, I want to bring us back to what Flew said about the "criteria of understanding" lying in the present and the future, not the past. There is a distinction to be made between *holding* a value or belief, and *coming* to hold a value or belief. The subject of indoctrination in the derivative case, once the indoctrination is finished, loves and enjoys opera for all the right reasons; that's just part and parcel of the indoctrination. The situation is not that he

loves opera because he loves his wife, but rather that he *came* to love opera (for its own sake) because he loves his wife.⁷³

1.5.4. The Harm of Violating Autonomy

Autonomy-based harms are probably the trickiest to discuss, because it is likely that so much of what makes indoctrination practically possible involves offenses against autonomy that aren't actually necessary to the fact of indoctrination itself. I'm sure we all would agree that it's wrong to kidnap someone and subject them to military-style indoctrination over their protests, or to lie to them about what they are getting into. This may be, in part, why so many people have (and not unjustifiably) such a dim view of many military recruiters, who often tell young teenagers all about the benefits of military service, but they seldom say, "and by the way, the training that we are going to subject you to is going to fundamentally change the way you think about things." This sort of skullduggery is clearly violative of the subject's autonomy, but it's also not really part of the process of indoctrination *per se*. Rather, it's something done to *facilitate* the indoctrination in the case of a reluctant (or potentially reluctant) subject.

We mustn't be naive: whatever we might think a "free choice" is, it's very likely that *many* people in the military or in law school didn't make one in choosing to be there; and if they did make a free choice, many of them were not fully informed. So as an empirical matter, some obvious harms against autonomy are likely committed in many instances of the moderate cases. Still, some people voluntarily enlist or enroll for the training, and some of them are fully aware of the indoctrination that they will be receiving. In light of this, if there is to be an autonomy-related harm that is *necessary* to indoctrination, then it's going to have to be the sort of harm that could take place

⁷³ It should be noted that not everyone endorses this distinction – though they probably should. D.C. Phillips, for instance, declared that “It has been clear to most members of the philosophical community that a person who has had values indoctrinated will not be acting as a result of holding the appropriate reasons and commitments.” D.C. Phillips, *Values Education of Children*, 15 SOCIAL THEORY & PRACTICE 339, 343 (1989).

with a recruit who is fully aware of what he's about to undergo, and who volunteers to undergo it. Such a harm is going to have to occur despite the fact that, as we saw above, indoctrination can be a way for subjects to become the sort of person that they *want* to become.

It might at first seem counterintuitive to say that indoctrination doesn't have to undermine autonomy. But one of the major differences between the easy and moderate cases of indoctrination is that the easy cases instilled a foundational belief that provided the basis for total subsequent control without any sort of safeguards or limitations whatsoever. The basic belief was that the glorious leader (whoever he was) was an authority not to be questioned. The habits of decision-making that are instilled in the easy cases are extreme, a total hijacking of the subject's will. The moderate cases are nothing like that, however. The indoctrination of law school doesn't even provide purchase for the sort of control that dictators and cult leaders would want to exercise. And the changes resulting from military indoctrination, while authority-focused, aren't designed to bring about a mindless devotion to orders. (If it were, it would probably be impermissible even if the subjects volunteered.⁷⁴)

That's not to say that military indoctrination couldn't be subsequently used to make further, deeper, more insidious indoctrination possible, or even just easier. Of course it could. But to make an argument that voluntary indoctrination undermines autonomy because it makes subsequent indoctrination easier is to confuse the prudent with the moral. People do all sorts of things that make them more easily influenced, including things like having children and getting married. Even by just coming to care about someone, a person may well have created a condition of which a skilled indoctrinator might later take advantage. We shouldn't think that the harm against autonomy is to be found simply in the creation of some future vulnerability.

⁷⁴ If you've seen the Jason Bourne films (loosely based on the Ludlum novels) then you've seen at least a fictional example of how indoctrination and conditioning can be evil even if someone volunteers. This isn't to say that Bourne isn't free – just that we recognize that he was mistreated in some way.

A more plausible argument might be that indoctrination -- even of the kind found in the moderate cases -- cuts off the possibility of future development in certain directions. (Such an argument was made by Joel Feinberg with respect to children;⁷⁵ I will deal with Mr. Feinberg's arguments in some great detail in section 3.4.) In other words, if you choose to become a soldier, and some drill sergeant goes ahead and indoctrinates you, what he's actually done can also be characterized as preventing you from pursuing a variety of selves or identities that are incompatible to various degrees with the values and beliefs that you now hold as a result of the indoctrination. As a soldier, for instance, you are not now going to be the sort of person who will easily join the local anarchist's club.

But as with the less plausible vulnerability-based argument, this restriction-based argument would ignore the fact that *everything* we choose to become, every move we make in our self-guided development, cuts off certain possibilities. We cannot be all things to all people, and autonomy, at least for normal, sane people, just isn't perfect freedom to reinvent your entire being at the drop of a hat. By becoming an honest person, I make my being a scoundrel more difficult. By becoming a good husband, I make it more difficult to be a playboy.

As I admitted above, indoctrination can certainly be performed in such a way that it significantly limits autonomy. Nor does it matter how extensive the indoctrination is: even the limited, relatively harmless indoctrination of the Opera Cases could be seen as limiting autonomy if the subject was tricked or unwilling. But in the Opera Cases, the indoctrinators were working towards the subject's own goals of self-guidance. The same sort of assistance can be found in the

⁷⁵ Joel Feinberg, "The Child's Right to an Open Future", in WHOSE CHILD: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, PARENTAL AUTHORITY, AND STATE POWER 124 (William Aiken & Hugh LaFollette eds., Rowman & Littlefield 1980).

moderate cases where the subject is voluntary and willing.⁷⁶ An indoctrinator who is helping you is acting as a sort of agent for you, like a surgeon who cuts into your flesh at your direction to bring about a state of health that you find more desirable. Were it possible for you to perform the surgery yourself, no one would say that you were immoral for cutting yourself open. And so, because the surgeon is acting on behalf of your interests, we tend to think that the surgeon is not doing anything wrong, either.⁷⁷ With respect to autonomy, the sorts of harms that more moderate indoctrinators work on their voluntary, knowing subjects need be no worse (and perhaps no different) than the sorts of things that subjects do to themselves all of the time in the course of becoming the sort of people they wish to become.

1.6. Conclusion

The goal of this Chapter was to offer an account of what indoctrination is, and to rehabilitate it as a practice by pointing out that it may not be harmful if it is performed under the right circumstances. Whether those circumstances obtain or not will, of course, be of paramount importance in determining if an indoctrinator is doing something that is morally impermissible. Certainly indoctrination can harm a subject by instilling “bad” values – but not all indoctrination need be of that sort, and we shouldn’t conflate the *collateral* harm of what is instilled with the harm stemming directly from the process by which it is instilled. Certain types of common indoctrination pretty clearly do not consist of false or destructive values. Some of them might even be good.

⁷⁶ Of course, you might have someone who wanted to come to value David Koresh absolutely and totally; that alone would not make indoctrination of this sort right, though it might ameliorate the *autonomy*-based harms involved in such an indoctrination.

⁷⁷ There is an issue of consent to be addressed here. Is consent necessarily to ensure that an indoctrinator is serving the subject’s interest? I suspect not, and that consent is something of a red herring. Rather than serving as a factor in whether indoctrination is beneficial or not, I think consent is primarily *epistemic*, that is, that it is a signal for a fundamental compatibility with the subject’s values that underlies the permissibility of the act in question. We do not require surgeons to get consent, for instance, when you are brought unconscious into the ER. It is presumed that the surgeons are doing what you might want. This issue is taken up more directly in Chapter II, *infra*.

Nor does it seem that indoctrination necessarily carries with it any reason- or autonomy-based harms. Indoctrination can be guided towards those ends to which reason points, and it can help us obtain those ends where other methods may fail us; it is not always possible to argue or will ourselves into being the sort of person that we ought to be. Thus, indoctrination can legitimately serve the ends of reason, even as it (by its very nature) bypasses the specific mechanisms of reason to do so. And insofar as an indoctrinator is working with a subject to accomplish the subject's own goals, indoctrination does not offend against autonomy any more than when a subject chooses to limit him or herself by becoming a particular type of person. Indeed, being able to become the sort of person that we wish to be is something that lies at the very core of most notions of autonomy.

So it seems entirely likely that, at least in situations where the subjects are both voluntary and informed as to what they are getting themselves into, there's actually no harm necessarily worked in the act of indoctrination itself. Indeed, it appears that the opposite outcome is at least possible: indoctrination, rather than being a necessarily pernicious process that undermines our sense of self and cripples our reason, can *empower* us to pursue the goals in our lives that we find worthwhile, including our goals of self-guided development.

Indoctrination, though, is a blurry thing. Perhaps, in picking out situations where the belief isn't false, isn't harmful, where the subject *wants* to change their values, where the beliefs and values aren't all-encompassing... perhaps I've picked something out that falls to the outside of where we would like to draw the conceptual boundary. I don't think that's the case, but if it is, I hope that I've at least managed to draw an interesting distinction.

Now that I've gone to such great lengths to show that indoctrination can be morally permissible, I will turn my attention in the next Chapter to trying to explain why it is that indoctrination is often – usually – thought to be such a terrible practice.

CHAPTER 2: **Indoctrination, Authenticity, and the Destruction of Meaning**

2.1. Introduction

I have explained how the actual practices that lie at the root of our modern, "bad" notions of indoctrination can in fact be part of a permissible course of action in service of the development of our identities and our becoming the sorts of people that we -- for various good reasons -- believe we that should. Nevertheless, it remains that indoctrination has a bad name and for what I think is a very good reason: it often inflicts significant harm on its subjects, harm that most people recognize as among the most disturbing that a person can suffer. Moreover, the harm suffered by someone who has been indoctrinated (in a harmful way) seems to be a special type of harm -- a harm completely unlike the harm of being lied to, of being assaulted against your will, or of being injured. It isn't special just because it involves profound changes in the victim, for murder, massive brain trauma, and mind control all have similarly drastic effects. Rather, it seems that there is something peculiarly horrifying about the fact that a victim of harmful indoctrination goes on and is pleased with their new state. No one *minds* being indoctrinated, but we can see from the outside that something terrible has occurred.

We previously saw that there were theories that characterized indoctrination's harm as a harm against autonomy, or a harm against reason. But such harms are neither unique to indoctrination nor do they flow from that which makes indoctrination what it is. Rather, they typically stem from the methods and practices most commonly (but not *necessarily*) associated with indoctrination -- or perhaps from the sort of content that is instilled in the subjects. For example, if

I kidnap you and indoctrinate you over your protests, that's a harm against your autonomy, to be sure. But as a harm against your autonomy it's not significantly different than my kidnapping you and drugging you over your protests. And in some ways, indoctrination is actually less harmful in this sense because if the process is successful, then you will be glad of what I've done. So autonomy probably isn't going to be the answer. But as we saw earlier, it also isn't clear that indoctrination harms or impairs reason, either: subjects of indoctrination reason just fine. It's just that sometimes they can have some strange starting points. Maybe those points themselves are bad, but it's not the bare fact of indoctrination that is the source of the harm.

I don't think it's crazy to think that indoctrination, when it's bad, is bad *specifically because of what makes it indoctrination* and not because of some other closely associated reason. There is something peculiarly unsettling about imagining that your values – the way you think and the ends towards which you reason – could be altered by someone as if you were so much clay. And the thought that you'd sit there and be happy about what had happened to you makes it seem even worse. I take this instinctive recoiling as the starting point for my inquiry, and I think that in our reacting in this way, we are correctly identifying something awful about indoctrination, at least in those circumstances where it is harmful. In this chapter, I hope to offer an account of indoctrination's harm that makes sense of these intuitions.

It seems clear to me that naïve types of consequentialism aren't going to get us an answer. Efficiency, happiness, prosperity, and the like will never tell us why indoctrination is bad, for the world on balance might very well be a much better place were some beneficent indoctrinator to simply tweak each and every person so that we all learned to sing in perfect harmony, with a Coke and a smile. It would be A Brave New World, literally. But who among us would want to submit themselves to such a regime? Is there any question that, were I to undertake such a project, I would be the mad scientist *bad guy* in the story of my life, while some chronically underachieving hero

would be justified in trying to stop me? I take this sort of “folk morality” from film and pulp literature as instructive: no matter how beautiful the world you’re creating is, you don’t get to do it by reconstructing people’s values wholesale. No one might be around to complain, but that wouldn’t make it right.

My goal is to articulate the harm of indoctrination in such a way that it can be seen as inherently harmful – not merely that its effects can be condemned or endorsed on a utilitarian calculus. I also want to ensure that my account does not need to reference either the impermissibility of the methods used or the moral or rational offensiveness of the “content” being instilled in the subject. The path I will take is one that acknowledges that indoctrination is a process of change, and which will express the harm in such a way that the change itself *is* the infliction of the harm. There are four claims which I take to be central to my account, and for which I will argue:

1. Indoctrination of the objectionable sort, which I will call *deviant indoctrination*,⁷⁸ harms its subject by making the subject’s life less worth living;
2. Deviant indoctrination does this by depriving the subject’s life of *meaningfulness*;
3. Meaningfulness is reduced or destroyed by deviant indoctrination because the product of deviant indoctrination is a subject whose identity is, to some extent, *inauthentic*;
4. It is the presence of an indoctrinator in these cases that both (a) prevents the subject’s sincere holding of the new values from being an authentic expression of his or her identity, and (b) distinguishes deviant indoctrination from the operation of “neutral causal forces” that could bring about substantially identical states in the subject.

There is a lot of content to be unpacked and explained in those four statements, and a lot of explaining to be done about what I mean by the various italicized terms. To support this account, I will explore the intersection of value, authenticity, and meaningfulness, particularly (but not

⁷⁸ For now, think of “deviant indoctrination” as indoctrination that instills some sort of value that is *at odds* with the subject’s pre-existing values. We’ll deal with this in much more detail later.

exclusively) as these notions are expressed in the work of Susan Wolf and Charles Taylor. The claims I am making about meaningfulness may seem controversial, and I will be spending a great deal of time developing the account – both in preparation for the discussion of indoctrination at the end of the Chapter as well as to have it on hand for the discussion of education in Chapter 3. Accordingly, we won't get back to indoctrination proper until quite late in the chapter.

As part of that development, I will argue that the meaningfulness of our lives stems (in great part if not entirely) from our interactions with others, more specifically from our acknowledgement and recognition of each other insofar as we pursue projects that we find valuable. The pursuit of such projects, I will argue, is a form of self-expression. And if our identities, our notions of ourselves in terms of our values and projects, are not authentic,⁷⁹ then our projects cease to be instances of genuine self-expression, and in turn our ability to interact meaningfully with others is severely curtailed. Deviant indoctrination prevents our identities' being authentic, and thus cuts us off from meaningful expression. And it is that resulting deprivation of meaningfulness that is, I hope to show, why the thought of being indoctrinated horrifies us, and why it is so often (correctly) seen as an impermissible harm.

One might object to this rather elaborate argument I'm proposing on something like the following grounds: once I've defined deviant indoctrination as "indoctrination that is at odds with the subject's existing values", it seems like we should be able to say something like, "Well of course deviant indoctrination is bad, because the subject wouldn't *want* to be indoctrinated in such a way!" We would have, it seems, a solid argument from harm-against-autonomy; so why bother with all of this talk about meaningfulness and authenticity?

⁷⁹ "Authentic" is a loaded term, and I will hopefully be able to explain exactly what I mean by it below. For now, I hope it is clear that I do not just mean something like "genuine" or "sincere", but something more in line with notions of Aristotelian proper function.

This objection overlooks what I have decided to call “The Authentic Subject Problem,” which is probably the most serious obstacle to the sort of project I am pursuing in this Chapter. As we saw in Chapter 1, indoctrination is distinguished from, say, conditioning and brainwashing by the fact that the indoctrinated subject endorses (often enthusiastically) his or her new values. I thus cannot merely claim that an indoctrinated subject’s values do not “belong” to the subject, for it seems they surely do. Nor can I argue that the subject does not wish the indoctrination to have taken place, for it seems they surely do. Just ask them!

There does not seem to be a reason to privilege the perspective of an “earlier version’s” preferences simply because they happened to come first. There are plenty of times we don’t do this. For example, a person might be scared of roller coasters and not want to go on one. Then we “force” them to go on one (using guilt and other sorts of social pressure) so that they can see what it’s like. When it comes to a stop, they say, “Let’s do it again!” No one in such a situation says, “Sorry... we have to give priority to the earlier you.”⁸⁰ It may be that we privilege earlier values when we look at indoctrination’s harm, but it’s not *just* because they are earlier.

Finally, I argue that while the subject's possession of the new values may be perfectly sincere, those values and the projects motivated by them nonetheless fail to be an authentic expression of the subject's will precisely because of the presence and role of the indoctrinator. Where an indoctrinator has wrought the sort of harm peculiar to deviant indoctrination, the subject's values and projects – insofar as they are grounded in the values that have been changed or instilled -- are an expression of the *indoctrinator's* will, not the subject’s. The subject is no longer “writing the story of his life”, but is just a character caught in someone else’s play.

That is a lot of ground to cover and metaphor to explain, so let’s start with meaningfulness.

⁸⁰ I’m not saying that we *never* give preference to earlier decisions; obviously we do. Later on, in Section 1.4.1 for instance, we’ll talk about situations like Odysseus’s having himself lashed to the mast. But whatever principles are informing our preferences are not based on mere temporal priority.

2.2. Meaningfulness

I want to start by taking for granted two propositions: (1) *ceteris paribus*, it is better to live a life that is worth living than it is to live one that isn't worth living; and (2) correlatively, living a life that is *more* worth living is better in many respects than living a life that is *less* worth living. The reasoning is plain: doing anything that is more worth doing is going to be better than doing something that is less worth doing. That's just more or less what "worth doing" means.

But I also think that much of what makes a life worth living is that it is a *meaningful* life. We typically think of a "meaningless" life as presenting us with a blunt question: Why bother living? There is a reason that those inflicted with existential despair are often caricatured as suicides. This section will explain both what the statement, "Much of what makes a life worth living is that it is a meaningful life" means and why it is true. I will describe both the role and operation of meaningfulness in our lives, and present it as an important, perhaps even vital good. To the extent that deviant indoctrination undermines or destroys this vital good, it will be shown to be harmful and at least presumptively impermissible.

2.2.1. Wolf's Account of Meaning

For the rest of this dissertation, I mean use the term "meaningfulness" in just about the same way Susan Wolf uses it in her Tanner Lectures on "Meaning in Life and Why it Matters."⁸¹ Wolf presents living a meaningful life as something very closely associated with living a good life, though what she has in mind by "good" isn't necessarily what one might first imagine: a life filled with meaning is, she says, valuable and good in a way distinct from a morally-lived life, or one filled

⁸¹ Susan Wolf, "Meaning in Life and Why it Matters", Tanner Lectures on Human Values at Princeton University, November 2007. All page cites herein are to the publically available PDF version of the document, available at http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/documents/a-to-z/w/Wolf_07.pdf. The lectures are also available in paperback with collected comments and alternate pagination: MEANING IN LIFE AND WHY IT MATTERS (Princeton University Press 2010).

to the brim with happiness and pleasure.⁸² The notion of fulfillment is important to understanding what she means, and there's some sort of synonymy (perhaps identity), between a fulfilled or fulfilling life and a meaningful one. I think Wolf's account of what meaningfulness is can be reduced (with a minimum of philosophical violence) to three key propositions:

First, as indicated above, meaningfulness is distinct from happiness and pleasure. One can pursue a thoroughly meaningful life, awash with fulfillment, and yet still experience a great deal of sadness and suffering. History is awash with artists whose lives were tortured, desperate, and brief -- Van Gogh, Cobain, Hemmingway, and on some accounts, Woolf. But despite their suffering, they were consumed with a passion for their art, and by most reckonings their lives were meaningful and not lived in vain.⁸³ The contrast class to a meaningful life is neither a miserable one nor a wretched one, but an "empty or shallow" one.⁸⁴ When our lives lack meaning, we find ourselves neither wandering among the damned of Dante's *Inferno* nor supping with the murderous usurpers of Shakespeare's *MacBeth*, but lost in the territory of Eliot's "Hollow Men".

Second, Wolf's describes meaningfulness as something that "arises from loving objects worthy of love and engaging with them in a positive way."⁸⁵ This suggests that meaning somehow comes out of the confluence of an attitude (love) and an activity (engaging) – a confluence manifested in the pursuit of projects and goals of various kinds. The sorts of examples that Wolf discusses as having meaning all seem to concern actions and plans: helping people, creating art, and

⁸² Presumably the very best life would sit comfortably at or near the intersection of all three types of goodness. That does not mean that all three types of goodness are of equal weight; for my part, I am inclined to think that happiness and pleasure is subordinate to meaningfulness and morality. Other may, of course, disagree,

⁸³ I think that there are some problems with using the tortured artist as an actual example of the "meaningful life", in part because I think that someone like Cobain might have killed themselves precisely because their life *wasn't* meaningful even though it may have seemed that way to others. We will discuss that more below, but for now these cases serve very well for giving us at least an inkling of how meaningfulness differs from happiness and pleasure.

⁸⁴ Wolf, *supra* n. 81, at 77.

⁸⁵ *Id.* at 78/8.

so forth. If we are to find or generate meaning, apparently it requires *doing* something in relation to an “object of love” -- creation, protection, promotion, honor, or affirmation of that object’s value in some active way.⁸⁶ For clarity’s sake, I will use the term “projects” from here on in to refer to just these sorts of activities, though they needn’t be formal undertakings with defined goals.⁸⁷ Going out dancing with friends would count as a “project” in this sense.

Third, meaning on Wolf’s account requires at least two things: (1) that the person in question finds the projects *subjectively* fulfilling (that is, that he or she love the project or its object), and (2) that the projects in question fulfill some *objective* criterion of worthiness. The subjective requirement is fairly straightforward: it is essentially the internal perspective in play when one person tells another to pursue their passions or the calling of their heart. It seems intuitively appealing that, in order to be meaningful, our lives should be personally fulfilling.⁸⁸ (Once again, this doesn’t mean *happy*, but more like “satisfied”.)

But this individual, subjective sense of fulfillment is, on its own, not enough to make meaningfulness the sort of important good in human life that she thinks it is. We can, the story goes, have such subjective fulfillment, and perhaps even think that our lives are meaningful, but nevertheless be gravely mistaken. Wolf offers several examples of people who find their lives subjectively fulfilling yet whose pursuits seem somehow empty or meaningless, such as “a person who simply loves smoking pot all day”, a person “who is fulfilled doing crossword puzzles”, or a person “whose world revolves around her love for her pet goldfish.” Such people may, subjectively,

⁸⁶ *Id.* at 79.

⁸⁷ Wolf falls into the natural use of the word “projects” at points as well. *See, e.g., Id.* at 91.

⁸⁸ Wolf considers the possibility that a person might live an objectively meaningful life, but be unaware of it. She characterizes this as a failure to live a fulfilled life, claiming that “the quality of their own lives is limited at best if they are not emotionally engaged with the people or things or activities that make what they are doing valuable.” *Id.* at p. 87. This is precisely the problem I have with some tortured artist examples. *See* n. 83, *supra*.

be deeply fulfilled by their activities, but there is a sense in which their activities are tragic, empty – even pathetic. These projects do not meet the objective criterion.

That objective criterion is the primary focus of the lectures, for it is what provides Wolf with grounds for justifying her ultimate claim: that meaning can and should be pursued *for its own sake*, quite apart from concerns about morality or happiness. I do not intend to either support or attack that position here; merely to endorse it wholeheartedly. I think meaningfulness is important for its own sake, and I think Wolf is right that a meaningful project must be both subjectively fulfilling and objectively valuable. What I want to do here is to take a closer look at what this objective criterion is, and how it works.

The objective criterion, to a certain extent, already implied in virtue of Wolf's using the expression "worthy of love". Nevertheless, its exact workings and nature are never fully articulated. We are, however, given several important claims as to how it operates, and what it might look like:

1. the objective quality of one's projects is assessed from an external point of view (*cf.* Nagel's "view from nowhere");
2. the criterion involves moving beyond the horizons of navel-gazing self-absorption, and working towards something "greater" than one's self; and
3. it seems to involve *interaction* with other people (though not necessarily the people of one's own time or society), whether directly, or through the conferring of effects or benefits.

The first two claims are made explicitly by Wolf; I'm taking it that the third claim is implied, as the sorts of examples Wolf uses for more meaningful lives all involve taking part in the lives of others, while the examples of lives that have less meaning -- the pot smoker, the crossword puzzler, and goldfish-tender -- are all inward-looking, caught up in a purely individual sort of experience. Wolf seems to explicitly endorse the importance of interactivity, as well: "If we are engaged in projects of independent value," she asserts, "then presumably others will be capable of appreciating what we are doing, too. Others may actually appreciate what we are doing, or at least appreciate the

same values as the ones that motivate us."⁸⁹ By engaging with activities that possess objective, independent value, we are able to look at ourselves and see our own lives "as valuable in a way that can be recognized from a point of view other than" our own.⁹⁰ The operation of the external view which validates the objective worth of our projects is, she suggests, "related to our social natures, and to our need or wish not to be alone."⁹¹ This also seems right to me.

Wolf thinks that others' ability to appreciate what we are doing and our projects' appeal from the external point of view are results (or perhaps indications of) the project's objective value. The ultimate grounding of this objective value, we are invited to think, lies somewhere between the radically objective and the radically subjective: neither strictly in the project itself, nor strictly within the mind of the person pursuing it. Radical subjectivism doesn't seem to work because, Wolf thinks, we certainly *can* be mistaken about the value of our projects.⁹² The criterion thus must lie at least partially outside of our own heads. Radically objective views, on the other hand, she calls "implausible and obscure,"⁹³ and I'm inclined to agree. A few candidates for a theory of value are considered, but each is dismissed in turn, leaving Wolf with the conclusion that an "adequate account of the objectivity of value... is an unsolved problem in philosophy."⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Wolf, *supra* n. 81 at 93.

⁹⁰ *Id.* at 91. There seems to be some confusion here as to whether the objective criterion functions on its own, or through the modification of the subjective experience. In other words, it is not clear whether objective value *just is* what makes the project a candidate for meaningful action, or whether the independently objective qualities of the project make it possible for the actor to see the project in a different light, and that it is this subjective experience (properly informed by the objective worth of the project) that allows the project to be meaningful in a full-blooded way. Fortunately, I don't think it's necessary to definitively resolve this question in order to pursue the goals of this chapter.

⁹¹ *Id.* at 92.

⁹² *Id.* at 103.

⁹³ *Id.* at 104.

⁹⁴ *Id.*

Amidst these ruminations, Wolf briefly entertains the possibility that “whether something is [objectively] valuable depends on whether it is valued by a community of valuers.”⁹⁵ This view, which she labels as “intersubjective”, is quickly dismissed on the grounds that the mere valuing of the *individual* actor, taken alone, seems insufficient to grant objective meaning, and there seems no explanation for why numbers should make a qualitative difference. Intersubjectivity, then, is rejected because radical subjectivism seems obviously false:

If an individual's valuing something isn't sufficient to give the thing real value, however, it is hard to see why a group's endorsement should carry any more weight. If one person can be mistaken about value, why can't five people, or five thousand? The history of art, or for that matter of morals, seems ample testimony to the view that whole societies can be wrong.

I think this dismissal of an intersubjective explanation is a mistake, and that such a theory is likely to be the *only* type of theory which can offer an "adequate account of the objectivity of values".⁹⁶ I'll settle, however, for arguing that it is likely to provide an adequate account, though perhaps not exclusively so, in the next section.

2.2.2. The Case for Intersubjectivity

Before building the case for why we should entertain intersubjectivity as a serious option, I need to make two distinctions. The first is between the *experience* of living a life that seems objectively meaningful on the one hand, and the *fact* of having lived such a life on the other: someone may die thinking that their projects will come to naught, and yet be mistaken. When I speak of living a meaningful life from here on, I am speaking of the fact of it, not the experience.

The second distinction I want to make is between the claim that a meaningful life necessarily involves projects that are “objectively valuable”, on the one hand, and the slightly different claim

⁹⁵ Id.

⁹⁶ Id.

that a meaningful life necessarily involves *the type* of projects that are “objectively valuable” on the other. While Wolf seems to blur these two claims at points, I am going to focus almost exclusively on the first claim, which I think is both more well-supported by Wolf’s account, and more likely to result in a coherent discussion. As an example of how this distinction might play out, consider that if my life is meaningful because of my helping sick children, then if the first claim is true we can know without question that *my* helping sick children is thereby an “objectively valuable” project. But that does not necessarily mean that every instance of “helping sick children” is thereby going to share the same objective value; that would be the conclusion drawn if the second claim were true.

Now, it may turn out that every instance of helping sick children is, in fact, objectively valuable. But that wouldn’t mean that the second claim is necessarily true, and I think that focusing on the first claim is going to present us with a much less treacherous linguistic landscape: you could just as easily characterize my helping sick children in more general terms: practicing medicine, making myself happy, or even just “doing stuff”. It does not follow from the fact that I am “doing stuff” that is objectively meaningful that all instances of “doing stuff” are going to be similarly valuable.

With these two distinctions in mind, this argument of this section will proceed in three steps. First, I will open up some space for the intersubjective account to breathe by tackling Wolf’s objection and explaining how “mistakes” in appreciating the value of something may be errors in judging magnitude, rather than judging type. Second, I will briefly examine the operation of the “external perspective” from which we are supposed to evaluate our projects, and use that examination to propose that the source of value plausibly rests in the subjective valuing of other people. Third, I will explain how I think that an account of intersubjectivity as a source of objective value might work, specifically how it requires not merely a large number of people to value something, but requires that those people interact with each other in particularly meaningful ways.

(I will also explain what I mean by “particularly meaningful ways.”) At the end of the section, I will briefly discuss some fallout of the position I am taking, and why it might strike some people as wrong-headed.

2.2.2.1. Errors in Magnitude, Errors in Kind.

Wolf rejects intersubjectivity as a candidate for objective meaning explicitly because one person can be mistaken about the meaningfulness of a project. And if one person can be mistaken, why not an entire society? This strongly suggests that Wolf sees subjective value as different *in kind* from objective value, such that the former does not give rise to the latter. I don’t dispute that a person’s finding a project subjectively fulfilling does not thereby elevate that project to the status of “meaningful” in the sense that we can say that the person has lived a “meaningful life”. But that alone does not entail that an individual's valuing of his own projects is thereby *incapable* of bestowing any objective value whatsoever, merely that it cannot confer the full-fledged status of "meaningful".

It also doesn’t seem controversial to assert that certain projects are more or less meaningful, or possess greater or lesser degrees of value. Wolf herself points this out by way of discussing her “goldfish tender”:

Perhaps the life and comfort of a goldfish is worth something independently... [but e]ven so, the corresponding endeavors do not seem valuable enough to merit the kind of time, energy, and investment that these characters are imagined to devote to them, particularly in light of the wealth of other possible activities that we assume they might be engaging with instead.⁹⁷

If I spend my entire life devoted to my goldfish because I see it as meaningful, then there is a clear sense in which I am making a mistake about the meaningfulness (and the value) of my project. But there are also at least two different ways to look at the mistake. First, one could view the mistake as one of thinking that a concept ("objectively valuable") applies, when in fact it doesn't.

⁹⁷ Wolf, *supra* n. 81, at 98.

Alternatively, one could see the mistake as one of relative magnitudes: I think that caring for my goldfish is more important than all of the other activities and projects that I am forgoing in order to tend to it. From this second perspective, I'm making a mistake because I'm incurring tremendous *opportunity cost* in giving my life meaning. In other words, I'm not wrong in thinking that caring for my goldfish gives my life meaning, but I am deeply mistaken about thinking of that meaning as sufficient for my living a good, meaningful life. My mistake, then, is not so much one of thinking "A" when in fact "not A", as it is a misjudging of magnitude.⁹⁸

There are, then, two completely separate questions to be asked. First, is a particular project objectively valuable? And second, is that project the sort of thing that ought to be done in light of its objective value? When she asks, "If one person can be mistaken about value, why can't five people, or five thousand?" Wolf seems to be collapsing these two questions. Clearly five thousand people could be mistaken about the second question – whether the project in question is the thing to be done. But it's not quite as clear that five thousand people could be wrong about the first question. Wolf herself suggests that it's possible that "almost anything that a significant number of people have *taken* to be valuable over a large span of time is valuable."⁹⁹

Yet she seems to think that the function of the numbers in such a case is epistemological, rather than ontological: that they allow us to recognize value because they point to something about the project itself, that "perhaps the activity is challenging, the object beautiful, the project morally important." But if it were the case that the valuing of an individual do create real, objective meaning -- however slight -- then it shouldn't surprise us that some "significant" number of people

⁹⁸ This is not a trivial distinction: we would, generally speaking, have much more confidence in the perceptual and cognitive powers of someone who looked at a heap of sand and said "There are 4 kgs of sand!" (when there are in fact 12 kg of sand) than we would in someone who looked at the same heap and said, "Wow... that's a lot of broccoli!"

⁹⁹ Wolf, *supra* n. 81, at 105 (emphasis in original). As we will see below, I think that certain things "pass out" of meaningfulness because, as valuable as they may have been taken to be at one time, they are taken as valuable no longer.

should, valuing in concert, endow the object of their valuing with a greater, more significant objective value.

In other words, it seems entirely possible that goldfish tending, crossword puzzling, and the like do, in fact, have some objective value to them simply in virtue of the fact that the tender and the puzzler deeply care about their own projects. Nevertheless, their decision to pursue those projects may still be a grave error of judgment insofar as they are making a mistake of degree. The life of a person who devotes themselves to pot-smoking and similar activities may not *meaningless*, but merely "less meaningful". Perhaps we can say that it is not meaningful enough to meet some standard¹⁰⁰ for a good life, and even that there's something a little sad about the situation. We surely look with a certain pity at people consumed with monomania, but it is important to note that at the same time there is often something inherently admirable in their devotion to the object of their mania. That little echo of admiration we feel is important; it's a reminder that the fanatic we're pitying is a person, and that they are doing something of at least marginal importance insofar as it is important *to them*. We should acknowledge that, in some sense, such a person is living a life with some meaning in it, even if it's not as much as we (properly) think there should be. And we should value that person's valuing because the valuer, however misguided or mistaken, is him- or herself the very sort of phenomenon that has value, and which should -- to some extent or another, however small -- be *meaningful to us*.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ There may be some absolute threshold for what counts as a "meaningful" life, but if that is the case we should be mindful that it may not be something that is attainable by each and every person.

¹⁰¹ Korsgaard seems to believe something similar to this. She asserts that "If you are hitting me, and I scream 'stop', you now have reason to stop. You might continue anyway, but you cannot continue as you did before." Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, Tanner Lectures on Human Values, delivered at Cambridge University, November 16-17, 1992, at pp.97 in the publically available PDF, Available at: http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/k/korsgaard94.pdf. The fact that another person is expressing some desire or another, we are to think, just by itself gives us reasons for acting a certain way with respect to that desire.

2.2.2.2. The External Perspective and a Plausible Source of Value

Wolf invokes an “external viewpoint” (which is similar to Nagel's "view from nowhere"¹⁰²) by which we are supposed to judge objective value. There's a temptation, I think, to hear a phrase like this and imagine some sort of perfectly dispassionate, mechanistic objectivity, but of course this is neither what Nagel nor what Wolf have in mind at all. Such an observer wouldn't find *anything* either worthwhile or worthless; it would simply observe. The external perspective invoked by Wolf, as divorced as it may (or may not) be from any particular individual, is nevertheless one that judges and values. (Indeed, that seems to be the entire reason for adopting it in the first place.)

And if the external view by which we evaluate the objective value of our projects is a view that evaluates and judges, then it is necessarily a view that has some set of standards for making those evaluations. It is not empty of content; merely uninvested in that content. As Bernard Williams summarized, “the objective account is an account *of* that point of view which is not itself given *from* that point of view.”¹⁰³ But it is nonetheless given *from* a point of view. Accordingly, we should not just be concerned with whether our projects are objectively valuable when viewed from an external perspective, but also concerned about *what type* of external perspective we should adopt.

The neutral perspective is not achieved by stripping out every value and bias – only those that we feel are particular to ourselves. Because I recognize that not all people enjoy role-playing games, fencing, and wine, for example, I don't usually count those into my "objective" view of what is best in life. Instead, I try to generalize, to find common goods that, in my experience, all evaluators would (or should) acknowledge. What's left, if we've done a very good job, may be a sort of "external" view, but it is still built upon a basic model for what it is to be an evaluator of a certain

¹⁰² Wolf, *supra* n. 81, at 91-92.

¹⁰³ Bernard Williams, “A Passion for the Beyond”, LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS Vol. 8, No. 14 (August 7, 1986) at p. 5 (book review of Nagel's *The View from Nowhere*).

type – one with which we are familiar.¹⁰⁴ The external perspective, then, is a way to model what we think other people should think; that is, what other people – properly informed and thinking clearly, *will* think.

I think that Wolf has things precisely backwards in her invocation of the external perspective. She sees the empirical question of whether a significant number of people find a project to be meaningful as an epistemic clue, illuminating the more substantive issue of whether or not our projects are objectively valuable when viewed from an external perspective. I think that we should see it the other way around: it is the adoption of the external perspective itself that is an epistemic tool for judging whether something is likely to be meaningful to actual people. I think that the fact that some "significant" number of people take something to be valuable over a large span of time, on the other hand, may very well be – ontologically – part of what it means to be objectively valuable and thus a candidate for contributing to a meaningful life. A project, then, would be valuable at least in part because someone takes it to be valuable. Accordingly, pursuing such a project may contribute to a life that is "objectively" meaningful (that is, not a mistake in terms of opportunity cost) in part because some sufficient number of people take it to be meaningful.

Two examples might help to make this point more clear by showing how the same “type” of activity might, in one situation be pointless and yet in another contribute to a life which is very clearly meaningful.

First, let’s start with Wolf’s own example, the crossword puzzler. Wolf seems to believe that solving endless crossword puzzles, no matter how personally rewarding, will either never pass, or is extremely unlikely to pass, the test of objective value. Sisyphus may love rolling rocks and even find

¹⁰⁴ If we were not familiar with it, it seems that we would be unable to imagine what it would be like to view things from that perspective. This seems to be the implication of Nagel’s discussion of how eggs taste to a cockroach – it is something that we cannot really understand from within our own personal point of view. To understand it, we would need to either be far greater than we are, or to be a cockroach inhabiting that very perspective. Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford University Press, 1986) at p. 25.

it fulfilling, but nothing ever comes of either rock-rolling or sitting by oneself doing crossword puzzles. It is, we are to think, a pointless activity, from an external point of view.¹⁰⁵

But this characterization of crossword puzzles is unfairly stacking the deck against our poor puzzler. Maybe it's not the crossword puzzling that is the source of triviality and meaninglessness, but rather the isolation, the inward-looking focus of the activity. We can imagine another type of puzzler, living in a different type of society. This puzzler – the Van Cliburn of puzzlers – travels to an enemy state to engage their best crossword puzzlers in a series of puzzles for national honor. Our brave puzzler vanquishes the competition; he is returned home to a ticker-tape parade and national television appearances. One can easily imagine a culture where thousands gather to watch champion puzzlers pit themselves against each other in solving the latest NYT crossword, with the puzzle put up on 360-inch monitors, accompanied by the incessant patter of color commentary. (Monty Python once poked fun at this sort of idea with a broadcast of Thomas Hardy's writing a novel.) In such a world, there may be weekly gatherings all over the country where people join together to have crossword competitions. Crossword puzzle solving would, in such a society, assume great significance. Such a world – while certainly not the one we currently live in – is surely possible.

Despite her explicit caution, Wolf seems at times to proceed as if the objective value is, somehow, to be found in the activity itself, and she talks about crossword-puzzling as if it were a type of activity whose category is relevant to the question of meaningfulness. But how can that be, if (as we just saw) crossword puzzle-solving is meaningless in one context, but could be incredibly meaningful in another? Perhaps she just means to indict introverted, inward-looking endless

¹⁰⁵ I'm not convinced it's *inherently* pointless: if you're stuck by yourself on a deserted island, and you've done everything you can to ensure your eventual rescue, that endless crossword puzzles seems like a fine way to spend your time. But perhaps, even if it is the best option available to you, it is pointless. Being stuck on an island is a bad thing, after all.

crossword puzzling, but then it's not the puzzling *per se* that should put us off, but something else entirely. The obvious response, then, would be to claim that I'm being disingenuous, and that these are not two instances of the same activity at all. One is a social activity, the other a solitary one.

I am happy to endorse that response: it would mean that the "something else entirely" which should put us off is the solitariness of the introverted puzzling, and that's where I'm going with all of this. The way I see it, either the two types of puzzling are to be taken as the same type of activity, in which case the type of activity *cannot* be determinate of objective value, or they are to be taken as distinct, in which case the relevant difference separating them from each other would appear to be their social nature, the approval and engagement of others in the project.

To be fair, it is not as if Wolf thinks that crossword puzzling could *never* be meaningful; she recognizes not only that our notions of what is valuable are shaped by our upbringing and culture, but also that "human ingenuity and a continually changing universe will ensure that new forms of value will evolve."¹⁰⁶ So maybe if the imaginary world's heroic crossword puzzling is a different activity from the introverted crossword puzzling in our world, maybe that form of value just hasn't evolved yet.

But our notions of value don't just get created over time; they also seem to disappear, to atrophy, and to die out. This fleetingness suggests that what is happening is not the "discovery" of an activity or project that possesses the characteristic of being objectively valuable that was out there just waiting to be found, but rather that there is something else that is causing the activities or projects in question to gain, and perhaps subsequently lose, their "objective value". Consider the second example:

¹⁰⁶ Wolf, *supra* note 81, at 100. (citing to Raz's *The Practice of Value*). Note that she still seems to be talking about "forms of value" as if categories of activity were what was at issue.

Imagine a lamplighter in the 1700's who deeply enjoys his craft, who works to make himself the best lamplighter he can, perhaps even to the point of creating refinements to technique and process. Maybe he's active in his guild. People smile at him as they pass him on the street. In his own time, such a pursuit is easily as meaningful as any established trade or profession from our own period. But no one in the modern, Westernized world values the profession of lamplighting anymore: we don't even really have that profession to value. Once it was a worthwhile profession that served a legitimate public and social function, and no one would have said that a life spent lamplighting was meaningless. But today, someone who devotes themselves to perfecting the art of lamplighting could rightfully be seen as engaging in something futile, maybe even hollow and a bit sad. The conundrum, then, is what can possibly count as objective value *rooted in the activity itself* if the same activity in different contexts has it in one, but not the other? I think the obvious move is to say that it is not rooted in the activity itself, and rather to look at what has changed: the attitude of people. Where the attitudes of people change, the qualities of “objective value” seem to change as well. That seems reason enough to believe (in the absence of some other compelling argument) that the attitudes themselves are responsible for the value.

Now, one might respond to this example by arguing that I'm not playing fair, that I'm once again mischaracterizing the activity in question. Such an objection would, I think, boil down to a claim that it is not expertly lighting lamps that was ever, in and of itself, objectively valuable. And in having the profession pass into obscurity, nothing has really changed at all. One could go on to argue that what was actually objectively valuable was providing light at night, and so that the people who maintain and work to provide electricity for streetlamps in the modern age are still engaged in projects of value quite similar to those of lamplighters. Thus, the objective value of the activity has not changed, and so it cannot be the case that value disappears.

I've already indicated that I don't think it's helpful to attribute meaningfulness and value to categories of activity, that what matters are specific, individuated projects. And if our efforts to find useful categories of valuable activity end up depending not just on what's being done, but on the social context in which it is being done (such that we count 18th century lamplighters as being in the same category as modern electrical engineers, not a modern lamplighter) then that seems like compelling evidence that we should be focusing on either the activity-in-context, or perhaps even just on the context. But if our focus is to be on the activity itself, and the counterargument to my position is that the activity *hasn't* changed over time – that it's just “providing light” or somesuch, then it strikes me that we are just pushing off the real question. And if we follow that question as it is being pushed off, I think we will eventually arrive at the root of objective value: other people. Let me explain what I mean.

We can generalize the activity to something like “providing light” easily enough. But lamplit streets, or even the presence of light itself, do not seem to be *objectively* valuable unless there is someone who needs it. Surely light-providing activities of any sort in the Kingdom of the Blind are futile. Granted, we don't live in the Kingdom of the Blind. I am not denying that there might be something inherent in the human constitution that makes light something that's really, objectively valuable, and projects and activities that provide it thus seem objectively valuable as well. But if we stop there, with our empirical human needs, then we've stopped pushing the question.

Yet why stop pushing there? One can imagine easily enough some intelligence that doesn't have the same sorts of requirements for light or oxygen that we do. Shouldn't we want our neutral, "external" viewpoint in such a case to stop being so humanocentric? To keep pushing the question, we would redescribe the activity again and again – to something utterly generic like “providing something valued by persons” (where “persons” stands in for some sort of evaluating agent capable of making judgments and having preferences). What we're not going to be able to do, though, with

any sort of meaningful activity, is write other persons out of the picture entirely. Our external perspective isn't really capable of getting outside of that – not if it's going to continue to be useful in helping us figure out what's worth doing.

My conclusion here is that I don't think it's the activity itself – whether it's lamplighting, crossword puzzling, competition, or providing illumination – is ever going to be a good candidate for objective value. I think it's entirely plausible that what really matters about “objectively valuable” activities is rather the interpersonal context in which such an activity takes place. What really matters, in other words, is other people and – derivatively – what those other people value.

2.2.2.3. The Right Kind of Interaction

I've just argued that it's possible that an “objectively valuable” activity's being valuable could plausibly be the result of that activity's being found *subjectively* valuable by people, who are themselves (we should think) objectively valuable. But surely people can be mistaken about value, can't they? Wolf objects to intersubjectivity as an explanation, in part, because of the possibility that an entire society could be mistaken about value. Let's start by acknowledging that Wolf is certainly correct on a more general level: there's no question that whole societies can be wrong about many things that seem to involve questions of value. One might think that Sumerian child sacrifice, Greek religious practices, Medieval theories of alchemy, or American slavery are ample evidence of this. But the fact that societies can be wrong *en masse* about, say, issues of morality or science doesn't necessarily mean that they can be wrong on issues of meaningfulness. Morality and meaningfulness, while related, are separate issues.

One could, I suppose, *imagine* a society that embraced a sort of meaningless, vapid activity as something to be pursued: perhaps an entire society could be addicted to single-player video games, for example. (That they be *single*-player seems important to this example.) Such “empty” expression, if adopted on a wide scale as an ideal, would reflect what Charles Taylor would call a

mistaken ethic of authenticity that -- like certain parts of our own modern, Western culture -- turns human psychology inward and away from social interaction.¹⁰⁷ And now we come to the crux of my problem with Wolf's dismissal of intersubjectivity as an explanation for objective value: I find it hard to say that such a model disproves intersubjectivity because if it ever were to exist, it would not be *intersubjective* at all. It would just be "lots of subjective" (assuming everyone subjectively liked what they were doing). If one were to change the scenario somewhat, by making the participation in the games more interactive, and making the game itself somehow reflective of the people playing it (so that, say, personal play style was an issue) – well, that makes the example “intersubjective” but at the same time it also seems to substantially undermine the claim that the project lacks meaning across the board.

So consider once again our lonely crossword puzzler. His isolated situation is not rectified by putting him in a room with 500 other puzzlers, all enraptured and excited by their own individual puzzles yet who care not one whit about the other 499 instances of crossword puzzling going on around them. All you have then is a collection of people engaging in 500 separate, pointless projects; it is not “intersubjective” because there is no interaction going on at all. Aggregation is not interaction, after all.

What is required, I think, for an intersubjective value to arise is for there to be a mutual valuing of something. And the proper object of that valuing is not some class of activity, but the very particular, singular project being pursued by an actual person. I may care about my own crossword puzzling, and that may give it some small degree of meaningfulness. But if you care about my crossword puzzling – that is, the actual bit of puzzling that I am performing – then that makes my activity more meaningful. If my entire society cares about my particular act of crossword

¹⁰⁷ Charles Taylor, *THE ETHICS OF AUTHENTICITY* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1991). We will discuss Taylor's notion of authenticity in much greater detail below.

puzzling (as in the case of our van Cliburn of puzzlers) then perhaps it is even more meaningful. Likewise, if I go out onto my driveway and throw a rubber ball through a metal hoop, that hardly seems meaningful by itself. It's just a mechanical operation, after all. But if what I am doing is practicing for the league championships – a game eagerly anticipated by all of my neighbors, each of whom regularly congratulates me and admires me for my play in past games – well, now my throwing a ball through a hoop is part of a larger project that is, in all of its individual particularity, valued by others. Indeed, in that case, what counts as *my project* is actually something of a joint venture, something I share with others.

But it's not at all clear to me that merely having a large number of people invested in your project is enough – or even required. I suspect that what matters is that whatever number of people are invested, they must be invested in what you take to be *your* project. 10,000 people – or ten million – might *think* that your project is meaningful, but it seems to me that they could nevertheless be deeply mistaken in their view about what your project really is. The mutual valuing of a project requires that all concerned parties actually have the same thing in mind. Another example, I hope, will help clarify what I mean here:

One can imagine that many, *many* people are invested in what they take to be Michael Jordan's basketball playing. It seems like having a million screaming fans should suffice for making one's project valuable, if anything does. But we also know from countless interviews and anecdotes that many a celebrity finds themselves looking out on legions of adoring fans and asking themselves "What's the point of all of this?" Indeed, it sometimes seems that people pursue celebrity precisely because they think that having the attention and investment of others makes life more meaningful. Yet it also seems that this isn't necessarily the case. So our imagined Michael Jordan might have thousands of adoring fans, and still be filled with a sort of existential despair because he is not getting a sense of fulfillment from his sports. (Let me be clear – I'm making up a story about

Michael Jordan because he is an easily recognizable name in professional sports. I know nothing of his particular situation.)

I suspect that a large part of the explanation for this paradox of celebrity is a disconnect between the “valuings” that are going on. What Michael Jordan really values in his playing basketball may not at all be what the majority of fans value. Michael might value his playing to the extent that it is an expression of who he is; he might see himself as having a particular style, of telling a particular story about himself through his game. The fan sees something else entirely – a more superficial and less personal view of the “project” that cuts out much of what makes it important to Michael; maybe they see his project as “winning”, for instance. But we can imagine that he’s not playing for the sake of winning – winning is a by-product of what he’s really after: excellence, that string of perfect moments when everything comes together, Michael-style. The fans are appreciating his playing as *they* see it, but they aren’t really appreciating Michael’s project, and they aren’t really appreciating Michael as he sees himself.

He might be better served by turning to his teammates, who know him better, and who may be in a better position to appreciate not just the facts about his basketball playing, but the specific project of his playing in which he is engaged. We know that meaningfulness requires that a project meet both a subjective and an objective criterion, and that to meet the subjective criterion, the project in question must to be deeply fulfilling to the actor on a personal level. Thus, the nature of the project to be subjected to the objective criterion will be very specifically characterized by *what* it is that the actor finds fulfilling on a personal level. In order for there to be objective value in that project, *it needs to be the same project*. And that means that, if objective value is intersubjective in nature (and I hope that I’ve successfully argued that this is plausibly the case) then the mutual valuings need to be aimed at the same target – the very project about which the actor cares deeply.

Thus, properly intersubjective value requires not just that we value each other's projects, but that we see in those projects the same sort of value that the actors themselves see. And when we do that, we aren't just valuing the project – we are also valuing the person performing it, insofar as it expresses who they take themselves to be.¹⁰⁸ To the degree that the parties to a project (whether as active participants or as passive observers) are aware of what's really going on with respect to each other, the project will become a bearer of *intersubjective*, and thus objective, value. It will really matter.

A last example, this one from one of my favourite science fiction television show, *Babylon 5*, gets to this point nicely. It's part of a sermon by a minor character, the Reverend Dexter:

*You know, before I got married, Emily used to come by sometimes and help me clean out my apartment. Well, I asked her, "How come you're so eager to help clean up my place when your place is just as bad?" She said, "Because cleaning up your place helps me to forget what a mess I've made of mine, and - when I sweep my floor, all I've done is sweep my floor. But, when I help you clean up your place, I am helping you."*¹⁰⁹

This is a little trite, to be sure. But this gets right to the point. Emily isn't sweeping the floor at Dexter's place because she wants his place clean. She's doing it because she knows that Dexter values the project, and she wants to help him. The sweeping and cleaning is of only minor value by itself: everyone wants their place cleaner. But Emily knows what Dexter wants; Dexter knows that Emily knows what Dexter wants, and they value each other. It is in this way that sweeping – a simple, mechanical act of cleaning – can be as objectively valuable as just about anything else you might imagine. When we achieve meaningfulness in our lives, we do not just participate in projects that are recognized by others; we may recognize others in pursuing our projects, and we are ourselves may be recognized by others in the projects that we choose to pursue.

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter 2, §4.1, *infra*.

¹⁰⁹ J. Michael Straczynski, *Babylon 5, Season 4*, "And the Rock Cried Out, No Hiding Place" (1997).

I don't want to give the impression, though, that a great artist whose work is only appreciated after his death, who spawns a movement, is somehow not living a meaningful life because he didn't have "tender moments" of genuine interaction. It seems obvious to me that he or she would be living a meaningful life just so long as he or she loved her work, and her work was valued by someone, even years hence. This just shows that the "mutual valuing" need not be contemporaneous. There have been many misunderstood geniuses, many people whose work was only appreciated after their passing. Indeed, many artists take themselves to be creating the sort of cultural context in which their work becomes relevant – a sort of "pulling meaning up by its bootstraps." Apropos of the first distinction I made at the start of this section, whether the artist *experiences* his or her projects as meaningful is really a question of attitude and confidence: if the artist imagines that his or her work will find its home, then his or her art will be experienced as meaningful, whether it turns out to be meaningful in fact or not. If the artist despairs of ever connecting to another person through his or her art, then his or her life will not be experienced as meaningful, even if he or she ends up being thought of in the same breath as Picasso and Leonardo a century *post mortem*.

But I do want to be clear that the "same project" requirement I've been harping on for the last several pages is fairly strict: and if it is not observed, then all the apparent meaningfulness in the world can't salvage the situation. Another example: if somehow *everyone* from St. Peter to Billy Graham has gotten the teachings of Jesus Christ seriously wrong, if no one really understands that Jesus took himself to be teaching, then Jesus's teachings were as a matter of fact meaningless. They may be *taken* to have been meaningful, and they may even be experienced *as* meaningful by some people. But that's not quite the same thing.

2.2.2.4. The Problem of Futility

I want to close this section by discussing what some might see as an objectionable feature of the account of “objective value” that I’ve offered here. I’ve argued that the value of projects is not to be found in the projects insofar as they are of a certain type, nor as they are considered in isolation. But I also suggested that it was entirely possible that *every* instance of “helping sick children” will be something that is meaningful. These two claims seem somewhat in tension, for it seems that the category of activity called “helping sick children” could be said to possess objective value itself in virtue of its always doing so.

That tension can be resolved by allowing that there may be something about certain categories of projects that makes the individual instances of them better candidates for serving as the bearers of objective value because they are inherently more interactive or other-regarding, or perhaps just more apt to engage the passions of others. Multi-player video games with real-time voice chat functions, for instance, may naturally yield more meaningful engagement than a one-player gaming console – though many hours of playing “hotseat” games of Civilization, Warlords II, and other such things at a single computer with friends would count against that.. But whatever qualities we might identify in projects likely to be valuable are going to be qualities that, on their own, give rise only to a *potential*. I think it would be a mistake to confuse that potential for value with actual possession of objective value itself.

The fallout of this view may, however, be objectionable to some readers – because however worthwhile a project may potentially be, it will depend on the realization of certain facts for its own realization as a meaningful activity – facts which may well be completely outside the control of the actor. In other words, we don’t get to live meaningful lives just by making the right choices or having the right attitudes; we require a certain amount of Aristotelian “luck”.

To put this more concretely, we could imagine that some scientist who discovered a cure for cancer while working anonymously and in total isolation. Surely this has the potential to be a meaningful project! He boxes up his cure in his car, intending to carry it to the Cancer-Curer Conference in the next county and present it for the benefit of all mankind. But on the way, he's hit by a gasoline truck. Both he and all traces of his work are destroyed. No one ever finds out what he was working on, much less that it was a success. Is this scientist's work meaningful?

I don't think it is. I think he has suffered a terrible fate because all of his work on the cure was in vain. To be sure, it had the potential to be very, *very* meaningful; but that potential was never realized. Our poor scientist should have gotten out more, should have written down his work, or had a partner.

I might be wrong, of course, and a cynic to boot. I suppose it's possible that there is some degree of meaningfulness to be found in this situation. And at the very least, the scientist's work was valuable *to him*. I can also imagine that someone might make an argument along the following lines: "Of course his work was meaningful – thousands of researchers are working every day to solve this. They are all part of the project of curing cancer." But this seems to me to be stretching the definition of the "project" a bit far. Our hypothetical scientist's contributions don't strike me as part of the greater project; his work was destroyed before it could be assimilated into the group project of curing cancer, and he was working in isolation, not as part of a team.

We could, of course, *say* that it was "part of the project of curing cancer", sure, but even that seems to first require that we be somehow aware of what he was up to – which would be critically changing the example. There are other possible ways out of this conundrum, none of which I find particularly plausible. Maybe we could satisfy ourselves with building a vaguely- but sincerely-intended monument to "all those nameless scientists who worked to cure cancer." (We seem to do this from time to time, *e.g.* the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.) Maybe the scientist

took himself to be part of the greater project and that's enough. But it's really not my intention to get into an extended discussion of collective intention or action. I just want to point out that whether or not someone counts as being part of some specific larger project is a question that matters for our inquiry, and that it may not be as simple as having been engaged in the same *sort* of activity.

All of this talk of meaningfulness and intersubjectivity may seem rather far afield from our supposed topic of indoctrination, but I think it is necessary for understanding how it is that indoctrination – at least the deviant sort, taken as such – is harmful. It is harmful, I will argue, because it undermines authenticity, which undermines the meaningfulness of our projects. Now that you have an idea of what I mean by meaningfulness, I think it's time to explain what I mean by “authenticity”.

2.3. The Importance of Authenticity

On its face, the account of meaningfulness I've just given requires authenticity – at least in some sense of the word. After all, we have to find our projects subjectively fulfilling in order for them to be meaningful. We thus have to “authentically” value our projects, and not just pretend to. If we just pretend to, not only do we fail to fulfill the subjective criterion, but it also becomes impossible for others to appreciate what we appreciate in the project (since we don't).

But that's a fairly superficial notion of authenticity – one that equates authenticity with something like “sincerity”. And I've already granted that an indoctrinated subject is sincere enough in their beliefs. So if I am going to argue that indoctrination undermines meaningfulness by way of undermining authenticity, I'll need to avail myself of different, more substantial type of authenticity. In this section, I will look at just such an account – the one offered by Charles Taylor in his *The Ethics of Authenticity*. First, however, I want to very briefly explore how authenticity and

meaningfulness might be thought to interact, and to situate Taylor's account of authenticity within the conversation so far.

2.3.1. Authenticity and Meaningfulness

In everyday language, a thing has authenticity (i.e., it is authentic) when it “truly” is whatever it is taken, purports, is hypothesized, or seems to be. Authenticity is, in other words, measured against some standard. It might seem an empty term: isn't *everything* authentically whatever it is? But to invoke authenticity at all is to conjure up the possibility of inauthenticity, to invoke the possibility of mistake, deception, or dissemblance. So to the extent that we might talk about a person having “inauthentic values”, we would be implicitly acknowledging that the values do not actually belong to that person, for whatever reason. Perhaps he is lying to us, saying that he loves his grandmother while his expression betrays the fact that he can't stand the old bat.

Or maybe there's something more complex at work, as when a slave assures his master that he aims to please. There is surely a sense in which the slave may be said to genuinely value pleasing his master, but there is also a sense in which that valuing isn't really authentic – in the sense that it's not what's really doing the motivational work. The slave plausibly values pleasing his master just in order to preserve that which he really values: his life or physical comfort or somesuch. At the same time, though, what it is to actually be a value seems to assume that the value is sincerely held, and inauthenticity is only going to enter the picture, really, if someone is either lying about his or her values to others or if his or her image of themselves is deeply mistaken (such as someone who thinks that they are brave, but discovers that they are in fact a coward). Even there, though, the actually-held values aren't inauthentic – the professed or perceived values are (and they aren't really values at all).

We saw last chapter that our values are deeply connected to action. When our projects are aimed at something that we love, that we value, one way of characterizing what we are doing is

*expressing our values.*¹¹⁰ When I say "expressing" I do not necessarily mean that we are engaging in pointed speech of some kind, or that we are proclaiming our values in order to inform others about them. I mean to use the term in something like the genetic sense; a person's genes express themselves through the color of their eyes, the length of their bones, etc. Likewise, our values find their expression in our actions, our pursuits, and our projects.

But at the same time, we are making something like a statement, at least metaphorically. Our projects communicate to the world a sense of who we take ourselves to be. It is not as if we are inert vessels for the expression of an abstract, detached set of values.¹¹¹ Our loving those things that we love, those people that we love, is in an important sense constitutive of who we are. The expression of values is thus tied up with the notion of our identity – not in a numerical sense, but rather one's conception of one's own self. Our identity is "'who' we are, 'where we're coming from'... the background against which our tastes and desires and opinions and aspirations make sense."¹¹² One's identity, in this way, is an idea of who one is, including who one wishes to be.¹¹³

This sort of talk of "self" lends itself naturally to talk of authenticity. We commonly speak of "authentic" people, people who seem to have a correspondence between the person that they are "on the inside" and the self that they present to the world. We take as "authentic" those selves that do not seem to have substantial layers of artifice or dissemblance about them. But if that's

¹¹⁰ Careful readers will recognize that I slipped the word "expressed" into my initial discussion of values in Chapter 1. See Chapter 1 at the opening paragraph of §2.2.2 ("When we talk of a person's values, we're talking about the things that a person cares about, particularly how those cares are expressed in deliberate, intentional action.").

¹¹¹ Some philosophers who call themselves Kantians or Rawlsians seem to verge on believing something like this either is or should be the case. But even if that's not a terribly unfair description of their views, I take it that this isn't their point. The point is to actually *be* someone who is authentically in line with that higher set of values.

¹¹² Taylor, *supra* n. 107, at 34.

¹¹³ It's worth pointing out that I am adopting a very Western view of identity as reflecting an identifiable and real "self". I recognize that there are cultural, philosophical, and religious traditions that see the assertion of the self as a sort of error or illusion. If my entire project needs to be cast as a giant conditional, the antecedent of which is "If the self isn't an incoherent notion," then so be it.

authenticity, then authenticity of self, like authenticity of values, sound just like a sort of sincerity. We cannot stop there.

One very powerful picture of identity that has emerged in the modern world is that of the creation of one's identity as something of an individual project.¹¹⁴ Even though it's just one of many views that exist today, let's call this the "modern view" of identity. Wolf inadvertently gives a perfect description of what lies at the core of this view when she describes the "Fulfillment View" that serves as the foundation for her subjective criterion:

It doesn't matter what you do with your life as long as it is something you love. Do not get stuck, or settle into doing something just because it is expected of you, or because it is conventionally recognized as good, or because nothing better occurs to you. Find your passion. Figure out what turns you on, and go for it.¹¹⁵

The advice is practical on its face; we are being told what to *do* if we want to live meaningfully. But the process is just as much an exploration of the self as of the world. You aren't supposed to just go do things, but also "figure out" something about yourself. Then you are supposed to act accordingly -- authentically. And it is exactly this type of self-discovery that, according to Charles Taylor, modern culture has enshrined as "authenticity", setting it out as one of the highest goods for people.¹¹⁶ Its picture of human life is Socrates and Polonius, bundled up with

¹¹⁴ I take it that this is a relatively recent phenomenon, finding its genesis in the late 17th century. That's not to say that before the Enlightenment people were *drones*. It is merely to note that one's psychological identity seems to have been far more socially, religiously, and culturally determined before the advent of radical individualism.

¹¹⁵ Wolf, *supra* n.81, at 79.

¹¹⁶ Taylor claims that this involves a "moral" ideal insofar as this view of human nature is held up as a conception of the good life, or "better or higher mode of life" to which we ought to aspire. Taylor, *supra* n. 107, at 16. I remain unsure of whether the sorts of issues addressed by either Wolf or Taylor are moral issues or not. Certainly Wolf seems to put some space between morality on the one hand, and meaningfulness on the other. But I don't need to answer that question, even if what I am ultimately interested in this dissertation is answering moral questions about indoctrination and education. It is enough for my purposes that Wolf and Taylor are, for all practical purposes, talking about the same sort of things: purposelessness versus purpose, meaninglessness versus meaningfulness.

a bow.¹¹⁷ It is also a demand: you are charged with creating a true – that is, an authentic -- identity for yourself, with understanding who you really are and getting your identity right. If you don't get it right, how will others ever be able to appreciate the self that is expressed in your projects? Getting it wrong sounds like a recipe for misery.

Now, it's easy enough to *say* that a person should get their identity "right". And if we've adopted the modern view, then at least we've moved beyond sincerity. But all we've done is replace it with a vague sort of coherence: one's identity is authentic so long as one's sense of self is in accord with one's true self. But what if my "true self" turns out to like sitting alone all day playing single-player video games? Is there some sort of strange predestination at work, granting unto the elect a chance for meaningfulness and condemning everyone else to their empty pleasures? If our "true selves" are out there (in there?) waiting to be discovered, I don't know what they look like. The more sensible view, I think, is that our true selves aren't out there waiting for us. Rather, they are created. But then what does an "authentically" created self look like? Against what standard can it be measured as authentic? Taylor gives us an answer to that question in the course of hashing out his own issues with the modern view of identity. While his critique is leveled at several different views that he sees as acting in concert, he places the responsibility for some Very Bad Things (what he calls "malaises of modernity") squarely at the feet of the modern view of identity.

On Taylor's account, the modern view has made a terrible mistake in conceiving of authenticity as finding our own individual way of "being human", in holding that we must each "do our own thing" and "find our own fulfillment."¹¹⁸ Taylor rejects this view for a number of reasons, but the most relevant to our discussion here is that he believes it mischaracterizes the nature of

¹¹⁷ Granted, Socrates probably wasn't the originator of the phrase "Know Thyself", but it is popularly associated with him; and Polonius is a fictional character. Still, one cannot be true to one's own self unless he first knows what one's own self is.

¹¹⁸ Taylor, *supra* n.107, at 28-29.

human identity. On his picture, the authenticity of our identity and our sense of self depends in great part on whether it has come about in a way consistent with the sort of creatures that we are.

The modern view gets us wrong, he claims. And we end up with, among other things, the aforementioned malaises. These malaises include the fact that "People no longer have a sense of a higher purpose, of something worth dying for," that people "suffer from a lack of passion" or are consumed with Tocqueville's small and vulgar pleasures. These malaises are clearly of a kind with the purposelessness that motivated Wolf's discussion of meaningfulness. The malaises are not a product of immortality or unhappiness, but stem from a disconnect with the things that really matter. So Taylor's project, I take it, can be characterized as one that undertakes to give us an account of a sort of authenticity that underlies and is required for us to live meaningful lives. It is this sort of authenticity that I think indoctrination undermines.

2.3.2. Horizons of Significance

On Taylor's account, the shallower view of authenticity (let's call it the "modern view" of authenticity, of a piece with the modern view of identity) approaches personal identity as a "monologic" project: that is, identity is the province of a single person's quest of self-discovery, self-definition, and fulfillment. Taylor argues against this view by asserting that our identities are, by nature, essentially "dialogic". By this he means that our interactions with, our regard for, and our dependence on others are all integral to making us who we properly are. Identity is discursive: the development of our identities is a process involving "language in a broad sense", including not only words, but "the 'languages' of art, of gesture, of love, and the like."¹¹⁹ Those languages are the medium through which our identities are "negotiate[d] through dialogue, partly overt, partly internalized, with others."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ *Id.* at 33.

¹²⁰ *Id.* at 47.

This is not to say Taylor thinks that our identities are not, in significant part, something of our own creation. We must, after all, participate in the conversations that form us. It is only to acknowledge the old saw that no man is an island. If we fall into the trap of modern authenticity-talk, if we think that we can create ourselves entirely on our own, then we are guilty of ignoring our social natures and the discursive way in which our identities ought to be brought about. In so doing, we risk cutting ourselves off from what Taylor calls "horizons of significance", against which that which we have chosen to be assumes a real sort of significance, and not just the hollow significance of individual fiat.¹²¹

As an example of how these "horizons" work, Taylor offers someone who simply chooses, *ipse dixit*, to form his identity around having some precise number of hairs on his head.¹²² This example, of course, sounds patently absurd... but that's really his point. By itself, as an act of pure fiat, such an identity means little. Yet while it is outré in any scenario, such an identity could, however, take on significance if there were a meaningful story behind it, perhaps involving some sort of religious meaning. That religious context is the sort of thing that Taylor has in mind by the term "horizons".

But these horizons aren't just stories that add significance to who we are; they aren't like trinkets and baubles with which we can decorate our chosen identities. They are, in a sense, *limitations* (hence the word "horizons") on what we can choose to be while still maintaining our authenticity. Taylor's notion of authenticity, then, doesn't mean just being sincere or true to one's "inner self" (whatever that is); it means acknowledging horizons of significance as something real

¹²¹ There are echoes of a certain kind of Spinozistic view of humanity in this notion. Joseph Almog has lectured (and written in a forthcoming manuscript) about a pseudo-Cartesian view of a person as a sort of "clean room", possessed of an abstracted, detached sort of individualism in virtue of the disembodied self's skeptical removal. The Spinozistic view sees a personality as more fully integrated into nature and the species.

¹²² Taylor, *supra* n.107, at 36.

and objective, and coming to be who we are within and in contact with those horizons. We cannot simply will them away by choosing something else; they are "***demands*** emanating from beyond the self." (emphasis added) There is, in other words, something imperative about them, something that demands to be recognized.¹²³

To indulge in modern, atomistic individualism is to ignore these demands, to abandon candidates for real meaning, and to risk creating an identity that is inherently trivial.¹²⁴ It is also -- and this is perhaps more core to Taylor's moral arguments -- to open the door to a soft sort of relativism in which nothing at all can be of significance. In much the same way that Wolf holds meaningfulness to require involvement with projects of objective value, Taylor's arguments require that our identities themselves come about in such a way as to involve projects of objective value: "I can [authentically] define my identity only against the background of things that matter."¹²⁵ In both cases, what matters, or what has objective value, is firmly grounded in the inherent value of other persons: the needs of others, the duties of being a member of one's society, familial duties, friendships, or even religious precepts. Taylor's point is not that one must capitulate entirely to the demands of all of these objective horizons; there is both room and an important role for the self-determined identity. We should not, however, discard the demands and think of authenticity *solely* in terms of self-discovery and the demands of independent creation. One's internal demands and the

¹²³ It's plausible that the demands put upon us by these horizons -- which seem to come from our being situated in social contexts -- are very similar to the sort of demands implicated in the brief discussion of Korsgaard, *supra* n.101.

¹²⁴ At the risk of digression, the sort of emptiness and vacuity faced by someone who fails to engage with these horizons reminds me of Kierkegaard's account of the despair faced by those who fail to recognize the self in its proper, natural relationship to God; the self relates (conceives?) of itself, but the identity is not what it should be. See Soren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, esp. Part I, chs. A and C.

¹²⁵ Taylor, *supra* n.107, at 40. I put in the word "authentically" to make a point. It's not in Taylor's text, but the entire purpose of his book is to explain how we can create an authentic identity, so I don't feel that the insertion is unwarranted.

demands of one's proper horizons "may be in tension," he writes, "But what must be wrong is a simple privileging of one over the other."¹²⁶

It might seem as if we're starting to get far afield from our topic – indoctrination – but I needed to explain Taylor's notion of authenticity in order to explain how it is that indoctrination can undermine meaningfulness. On some level, both Taylor and Wolf (at least as I've presented her argument) seem to be arguing for the very same thing: a subjective, individual engagement tempered by the requirements of acknowledging the importance of other people. Wolf seems to be concerned primarily with finding meaning in what we *do*. Taylor, on the other hand, seems to grapple with the same problems more explicitly in terms of who we *are*, leaving it to who we are to drive what we do. But their subject matter is, with some small divergences, fundamentally the same.

So why have I bothered working through both of these accounts? I presented Wolf's account because I think it sets out the terrain of meaningfulness in a clearer way, and because the discussion of intersubjectivity was necessary to explaining why it was that our projects do not just produce meaningfulness in our lives because they are recognized by others, but because we are recognized in our projects. Taylor's account opens the door for the introduction of indoctrination to the conversation because indoctrination is at its core about changing *who the subject is*. Talk of identity is thus more germane to a discussion of indoctrination than talk merely of activities. On Taylor's account, identity comes about through dialogic processes, through the organic give and take of our interactions with the people who matter to us. When an individual seizes control of their own identity and shuts it off from this process, they suffer and they cut themselves off from what really matters. To be authentic seems to require that one's identity come about in a particular way that is properly related to the sorts of creatures that we actually are.

¹²⁶ *Id.* at 66.

We now have in place an account of meaningfulness that can be used to look at both indoctrination and education. It was a lot of work to do, and perhaps some apologies are in order for the length of the discussion. But with this account in hand, let's get back to indoctrination, and how it is that it harms its subjects in its peculiarly offensive way.

2.4. The Impermissibility of Indoctrination

I have claimed that indoctrination – specifically a subtype I call deviant indoctrination – produces a subject whose identity is inauthentic, and that this renders the subject's projects (insofar as they implicate the indoctrinated values) incapable of being meaningful. Because the indoctrinated subject's projects are not meaningful, his or her life is less worth living. As we now have a rough idea of what I have in mind by the two terms “meaningful” and “authenticity” and a picture of how they are related the explanation can proceed.

Recall that the greatest obstacle to such an account is the Authentic Subject Problem: when indoctrination works the subject fully adopts the newfound values; they are fully incorporated into his or her sense of self. Now we come to a bit of a paradox: if we are to assume that indoctrination is *more* harmful when it is at once deep, pervasive, and fantastically successful than when it fails or induces only a tepidly held value – and I think this is obvious – then there should be *less* authenticity in the fully indoctrinated subject who is wholeheartedly devoted to their new values than there is in the subject whose indoctrination was only partially successful, and who wavers in the strength of his or her beliefs. Sincerity on this picture then would stand directly *at odds* with authenticity, and that's a very tough nut to crack. The easy road is closed to us: simply asserting that the new values are inauthentic because they are new or later in time doesn't get us anywhere useful.

Nor would it be helpful, as tempting as it might be, to take Taylor's arguments and simply pronounce that because authenticity requires that a person's identity be brought about in a dialogic way, and because deviant indoctrination – as fundamentally monologic a process as can be

imagined¹²⁷ -- is not such a proper way, the resulting identity must thereby be inauthentic. This would miss the point of Taylor's argument, I think. It strikes me that the reason that it is important for a person's identity to come about through an organic, dialogic process of interaction between the individual and his or her social context on Taylor's account is not that the process itself bestows some sort of magic value to the resulting identity, but because the process results in an identity that is at once the product of an individual's acts of self-creation *and* firmly grounded in "horizons of significance".¹²⁸ In other words, an important part of authenticity is that the identity that emerges from a dialogic process incorporates, *substantively*, the values and concerns of both the person and the horizons by which that person is limited.

So my project in this section is (1) to show that a particular class of indoctrination *necessarily* results in an identity that fails to meet that standard, and (2) to explain why failing to meet that standard results in a serious harm. Specifically, what I will call "deviant" indoctrination necessarily produces an identity that, insofar as it *is* the product of indoctrination,¹²⁹ fails to reflect the proper balance of self-expression and self-discovery on the one hand, and horizons of significance on the other. If our identities are properly formed in a conversation, then both sides should be "speaking", as it were. Deviant indoctrination silences the subject.

¹²⁷ Albeit monologic "from the other side" of things, as it were. With deviant indoctrination, it is the individual who fails to participate in the formation of his or her own identity.

¹²⁸ At the same time, however, there may be room for considering the process as such to be important; the outlines of such a view would be, roughly, that our involving the horizons of significance in the formation of our identities is *itself* a statement and affirmation of their value, that is, our engaging those horizons in the right sort of process may in and of itself be a meaningful "statement".

¹²⁹ This is an important phrase -- "insofar as it is the product of indoctrination". If I'm indoctrinated with some small bit of values-adjustment such as, say, liking chocolate ice cream -- then most of my identity has been left intact. The "produced" identity can only really be differentiated from my "old" identity insofar as the liking of chocolate ice cream manifests itself, either in actions or in how my identity is subsequently affected. By contrast, something more systemic and far-reaching, producing values much more strongly held -- such as the inculcation of soldierly values discussed in Chapter 1 -- would produce an identity that was *drastically* different in important ways.

While the content of the indoctrination will determine whether or not the instilled values properly incorporate horizons with objective value (one could be indoctrinated to care for one's parents, for instance), it will be the degree to which the new values are "at variance" with the subject's pre-existing values that will determine the degree to which the new values, and thus the new identity, are an authentic expression of the subject. Deviant indoctrination, then, is not "deviant" in the sense that the values are morally or aesthetically repulsive, but because the result of the indoctrination is that the subject deviates from his or her pre-existing values. And to the extent that the new values are opposed to what came before, it is, in a sense, *impossible* that the new values represent an authentic expression of who the subject is.

2.4.1. The Importance of Expression

But why should deviation of this sort matter at all? Can the identity of an aspiring recruit who becomes a soldier after going through basic training can be considered "authentic", while a reluctant pacifist's identity, emerging with identical soldierly values, is not? I think so. And while I am not claiming that the difference has to do with the process by which the identities and the values that they embody emerge, it does have to do with the circumstances under which they emerge. Specifically, the context of the subject's pre-existing values provides a background against which two seemingly identical acts of indoctrination can be seen to have drastically different effects. Those pre-existing values determine whether or not the new values, implanted through indoctrination, are an "expression" of the subject's values, and thus whether the emergent identity is authentically his.

To explain how this works, I will assume, for the time being, that our own role in the creation of our identities, or at least those aspects of our identities which is self-guided and up to us, are roughly analogous to artistic expression.¹³⁰ (I say "roughly" because there are important

¹³⁰ This likely does not require great feats of imagination or speculation: as Taylor observes, in the modern conception of the individual the connection between self-definition and artistic creation is extremely strong, to the point

differences which I will discuss shortly.) I want to argue that there is also an important difference between an identity that is constructed with the input of its own self, on the one hand, and an identically constituted identity that arose through external imposition, without input from the self. The difference, I think, is one of expression: the former identity is, in a sense, the expression of an identity where the latter is not. In *Responsibility and Self-Expression*, John Martin Fischer gives us a fairly clear picture of how it is that expression can matter with respect to artistic expression, even when outcomes do not.

Suppose a sculptor creates a sculpture in the "normal" way... but imagine further that, if he hadn't created this sculpture, some other artist would have created exactly the same sort of sculpture -- a different particular sculpture that is nonetheless molecule-for-molecule isomorphic.... [Even though the sculptor's actions made no difference to the end result] there is also a clear sense in which the artist's creative activity has value. I suggest that we value the artist's activity... because he expresses himself in a certain way. He does not make a difference, but he *does* make a statement.¹³¹

Fischer distinguishes between "making a difference" and "making a statement" in order to argue against the idea that moral responsibility comes about in virtue of having made a difference (i.e., creating an alternative outcome). Instead, Fischer wants us to think that moral responsibility comes about because of what he calls "guidance control," or perhaps more appropriately, "narrative control."¹³² Moral Responsibility is not my topic here.¹³³ Yet the larger context of Fischer's

where the creation of the self becomes something like the creation of art. See Taylor, *supra* n.107, at 60-64. Taylor, of course, warns us against giving over identity formation *entirely* to this ideal.

¹³¹ John Martin Fischer, *Responsibility and Self-Expression*, 3 J. OF ETHICS 277, 287 (1999) (emphasis in original).

¹³² "Narrative control" is my own term. Fischer uses the term "guidance control", I suspect, as a way of differentiating from "regulative control", the requirement for moral responsibility that he charges to his opponents.

¹³³ Fischer's discussion moves into some subtle talk of freedom, something I've scrupulously tried to avoid discussing because it seems like an open question whether someone who is successfully indoctrinated is, in fact, "free". While certain instances or methods of indoctrination may impinge on freedom, it's not clear to me that someone in the possession of a real set of values who is acting on those values can be said to be unfree.

discussion is one that gives us a useful way of looking at indoctrination's harm, so I will try to quickly sketch the background against which Fischer's account takes place.

Drawing heavily on David Velleman's sketch of the narrative structure of life from *Well-Being and Time*, Fischer argues that what makes an agent morally responsible for his or her actions is not that he or she acted in such a way that a particular result was thereby (intentionally) caused, but rather that he or she acted in a way so as to write "a sentence in the book of [his or her life]."¹³⁴ The creation of one's life story is, on this account, something almost artistic in nature, a type of self-expression.

Velleman's account is focused on how we tabulate pleasures and pains to determine well-being – something even further afield from our topic. But it includes the proposition that certain episodes in our life can gain meaning by assuming a particular place in the story of our lives.¹³⁵ If I can put it very crudely, the idea is something along the lines of "the whole of our life story sets the meaning for each of the parts, and this works even retroactively." On Velleman's account, a terrible tragedy may not weigh as heavily against the quality of our overall life experience if it takes a position in the story our life whereby it leads us to redemption, self-discovery, becoming stronger, or some other good fortune. Fischer's move against this background is to identify individual intentional acts -- the sorts of things for which we might think we are morally responsible -- as being components of this sort of narrative self-expression. His conclusion is that the foundation of moral responsibility may lie not so much in the fact that we are taking one specific action or another as it does in the fact that we are responsible for the way in which we go about creating the story of our lives.

¹³⁴ Fischer, *supra* n.131, at 290.

¹³⁵ See generally J. David Velleman, "Well-Being and Time", 72 PAC. PHIL. QUART. 48 (1991).

I think something very similar – though not identical – is going on with how we go about creating not just the story of our lives, but how we go about shaping and/or becoming our identity over time. It's not clear that the narrative structure of life that Velleman and Fischer invoke is quite the same thing as the sense of identity we've invoked here, but there are similarities. They both are a type of idea against which our loves and projects, our successes and failures, make a certain coherent sense. If there is a difference, it may be that identity is more of an idea of the person you are *right now* -- and perhaps it gains its status as a story as it grows and changes over time. Identity might even be properly said to be the "story so far", so that when we reach the end of the story¹³⁶ our identity just is our story. Perhaps "our story" goes beyond our conscious conception of self and includes things that we've forgotten. The specifics aren't entirely relevant. The point is that *who we are* is itself a sort of project in which we are engaged, one that we are free to approach with more or less vigor, care, and engagement. For some people (myself included) identity is a carefully guarded, constantly maintained thing. For others, such as one of my colleagues who insists he doesn't think much about what sort of person he is, it may be a much looser thing.

So in Fischer's first case, the sculptor makes the statue. It's his statue, and it tells us something about him because it is an expression of his artistry. In the second case, some other forces conspire to make the statue.¹³⁷ What we are to take away from this (and it seems intuitively plausible) is that the first statue has a different sort of meaning vis-a-vis the life of the sculptor, based on its own history (i.e., that the sculptor himself made it). The second statue doesn't tell us

¹³⁶ Velleman invites us to consider that the one strand of common thinking about death as a balancing of future harms and goods is incorrect, and that it is not about trying to "cash out" with the highest balance of net pleasure, but rather more akin to finding a good end to a story. *Id.* at 66.

¹³⁷ For clarity, let's assume that the statue's being overdetermined does not trace its causal origins to the sculptor's vision. The problem becomes a little murkier if we allow that whatever forces are at work around the second statue are somehow guided or caused by the fact that the artist in particular is the *sort* of person who would make such a statue, even if he doesn't make it himself.

anything about the sculptor, at least not anything about his creative processes, because they weren't engaged at all. There's no story to tell.

The analogy to art, however, breaks down to the extent that the artist in Fischer's case can be separated from the externally-determined statue entirely; with alterations to one's identity, that sort of disconnect simply isn't possible. Accordingly, I think that the analysis shouldn't be one of actual causal interaction, but one that focuses on whether the newer identity *can be seen* as a "natural" extension of, or expression of, the pre-existing identity. The analogy of the sculptor, then, would be mapped not onto internally and externally caused identities, but to identities that are consistent with pre-existing personality, and identities that are not. In the former case, a story can be told. In the latter, a coherent narrative is impossible.

To clarify how this works with respect to indoctrination, let us once more take up the Derivative Opera example from Chapter 1.

The Derivative Opera Case Revisited. A brief recap of the case: I can't stand opera, but I love my wife. I recognize that my marriage and my life will be happier if I can come to genuinely love opera. So I arrange to be indoctrinated with opera-regarding values. The process is a success, and I end up truly, genuinely loving opera.

We can see expression at work here: if I arrange to be indoctrinated into becoming the sort of person who loves opera because I love my wife, then there is a sense in which my subsequent state (being an opera lover) is itself an expression of my love for my wife. My values have, in one sense, drastically changed: I used to hate opera, and now I love it. That's a striking deviation with respect to my prior attitudes about opera. But at the same time, it's *not* so much of a deviation from who I was, because I previously possessed other values which were strongly pointing me towards coming to love opera. My coming to possess opera-regarding values (and thus my holding those values) is in this sense a direct expression of who I was before. The meaning of those values goes

beyond the meaning that they have simply because I possess them; there is a story to why I have them that involves who I am as a person. My opera-regarding values are freestanding, but they are connected to my prior self in a way that *makes sense*.

Contrast this with a situation where I hate opera, am filled with resolve that it is worthless, and do not have any reason to want to appreciate it. Let us imagine that I am surreptitiously subjected to deviant indoctrination; I am given opera-regarding values even though nothing in my own identity gives me any reason to pursue them. (Indeed, quite the opposite is the case: I seem to have every reason to want to go on disliking that which I dislike.) To keep the example clean, let us posit that in this process no violence is done to me, and nothing is obviously done against over my objection. Nevertheless, I am being inexorably indoctrinated by someone else to become an opera lover. We can attribute a tremendous amount of skill, patience, and subtlety to our indoctrinator -- as much as is necessary to avoid method-based issues.

In either case, the result is descriptively the same: I hold opera-regarding values and believe things like, "Opera is the greatest form of art". If you ask either version of me if I love opera, I will answer "yes," and smile happily as I order my Magic Flute tickets. But in the second situation, like Fischer's second sculpture, there is no way in which we can sensibly talk about my coming to hold opera-regarding values being an expression of my pre-existing values. I had almost nothing to do with the process, save as a sort of inert medium. Now, it's true that my new values "belong" to me and are sincerely held; the whole point of indoctrination, after all is to ensure that this is the case, and that's why the Authentic Subject Problem is a *problem*. But the state of my having the values I do, instead of being an expression of who I want to be, is become the expression of someone else's values, namely, of the indoctrinator's values.

So the question now is this: does the fact that my values are not themselves an expression of my pre-existing values render them "inauthentic" and cut off my ability to engage in meaningful

projects and activities from that point on? It seems at least possible that despite any inauthenticity in my possession of opera-regarding values, my present pursuit of opera itself would still be authentic. But perhaps there is a way of looking at this situation which will allow us to come to a contrary conclusion.

The evaluating individual, I have argued above, is the fundamental source of objective value (at least in terms of meaningfulness). What makes my projects valuable and meaningful in the first place is that they are *mine and I value them*. And what makes them even more valuable is that others value them as well. Thus, when I set out to pursue some activity, what allows that activity to be meaningful is in part that it is a reflection of my identity, of my particular personhood.¹³⁸

When an indoctrinator introduces deviant values into my identity, however, my identity is being altered in a way that is fairly permanent and resistant to change. (This is the definition of indoctrination.) When this takes place in a way that is substantially at variance with my existing values, the result is that, to a certain extent, I'm not being expressed through the projects in which I am engaging. Indeed, if the indoctrination is "deviant", then my newfound projects are somehow in conflict with my values, or at least the ones I used to hold.

There is then a sense in which the person now performing those projects isn't really me. I wouldn't go to the opera, but this new creature will, and he'll love it. And to the extent that pursuing opera-related projects might otherwise allow me to live a meaningful life, that meaning must necessarily fail because I am not "there" to be appreciated in my projects.

¹³⁸ Cuypers and Haji have advanced a theory that is vaguely similar – but different in important respects – to the one I propose here in order to determine when someone who has been subjected to indoctrination is "authentic". Their view is that what marks the difference between permissible and impermissible sorts of indoctrination is whether or not the indoctrination cuts off moral responsibility. This strikes me not so much as an explanation as a test – like litmus paper. Furthermore, they seem to think that moral responsibility requires some sort of substantive content in one's belief – perhaps an endorsement of critical self-evaluation. Thus, even a young child's "initial scheme" could be inauthentic where moral responsibility is concerned. See Stefaan E. Cuypers & Ishtiyaque Haji, *Education for Critical Thinking: Can it be non-indoctrinative?*, 38 EDUCATIONAL PHIL. AND THEORY 723 (2006). This article is taken up in much greater detail in Chapter 3. See *infra* n.211 *et seq.* and accompanying text.

The claim that deviant indoctrination makes me “not the same person” is likely to be met with some incredulity. I’ve already said that I don’t mean to give priority to a former “self” just on the basis of temporal precedent. Our identity, after all, changes all of the time without either our ceasing to be or our lives becoming meaningless. And there are obvious ways we can change that make our lives *more* meaningful. But if it’s not time-based, and if our identities change all the time, why on Earth would I think that someone else’s changing them for us presents such a radically different situation? More importantly, why would I think that someone else’s changing them causes us not to be ourselves? The answer is the way in which the presence and actions of an indoctrinator affects the process.

When our identity changes in the “normal” course of our lives, it does so through the sort of dialogic processes that Taylor describes. We come to new realizations, refine our values and opinions, and work to understand what is important to us. We have experiences, love, hate, suffer, and rejoice. We play a central (though not exclusive) role in the development of our identity, and that identity is as a result a part of the continuing story of who we are.¹³⁹ Our resulting identity is considered “ours” not because it happens to inhabit the same body, but because the person we were *became* the person we are now organically. A popular trope in cinema is the “body switch” – two people (often a child and a parent) swap bodies and live out a few days in the other person’s shoes. Such stories – as impossible as they are – confirm our intuitive sense that what matters to identity isn’t the body, but the memories, values, and sense of consciousness.

But when an indoctrinator instills a deviant belief in me, “I” – that is, the identity that is considered the seat of who I am – am totally excluded from the story of who I am becoming *to exactly the extent* to which the indoctrination is deviant. It is in this way that my identity – again,

¹³⁹ There are obviously instances in which we undergo radical personality or value shifts that aren’t explicable in this way. People slip into madness, have “Road to Damascus” moments, and are subjected to tremendous trauma that alter who they are. These sorts of situations are discussed below in Section 2.4.2.

to the extent that it is composed of deviant values that have been instilled – is no longer authentic. The dialogic process in which I am supposed to be a participant, in which I am supposed to express myself, has been replaced with a monologic process in which my role is entirely passive (an Aristotelian might say “material”). The resulting identity is inauthentic not just because we’re using the “wrong type of process” but because the particular values we are being given make the process one that prevents our new identity from being an expression of who we are.

I certainly don't mean that if I fall into the clutches of an indoctrinator that I'm not myself in *any* sense. Obviously I am: it's the same body, with the same memories, and perhaps even with many of the same values as before. I probably have a seamless flow of consciousness throughout the whole process. For many purposes – perhaps even most purposes – it's still me. But meaningfulness doesn't just require numeric identity or continuity of memory (although it very well may require those things). Meaningfulness, I hope I've demonstrated, entails that we are authentically expressing ourselves, and that our identity is being expressed in the world, and that we are in turn the recipients of appreciation for who we are as expressed in those projects that we value. That cannot happen if our values, and thus our identity, are not ours to begin with, for in those cases *we* are not the sources of objective value at all. Odysseus' men listen to his earlier orders not because they are his earlier orders, but because the commands that he be released do not come from him in any meaningful sense: they are the responses of a man in thrall to the Sirens' song. They know that what their commander – the person they love and respect – *really* wanted was to stay lashed to the mast. Fortunately, Odysseus will recover. The victim of indoctrination not only won't, but doesn't want to.

Thus, in the first case, where I come to unquestioningly hold opera-regarding values in order to improve my relationship with my wife, each and every time I go to the opera I am writing another part of the continuing story of my own life; each night out becomes an expression of my love for my

wife, one which is authentically mine. In the second case, where opera-regarding values are imposed on me without regard for my values, each night out for Verdi is a departure from my authentic values, not an expression of who *I* am but an expression of my indoctrinator's values and intentions.¹⁴⁰ My life, therefore, is less meaningful as a result, though it may appear to people who do not understand what has transpired that everything is just fine.

Even if I can't necessarily see what's going on from the inside, if someone who understands what has happened looks at me from the outside, they can recognize it. I said earlier that there is a distinction between the fact of living a meaningful life and the subjective experience of seeing that life as meaningful. The deviantly indoctrinated subject can feel like his life has meaning, but in fact it does not – not for the subject, at any rate. And the subject's blindness to this problem, his *participation* in it, is just another reason to think that deviant indoctrination is a most ghastly sort of harm.

2.4.2. Degree of Variance as the Measure for Harm

The harm of deviant indoctrination, then, is that my life now involves projects that produce no meaning for me, projects that don't make sense within my life story and which don't help me express my identity in an authentic way. But there is obviously a sense in which *some* identity is defined, and its operations seem authentic enough. The question is whether that identity is the same person we started with. I said above that the answer was "no", but intuitively that seems wrong. If I'm subjected to some minor bit of indoctrination, it certainly might seem that I'm the same person, and that my life is every bit as meaningful as it was before. If I'm indoctrinated to believe that, say, strawberry ice cream is the best sort of ice cream, and that ice cream is good, then I'm still going to be *me*, our common sense tells us. I'll just be me-who-likes strawberry ice cream.

¹⁴⁰ I do not mean to say that my indoctrinator must hold the values that he implants in me. That's not the sense in which his values are being expressed, and whether or not he enjoys opera is likely irrelevant.

So if it is still me, where's the harm? If it's still me, how can I argue that my identity has changed significantly enough to warrant calling my projects "meaningless"? The answer, I think, is that we're really sloppy with identity -- but not condemnably so. It's a practical sort of sloppiness.

The alteration of identity that I discussed above is, I think it is safe to say, scalar. There are major changes, and minor changes. And it's a fact about life that we go on as best we can, and we manage with whatever injuries and changes have occurred. Maybe my involvement with strawberry ice cream detracts from the meaningfulness of my life, but it's in a small way, and we go on. My friends still think of me as me, and my students still think of me as me. Sometimes people – seemingly for no reason at all – radically change their personalities and values. “Road to Damascus” moments do happen – and the truth is that they can put *tremendous* strain on relationships with friends, relatives, and spouses, who are left to try to come to terms with the “new person” in their lives.¹⁴¹ But most often, the edges get smoothed out and people adapt, just like we heal from minor cuts and scrapes.

But the fact that we heal, the fact that we go on, doesn't mean that we weren't injured in the first place. And the fact that we press on and revise our identities does not mean that the interference of the deviant indoctrinator hasn't robbed us of authenticity and meaningfulness. To the extent that I'm out there every week eating strawberry ice cream (something I assure you I don't enjoy except in particularly odd moods) I'm not myself; I'm the creature of my indoctrinator.

The harm becomes obvious if I fall into the hands of a master indoctrinator with broad ambitions for how to control my life. If I am turned into a zealous worshiper of Gozer the Gozerian, and subsequently devote the greater part of my life towards His Dark Purposes, then

¹⁴¹ In such cases, even if we can't make sense of it, we usually assume that there's some story in the background that makes sense. Indeed, we may suspect that it wasn't an epiphany at all, but that there is an indoctrinator of some sort lurking in the psychological wings. “Who have you been talking to?” we might ask. Of course, if the answer is “God,” well... if God has chosen to indoctrinate someone, I suppose all we can do is say that it's for the best.

there's every possibility that my acquaintances will look at me with my new values and say, "That's not Mike." And there's an important sense in which they'd be *right*. They might even be right (in that same sense) if they looked at the indoctrinator and said, "You killed him!" My identity -- such as it can be referred to as mine throughout the process -- will have undergone massive, discontinuous alterations. The answer to the broad question, "What sort of person are you?" can now be answered by simply saying that I am a Gozerian. ***And the only story in which it makes meaningful sense to talk about how I came to be such a person doesn't actually involve me at all.***

I put that last bit in bold italics because it really gets to the heart of my project in this chapter -- to explain why and how it is that deviant indoctrination robs us of meaningfulness. Deviant indoctrination, to a lesser or greater extent depending on the specifics of each instance, makes us into something like spectators in our own lives, rather than participants. This is every bit as true in the cases of minor, even trivial indoctrination like my being made into a lover of strawberry ice cream. But in such a mundane situation the *harm* isn't as great, both because my ice cream preferences are not a "core" part of my identity and because the kinds of activities and projects that my ice cream preferences motivate aren't usually the sorts of things that involve objective value of the type Wolf requires. By going out for a cone of the pink stuff, I'm not likely to be missing out on much, and my friends aren't likely to care enough to take me to professional deprogrammers. They might if I was turned into a Gozerian; they'd properly think that, since I am important to them, they should act to get me "back".¹⁴²

¹⁴² I want to flag an issue here for discussion in later chapters. My friends here are trying to get me "back". This is a very different situation than attempting to deprogram, say, a young child who was *raised* as a Gozerian. For such a child, we might think that who he genuinely is *is* the Gozerian, and that it is the deprogramming, however well-intentioned and even beneficial it might be, that is serving as deviant (and thus meaning-destroying) indoctrination.

Where the newfound values are either intrusive and dominating, or where the values with which they are incompatible (and which they thus "replace" if the indoctrination is successful) are central to one's identity, the particular harm of indoctrination is greater, the loss of authenticity more severe. With intrusive and dominating values, while the subject may nominally keep much of his authentic identity, in practical terms that retained self gets overrun by the strength of the instilled values. I might still like all the things I liked before, but there's *no time* for them because I've got to go clean Gozer's altar. I may still say, when asked, that I love my wife, but that means much less than it did before, because now I'm a Gozerian first and a husband a distant second. In the other situation, where the values are truly incompatible in substantive terms – going from being an individualistic pacifist to a conformist soldier, for instance – the authentic identity is necessarily destroyed to make room for the indoctrinator's chosen values.¹⁴³

The most harmful sorts of indoctrination probably involve both of these processes -- cases where a subject has certain strongly-held values, and is then transformed into a creature with values that are just as strongly held, but which are the antithesis of the prior values. This may be the worst sort of fate that a person can endure, the sort of thing that we recoil from in absolute horror.¹⁴⁴ Authenticity – that is, the continuous sense of identity that we have – may be more important to personhood than autonomy is. (Snails, after all, have a certain degree of “autonomy”.) Can you imagine anything worse than to have *who you are* slip from your control? The fact that indoctrination is capable of doing this to people (even if it is exceedingly rare and difficult to pull off) is, I suspect, precisely why indoctrination has such a poor reputation.

¹⁴³ There's obviously a way in which these two different types of deviant indoctrination can be seen, at least in certain situations, as really one and the same: my devotion to my wife *is supposed to be exclusively important*. That any value would approach it in importance is itself a substantive conflict, in a sense.

¹⁴⁴ Frank Herbert put it quite nicely in *Dune Messiah* when he had one of his characters intone, "A creature who has spent his life creating one particular representation of his selfdom will die rather than become the antithesis of that representation."

2.4.3. Consistency and Indifference

I think we can all agree that having your values system re-written wholesale into something that is the exact opposite is a terrible thing, and that one's life from that point on would be distinctly less meaningful. (Which isn't to say that the new person created in your body wouldn't have a meaningful life; it just wouldn't be you in any meaningful sense.) But the more interesting question, I think, is what we should think about cases of indoctrination that are neither of the explicitly self-guided sort discussed in Chapter 1, nor deviant and therefore harmful. What should we think about the meaningfulness of someone's life when they have been subjected to indoctrination that gives them values that are *consistent* with what they held previously, but which they did not ask for, did not seek, and to which they did not consent? And what about a subject who has no values at stake in the process, so is entirely indifferent to the values being instilled? I hope that the answers to these questions will help flesh out the account of indoctrination's harm that I am putting forward.

Fischer's sculptor, recall, *isn't* expressed when the sculpture is made without his participation. We might think that, correspondingly, the mere fact of indoctrination alone is enough to rob us of authenticity just because it cuts us out of the picture, and we don't have a role in the story of how we came to our new values. Even when it *isn't* deviant, a reckless indoctrinator who doesn't pay any attention to our previous values isn't leaving any room for those values to play any sort of causative role in the resulting identity.

I think that whether or not a subject of indoctrination is deprived of having a role in the formation of their own values, though, is going to depend on the sense in which he or she takes himself to have a role. Identity is, as Kierkegaard pointed out, a sort of reflection of itself. We cannot have that taken away from us which we never possessed, and if we are indifferent to whether we are a certain sort of person or not, then our becoming or failing to become that sort of person does not say anything about us anyway. Because we've spent so much time analogizing identity

definition to art, let's not break with tradition. I'd like us to consider the four situations below, bearing in mind that I'm using art as an analogy for indoctrination. It's a useful approach because with art, the artist is still around to express his or her opinion about the interference with his or her work in a sense in which an indoctrinated subject simply isn't available:

Situation A: Deviant Interference by Michael. Imagine that you're sitting in an art studio attempting to paint a portrait. You've got an image in your head of what it is you want to paint, but you're having trouble executing it. It's not going quite well, and your brow is beginning to ache from the furrows, your cheeks from the disappointed frowns. In walks an acquaintance of yours. Let's call him Michael. Michael walks over to you and peers at the painting you're working on. He hmms softly to himself, and dips his finger into the red paint on your palette. He then makes a few smudgy streaks across the painting and says, "There you go."

You're incensed, and you scream out "YOU RUINED IT!" Michael is a jerk. This is a fairly straightforward analogy for deviant indoctrination. I include it only for contrast.

Situation B: Consistent Interference by Kristina Accepted. You're in the same room, painting the same painting. In walks an acquaintance of yours. Let's call this one Kristina. Kristina dips her finger into some red paint, looks carefully at the painting, and without so much as a by your leave, smears some red across the painting. "There you go," she says.

You start to sputter in protest and outrage, but then you realize: Kristina has fixed the problem in the painting that was vexing you so. It's what it *should* be, that is, what you wanted it to be. Elated, you cry out, "THAT'S IT!" Kristina's a hero.

Situation C: Consistent Interference by Calvin Rejected. You're in the same room, painting the same painting. In walks an acquaintance of yours. Let's call this one Calvin. Calvin dips his finger into some red paint, looks carefully at the painting, and chuckles. "I see what you're doing," he says, and he smears some red across the painting, the exact same pattern that Kristina made in Situation B.

You instantly recognize that Calvin's understood exactly what you were up to, and that he's done precisely what you intended to do. You feel your gut drop, scream "I cannot believe you took that away from me!" and storm out. Calvin's a jerk.

Situation D: Indifference and Adam. You're once more in the same room, painting the same painting. In walks an acquaintance of yours. Let's call this one Adam. Adam dips his finger into some red paint and proceeds to dab a bit here and there. You think he probably finished what you had in mind, but you don't care. You shrug, say, "I was just burning time until the Lakers game comes on. Whatever."

Now, putting Michael aside – he’s pretty clearly doing something wrong and stands in the role of the deviant indoctrinator – let’s consider each of these cases.

Kristina. I think our intuitions are that Kristina's done something *right* by you, that she hasn't actually harmed you at all.¹⁴⁵ You weren't looking for the help, and you didn't actively want the help, but you're overjoyed at the results, because the results are exactly what you were interested in. Uninvited, she's given you assistance with your project. Now, there are two possibilities. The first is that Kristina was just smearing paint at random, and happened to get *very* lucky. The second possibility, and the more likely one, is that Kristina was sussing out what you were trying to do before she inserted herself into the process. In other words, she was "keyed into" the same vision of the painting that you had, and that vision guided her finger strokes. In this sense, it’s still your vision that is being expressed, despite the fact that Kristina did the painting. But the distinction is a trivial one in terms of whether there is a harm or not: what is expressed is your vision.

The analogy is, I think, fairly straightforward: an indoctrinator who unwittingly helps someone become the sort of person they really want to be *hasn't* harmed them in terms of their ability to live a meaningful life. Either they've taken the subject's values and self-guidance projects into account, in which case the subsequently defined identity is still an expression of the prior identity in a fairly obvious way, or they've acted recklessly but managed to work a kind of benefit despite themselves. With such a reckless indoctrinator, the actual story of how the subject comes to their values still doesn't seem to involve the subject in any causative way... but it is at least possible to *tell* such a story, owing to the fact that the values are, in fact, perfectly compatible with the identity

¹⁴⁵ Obviously one could argue that Kristina oughtn't go around messing with other people's paintings like this, that it's a bad policy. But those concerns are, I think, primarily *prudential* concerns. If we could be guaranteed that the person who was going to break into our house was just going to do the dishes and take out the trash, we wouldn't care. We'd probably be grateful. But we can't have that sort of guarantee, so we're extremely unsettled when someone breaks into the house, even if all that happens is the dishes get done and the trash gets taken out. We freak out; we feel violated; we wonder about what might have happened. I'm not interested in this paper in whether there are moral norms that govern whether we should take certain sorts of risks; I'm just interested in the harms that actually do result.

that was actually desired *ex ante*. And if we are still concerned about the reckless indoctrinator, it is likely a *prudential* worry that, while he didn't cause any harm this time, next time we might not be so lucky.

Calvin. Calvin, on the other hand, seems to have done *exactly* what Kristina did, but he's clearly doing something wrong. How is that possible? Kristina was supporting your project, true, but in that case, your "project" was just the painting's completion. There is a difference between pursuing a project for its own sake, and pursuing it for the sake of having accomplished it yourself. In the former situations, you welcome (or would welcome) assistance and guidance if it helps you draw closer to your goal. In the latter situations, however, the *whole point* of the project is doing it (or having done it) yourself. The goal is not just the result, but the state of being in a certain relationship with the result. The most obvious analogy to identity can be seen in the stereotypical teenager who is so dead-set on being his or her "own" person that they bristle at the slightest sign of any interference or control, no matter how well-meaning, inoffensive, or even in line with their values. They'll even engage in self-destructive or counter-productive behavior just so it's "genuinely" theirs.¹⁴⁶

Oddly enough, if your conception of your project involves having accomplished it yourself, then what Calvin has done seems *worse* than what Michael did, even though Calvin has given you "what you wanted". In the world of art, you cannot "unsee" what Calvin created, and it may *never* feel like it's really yours, even if you burn the painting and start from scratch. By analogy, we might think that there is a sort of "non-deviant" indoctrination (by which I strictly mean non-deviant only with respect to the final product, not to the process) can actually be just as bad (and possibly even

¹⁴⁶ There is, I think, an important sense in which this sort of typically independent adolescent attitude may be important to ensuring that the individual's side of the dialogic process ends up with an important say. That Taylor takes our culture to have embraced it wholesale, out of proportion with its actual role, may have something to do with what many pundits, thinkers, public intellectuals, and armchair sociologists have said about the "infantilization" of our culture.

worse) than more typically, “all-in” deviant indoctrination, that leaves you wondering which parts of you are “really” yours.

The lesson to take away from this is, I think, that the degree to which indoctrination is deviant does not simply depend on the degree to which the final instilled values conflict with the pre-existing values with respect to the subject matter of those values. It’s not enough that I wanted to become an opera lover, and you happened to make me one. Rather, the question of whether indoctrination is deviant or not depends critically on an evaluation of the subject’s pre-existing values as a whole, and whether or not the person that emerges from the indoctrination is an expression of those values. In other words, if you want to indoctrinate me without doing harm, you may not assume that my values are guiding me to become an ice cream truck driver simply because I’m observed to be taking steps in that direction. You must first find out something more about me, about what I care about and why I’m pursuing what I’m pursuing, before you can know whether your indoctrination will be interfering with what I’m up to. I might be interested in becoming an ice cream truck driver *on my own*.

Adam. Finally, it's not clear at all that when Adam messes up your painting that there was any harm done at all, because it's not something that you particularly care about. The right analogy for this is probably not the person who doesn't care who they are -- for such a person likely does not exist -- but rather an indoctrinator who changes something about which the subject is indifferent, where the subject doesn't (or wouldn't) have any objections to the interference as such. If some indoctrinator makes me into someone who appreciates arugula, I might not really care. The fact is that I'm not a fan of arugula, but I don't particularly *dislike* it, either, and in any case there's very little of my identity caught up in not liking arugula. So long as my newly-instilled love of arugula isn't so strong that it actually interferes with my other projects, it doesn't seem like there's much harm at all,

if any.¹⁴⁷ I'm probably going to be upset because of the general affront to my autonomy, but the indoctrination *as such* isn't going to have done any real harm.

My point in this subsection is just to offer an illustrations of the sense in which I mean that new values are "divergent" from existing values, and to explain exactly what "deviant" indoctrination is. I also hope that I provided some pushback against the notion that indoctrination will always be harmful when it doesn't involve the explicit cooperation of the subject. To the extent that we humans go about guiding and ordering our values, we're working on a project. And indoctrinators, when they interfere with our values, are making lasting changes in the subject matter of that project. These alterations can be minor, such as the instilling of small affections or tendencies, or major, as in the case of religious cultists who commit to their leader body and soul. These alterations can also be more or less at odds with the pre-existing values and identity of the subject, assuming that the subject is such that they would care about the changes.

One thing about which I need to be perfectly clear is that the decisive issue in determining whether or not indoctrination is harmful in this way is *not* the subject's conscious consent. Consent is relevant to whether the subject's *autonomy* is being harmed, but it is not strictly relevant to the harm caused by the indoctrination. Rather, what is important is the compatibility of the instilled values with the pre-existing values. We might value consent in these matters as an issue of prudence, or even of polity; who wants an indoctrinator rummaging around their psyche rewriting things willy-nilly, after all? But the harm caused by deviant indoctrination is a harm of authenticity and meaning. With authenticity compromised, the subject's projects are not a reflection of her identity. If she is not expressed in her projects, then she cannot be *appreciated* in her projects, and her projects cannot then provide the basis for living a meaningful life. And that, I take it, is bad.

¹⁴⁷ The condition of it not interfering with my other projects is an important one, and one that may not be practically realizable. On the other hand, maybe it only interferes with projects about which I am similarly indifferent.

All of this is just to say that indoctrination is not permissible or impermissible *per se*. Rather, in assessing whether a given act of indoctrination is permissible or not – specifically insofar as our concern is with the act of indoctrination and not with the ancillary issues of content, method, or harms to autonomy – we need to look not only at what's being taught or instilled, but also at the identity and values of the person to whom the material is being taught, or in whom it is being instilled. The harm of indoctrination arises in the *interplay* between these two factors. While there may be good reasons to think that the particular values that are instilled may themselves make the case for impermissibility or permissibility (such as turning Mother Theresa into a serial killer or vice versa, one of which seems obviously preferable to the other), I hope that I have shown that there are good reasons also to think that the permissibility of indoctrination *per se* depends on the compatibility or variance that exists between the subject -- specifically, the subject's values and identity -- and the values being indoctrinated.

2.5. Neutral Causal Forces

I've stated that it is the presence of the indoctrinator that cuts off authenticity, and I've explained how authenticity can be undermined. But other than stating that a deviantly indoctrinated subject's actions are an expression of the indoctrinator, thus far I haven't really explained why it matters that the indoctrinator be present for authenticity to be cut off. The last thing I want to discuss in this Chapter is why deviant indoctrination robs us of meaningfulness in our lives, but similar sorts of processes that *don't* involve indoctrinator's doesn't. My project in this chapter is to articulate a harm that is unique to indoctrination. If you can be harmed in the same way by getting hit on the head, well, then either it's not unique to indoctrination after all, or indoctrination doesn't require indoctrinators. The latter was ruled out in Chapter 1, and the entire purpose of this Chapter was to describe a harm unique to indoctrination. So in this section I will explain why it is that

neutral causal forces that bring about the same states that indoctrinators bring about – including “deviant” states – don’t have the same effect on the meaningfulness of our lives.¹⁴⁸

I take it that one thing I do not need to address here is the effect of other people on our values where no indoctrination is taking place. Our interactions with others constantly subject us to pressures and expectations that result in our values’ changing, after all. Some of these values may not be perfectly compatible with who we thought we might be. For instance, there was a point in my life where I thought of myself both as an actor and a theatre aficionado, and could never have imagined (nor would have ever wanted) not to be a part of that world. But my values changed in this respect.

Nowadays (with some very important exceptions and with apologies to those of you in the theatre world about whom I care very deeply) I generally can’t stand “theatre people”.¹⁴⁹ This didn’t come about through indoctrination, but through my organic, dialogic interactions with people over the course of several years. I don’t think this counts as “deviation” though, because there is a way to tell this story in which what actually happened is that one of my values – my valuing the company of a certain type of person– came into direct conflict with my continuing to value myself as an actor and continuing to participate in certain types of activity. Our values come into conflict all of the time, and that one of my values won out over the others isn’t cause for any special alarm, any more than the fact that the love of my wife might triumph over my hatred of opera.

Similarly, there are stories we can tell about our interaction with neutral causal forces that might seem at first blush to be cases of deviation, but which are in an important sense merely the

¹⁴⁸ Gideon Yaffe has an interesting take on this question, one that he answers by claiming that it is the counterfactual propensity of indoctrinators to act to “cut off” their subject’s escape attempts that makes indoctrination at the hand of indoctrinators different than indoctrination at the hands of neutral causal forces. Because the indoctrinator is actually out to get you in a way that a rock, say, isn’t, your *freedom* to avoid indoctrination is limited by an indoctrinator who will react to you in a way that it simply isn’t by neutral causal forces. See Yaffe, *supra* n.13.

¹⁴⁹ I’m not saying that there is anything objectively wrong with theatre people, or even that I have good reason for not preferring their company.

triumph of one of our values over others. The real-world situations in which we live can “conspire” (in a metaphorical sense) to bring it about that values that were previously not in conflict are put to the choice. Perhaps you never imagined that you would face a conflict between your love of country and your love for your child, for instance. There is certainly nothing about the content of those values *themselves* that conflict. But our lives are dynamic places, and the terrain in which our values play out changes all the time.

Here’s a vivid example of what I’m talking about: imagine that my plane crashes in the jungle, and I spend the next five years fighting for my life against lions and tigers and bears. Under such conditions, I’m likely to develop some very new values. I might walk out of the jungle, five years later, convinced that the good life is a life of battle and blood. This could conceivably happen even if I started my stay in the jungle as a genteel, sophisticated, semi-pacifistic knitter of tea cozies. The trauma of five years of fighting for my life, of living from one adrenaline rush to the next, of learning to associate the taste of freshly killed, bloody meat with survival... all of these things could combine to turn me into a fairly ferocious, cunning, killing machine. This situation is clearly not indoctrination in any intentional sense; *pave* certain readings of Conrad, the jungle isn't *trying* to change me.

There is also a story that can be told about my new, “primal” values, one that makes sense and that involves me. The story would go something like this: while I valued being a cultivated, civilized, somewhat passive person, when the chips were down it turned out that what I *really* valued more than anything else was survival. I didn’t previously see my valuing my life to be in conflict with my valuing all the pretty, calm things in my life. But when events changed, and those values came into conflict, I discovered that what I really wanted was to live. Everything else became expendable to the degree that it didn't support and advance that value, including all the values I supposedly held so dear. So what I've become, we might think, is "really" me, and I haven't suffered

any harm at all in terms of a loss of authenticity (except perhaps to the extent that my new values are problematic in terms of their content and their connections to horizons of significance). My new primal values are just the expression of my old values, an expression of *me*.

Now the wrinkle: one can easily enough imagine a situation where I fell into the clutches of an indoctrinator who performed a similar sort of process on me and produced in me values identical to those produced by the jungle. Why should it matter whether I fell into the jungle by chance, and ran into the situations I did, or whether I was placed there by an indoctrinator who carefully manipulated matters? The first thing to notice is that, where I am put into the jungle by chance, there are *no other values* at play other than those I bring with me. It seems impossible, then, that I had any values externally imposed upon me. Where would they come from? But it's a different situation with indoctrinators, who by definition are in the business of "instilling" values.

But at the same time, it's not as if indoctrinators pick up a can of values at the local store and put those values into your head from the outside. The values the indoctrinator implants do not magically appear: they arise out of things you already value. The David Koreshes of the world take your need for approval and companionship and belonging, and transfer it onto themselves. The Big Brothers of the world take your fear of pain and use it as a hammer to make you betray everything that might stand between you and total obedience. The Hitler Youth Corps of the world never give you any other choice: they become your world at a time when you are young and vulnerable and desperately in need of some context within which to define yourself. So in a sense, indoctrinators are also giving voice to something within you, allowing that something within you to express itself. So to take the jungle example above, if we assume that it was possible for me to adopt "primal" values on my own, then how is my coming to them by way of an indoctrinator any less authentic?¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ One thing I do **not** want to do is end up telling a story whereby indoctrinators only undermine meaningfulness when they make you into something you couldn't otherwise have become.

There are, I think, two ways to answer this question.

The first isn't so much an argument as a simple observation. We are, as human beings, social creatures. Our lives are -- for better or worse -- shaped by the fact that we are surrounded by social hierarchies, competition for mates, etc. As such we are -- perhaps instinctively, but certainly keenly -- aware that there is an important difference between tripping on a stone and being *pushed* by another person. When you are subjected to an indoctrinator, there is a way in which your will -- your very identity -- has been subordinated to the will and values of the indoctrinator. Whether you are aware of it or not, when who you are is at once the product of someone's deliberate actions and at odds with who you otherwise wished to be, there is a sense in which you are that person's creature and subordinate to their will. To be subject to indoctrination by someone is to have your values subordinated to theirs, in the strictest sense of the word: your proposed ordering of values takes a back seat to the ordering preferred by the indoctrinator. In this way, being indoctrinated, or for that matter, being slapped in the face, involves an exercise of interpersonal control and power in a way that being caught in the jungle or walking into a wall just doesn't.¹⁵¹ I don't want to cast this as a problem of freedom; it need not be. It's a matter of dignity and social relationships. An indoctrinator makes you "less than" in a significant way.

But that's also not, taken at face value, a harm that is unique to indoctrination. Indeed, it sounds like a harm against autonomy. We get subordinated all the time, in any number of ways. No, what separates a "neutral" situation from an identical situation involving the intention of an indoctrinator is that the sort of subordination that is going on is a subordination of *values*, not just of will or of social position. A subject who has been subject to deviant indoctrination hasn't just been put into a different place in the pecking order (although it may involve such things). What has

¹⁵¹ Also recall that, in order to be "deviant", the indoctrination in question has to be of the sort that is inconsistent with the subject's pre-existing values. If the subject is of a particularly submissive sort, then making them into your creature doesn't seem to have caused any harm in terms of authenticity at all.

occurred is that the indoctrinator has turned the subject's very identity into a tool for his or her own purposes (whether those purposes are as capricious as mere amusement, or more instrumental and/or ideologically charged).

Insofar as the subject has been deviantly indoctrinated, his or her very identity is an expression of the indoctrinator; the subject is a piece of art, not a person who neither generates value of his own nor whose values express who he is. The presence of the indoctrinator and the role that his or her own values and projects play in who the subject has become serve to block the subject's own expression: they "take over", because where indoctrination is *deviant*, where you say "go east" and the indoctrinator says "go west", there is only room for one person to be in charge. If you just get hit on the head randomly and change from heading east to heading west, there's no voice calling for you to go the other way.

I said earlier that I wasn't interested in writing about moral responsibility as such. That's true, but it might have been misleading. Authentic expression, I think, functions in a way that is very similar to moral responsibility. The responsibility of one person can, in certain conditions, supervene on the responsibility of another: if I am controlling your actions, then really it's me that is responsible for what you've done. Certainly there are ways in which we can both be responsible for your actions. But that sort of joint responsibility does not obtain where I've destroyed or undermined your agency in some way.

Likewise, it's entirely possible for someone who has been subjected to indoctrination to live their lives in such a way that they are an expression of both their own will and values as well as an expression of their indoctrinator's. That was one of the conclusions of the first chapter. But in situations where the indoctrination is deviant, we already know that the subject's ability to "express" themselves has been cut off. The indoctrinator's will and values are (because the indoctrination was a success) being expressed in an unchallenged way.

You can live your life as an expression of who you are. You can live your life in such a way that it expresses the value of several people – and indeed, commitment to horizons of significance may require this. But what you cannot do is be cause to live your life in such a way that it is antithetical to your values and have it yet remain an expression of who you are in any meaningful sense.

2.6. Conclusion

I've tried to show that when indoctrination is harmful, in virtue of its indoctrinative effects and not in virtue of any contingent or accidental characteristics, it is harmful to the extent that the newly instilled values are in opposition to and/or at odds with the pre-existing values of the subject. The reason this counts as a harm, and not simply as a change, is that to the extent that indoctrination is deviant in this way, it cuts off the continuity of a person's identity and robs them of an opportunity to be authentically who they are. An identity that emerges in this fashion, without having been subject to the “input” of the subject’s pre-existing values, cannot pursue meaningful projects in a robust sense, because the projects that they pursue will not be "authentically" their own. Such a subject is not expressed in his or her projects.

A life without meaningful projects, or even a life with fewer meaningful projects, is a less meaningful life, and a life that is less worth living. It would be a rare sort of person who would want to go on living if some intelligence diametrically opposed to all that they held dear took up permanent residence in their head. Most people, I suspect, would rather die -- and they'd rather die because they've lost something vital.

And when this is done intentionally to them, well, that seems like an impermissible harm in anyone's book. That, at least, is what I hope I've managed to convey.

CHAPTER 3: **The Role of Indoctrination in Education**

3.1. Introduction

Thus far, my focus has been primarily on indoctrination: its nature, operation, permissibility, and resultant harms. I've offered an account on which indoctrination is defined in great part in terms of its effect on the values of the subject, and on which indoctrination's peculiar sort of harm arises from inconsistencies or incompatibilities between the values to be imposed and the subject's existing values. That harm is characterized not in terms of autonomy, but in terms of authenticity – in terms of a person's identity being a genuine expression of who he or she is. In this chapter, I want to move the conversation away from indoctrination as an isolated practice, and look at the way it functions within one of its most treacherous contexts: institutional education systems such as public schools. As I said at the outset of the Chapter 1, indoctrination and education are conceptually linked, and although there is disagreement about the exact nature of their relationship it would be miserly to examine the former without talking about the latter.

It's not particularly contentious to acknowledge that there is – or at least may be – a necessary role for indoctrination to play in a proper education, particularly in its early stages.¹⁵² I indicated at the beginning of Chapter 1 that I wanted to put that issue aside, so as to get a clearer look at what was going on with indoctrination and its bad reputation. But now we should return to it. I hope flesh out an account of how and why indoctrination's role is critically necessary to education – not just in terms of teaching the youngest of children, but perhaps even for the proper

¹⁵² See *infra*, n.187-193 and accompanying text.

education of students of older ages as well. Specifically, what I want to argue is that institutional education – and very likely education more generally – has as one of its more important “ends” the development of a student’s ability to engage in meaningful activities within one’s social community. Put another way, when an educational system is doing the job it *should* do, it is helping its students live meaningful lives. Drawing on the discussions of meaningfulness and authenticity in Chapter 2, I will describe how, when education goes “right”, a student is initiated into the values of his or her community in such a way as to afford a workable and authentic social identity. This isn’t all education does, of course, but it is, I think, a *necessary* and motivating aspect of the process.

I will also argue that education, viewed this way, necessarily involves indoctrination as I’ve described it: indeed, to a large extent that’s the *point* of education. Moreover, I want to show that many critiques of various institutional educational systems and approaches – particularly Progressive and radical critiques of the “traditional” model of education – can be understood as attacks on educational processes that *fail* to provide the student with the sort of authentic identity that gives its holder the potential for a more meaningful life.

I don’t want to make indoctrination sound like it’s an unqualifiedly wonderful thing; obviously, it is a dangerous tool prone to terrible abuse. And if it is to be employed not merely on an individual basis, but systematically through an educational institution, the potential dangers are magnified; this is especially true given the tendency of many institutional educational systems to attempt to “standardize” their pupils.

My focus on *institutional* education is quite deliberate. To talk of education generally is to get caught up in a very broad discussion that is more or less co-extensive with “learning”, and which can conceivably cover just about any process or experience by which a person comes to understand or believe something in a new or different way. Even in the context of one person’s “teaching” another (and putting aside whether someone can really be “self-taught”, properly speaking) there still

exists a tremendous number of variations on the teacher-student relationship, up to and including a parent helping his child learn to walk. But when we speak of institutional education, we are speaking of a society's formalized and systematic undertaking to educate its members -- most notably but not exclusively its youngest members. Institutions of education, whether they are schools for children or universities for young adults, have as their goal the preparation of their students for living some specific sort of life. The sort of life that is intended can vary tremendously, from the very general (as in the case of elementary schools) to the highly specific (as in the case of a law school), but it is necessary that there be a sort of common picture, a "type" of student that is sought to be produced.

One of the benefits of looking at these institutional settings is that we are presented with the execution of a deliberate, intentional process (teaching) undertaken by an identifiable group of actors (teachers), and aimed at a specific class of subjects (students). The focused, outcome-based nature of a "school" will make it easier to see where indoctrination -- also a deliberate, focused activity -- fits into things. Much of my discussion herein is likely applicable to educational processes outside of the institutional setting, but I will content myself with the lower-hanging fruit, as it were.

This Chapter will proceed in three broad strokes. First, in Section 3.2, I will look at what it is that schools are up to. Relying on some established accounts of education's fundamental nature, I will argue that equipping students with the ability to live a meaningful life is a proper end of institutional education. More specifically, I will show that schools -- if they are to accomplish this goal -- must take it as one of their purposes to initiate students to the "cultural discourse" of their society. The purpose of education, I argue, must include the goal that we make our children "one of us".

Armed with this view of education, I should be able to quickly explain in Section 3.3 why indoctrination is necessary to fulfilling this goal of education. The balance of Section 3.3 will be taken up dealing with two specific problems for my account that emerge from the philosophical

literature. First, I will look at why it is that my endorsement of indoctrination in education does not run afoul of “radical” progressive critiques of modern education. Second, I will try to resolve the seeming tension between the account I am advancing and a group of views – spearheaded by none other than John Dewey – that sees indoctrination as fundamentally subversive of a properly democratic education.

Finally, in Section 3.4, I will deal with what I take as the greatest opponent to my account: the autonomy-based objection to indoctrination (and, in a sense, to the view of education I am advancing) that can be made under Joel Feinberg’s well-known “Open Future” argument. By the end, I hope I will have shown that indoctrination – the sort we usually think of as bad – has a place in a system of education, even if its deployment is like undertaking to walk a moral tightrope – something that requires great care and attention.

3.2. A Proper End of Education

In this section, I am going to advance the view that one of the fundamental and necessary ends of a proper education is giving students the capacity to live meaningful lives.

Immediately, we should note that talking about “ends” or “aims” in education is tricky business. The first distinction that needs to be made, I think, is between *proper* ends and *improper* ends, for education is the sort of activity that submits itself readily to this sort of evaluation.¹⁵³

There doesn’t seem much question that if I raise a group of children to be my own personal sex-slaves, then while what I am doing is unquestionably “educative” in some loose sense it is also

¹⁵³ We should also be mindful to keep separate the descriptive, functional aims or ends of some particular educational system, on the one hand, and the more normatively charged ends that we think a proper educational system *in general* should be pursuing, on the other. A great deal of what has been written about education in philosophy has been specifically about how these two notions of “end” can easily blur into each other, to the detriment of students. Dewey, for instance, speaks at length about how a school’s instrumental aims – the specific curriculum that it is teaching, for instance – can come to dominate and even replace the inherent ends of educational activity more broadly. In such cases, the lesson-plan becomes its own goal, rather than the means to some more abstracted, proper purpose.

manifestly improper. What's more, there's something objective to the standard that is being applied; it seems impossible that this repulsive sort of education could be made proper simply by virtue of my seizing control of society and bringing my "teachings" into an organized school system.

So what are the proper ends of education – particularly of the sort of initial, institutional education that our modern Western societies have decided should serve as the basis for our children's early lives? It's a big question: Plato, Augustine, Mill, Marx, Dewey, Freire, Peters and Brighouse are – taken all together – just the very beginning of what's been said on the topic. Indeed, the very concept of education's "ends" has been called into question, at least inasmuch as the education is thought to be a sort of instrumental good.¹⁵⁴ Still, it seems like there should, at least, be some highly generalized principles that describe the sorts of things toward which we think those engaged in "education" should be working toward.

As I said above, my goal in this section is to argue for just one such principle: that a proper education must necessarily take as its object or aim the expansion of a student's ability to engage in meaningful¹⁵⁵ activities, and thus live a fulfilled life. I don't believe that this is a seriously controversial claim, and I don't expect that establishing it will take much in the way of philosophical arm-twisting. I am not saying that this is the only goal of education, or even that it's the most important goal – just that it is both an important and a necessary one. Still, it's a positive claim, so some explanation and even a bit of justification is probably in order.

¹⁵⁴ See generally R.S. Peters, "The Philosophy of Education", in *THE STUDY OF EDUCATION* 59 (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1966, J.W. Tibble, ed.) at 71 ("Failure to realize that 'ends' or standards are built into the notion of 'being educated' as an achievement has led people to search mistakenly for 'aims of education' which are extrinsic to it.").

¹⁵⁵ If it is not obvious, when I say "meaningful activities" I am invoking the discussions of the last two Chapters – especially Chapter 2. To briefly revisit our definitions: to engage in meaningful activities is to engage in an activity that one sees, subjectively, as valuable – and which is also seen by others as valuable. In this way, the activity serves as a way to authentically express who one is, and to have that self be recognized and appreciated by others.

Let's start by noting that I'm not the only person who thinks this (though that hardly makes it true). Michael Bonnett and Stefaan Cuypers have already said something very, very similar to what I'd like to assert. The following tortured bit of prose is from a discussion of how Charles Taylor's notions of authenticity might be thought to apply to the practices of education:

[I]t might at least be said that it is an important goal of education to facilitate such permeation of the personal by the public in order to enhance the dimension of intersubjective agreement in which the demands of shared norms can be felt, experience can be checked, and certain kinds of arbitrariness can be combated – provided, that is, that such norms and standards are presented in a way that refines and maybe changes, but does not simply overwhelm or displace without engagement, the learner's own view.¹⁵⁶

If I may attempt a translation, “Enhance the dimension of intersubjective agreement in which the demands of shared norms can be felt” means, I take it, something like, “Get people more or less on the same page regarding the values to which they are committed.” The combatting of “arbitrariness” seems to be a reference to Taylor's worry about inauthenticity, or being disconnected from “horizons of significance”. Those undertaking a proper education should, on this account, work strenuously to avoid this. Finally, the worry about overwhelming or displacing the learner's own view is, I take it, an expression of worry about a type of “bad” indoctrination – although that worry is neither very fleshed out nor explicit.

Bonnett and Cuypers are, like me, taking Taylor's positions about authenticity as a starting point, and their conclusion is (generally speaking) that those undertaking to educate should respect the authenticity of students, and see the students' organic engagement with the material as the only way to promote that authenticity; this approach, they argue, should be contrasted with both

¹⁵⁶ Michael Bonnett and Stefaan Cuypers, “Autonomy and Authenticity in Education”, in *THE BLACKWELL GUIDE TO PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION* 326 (Blake, Smeyers, Smith & Standish, eds., Blackwell 2003) at 332. It's possible to see this entire dissertation project as fleshing out and supporting this sentence, at least from a certain point of view. One could easily see my account of deviant indoctrination as an account of a limitation on values education such that the learner's own view is not “overwhelmed or displaced.”

educational models that stress what they call “rational autonomy” and top-down, content-driven models of education akin to what Scheffler called “The Impression Model”.¹⁵⁷

What I’m arguing for is a somewhat more practical extension of this principle, albeit one that takes a much broader view of what counts as ‘education’. For instance, I think Bonnett and Cuypers are on shaky footing when they say that the reason authenticity is vital to education is the former’s “internal relationship with personal significance in learning, moral education, interpersonal understanding, and education for democratic citizenship.” This is, in my thought, far too narrow a conception of authenticity’s value. Can people only be “authentic” in a democracy? That seems unlikely. Instead, the reason that education is important is that “authenticity” of the type Taylor is discussing allows us to go out into our communities and lead fulfilling lives, *however that may be achieved*.

“Democratic citizenship” may be taken as a proper moral end of education, insofar as we are convinced that the implementation and promotion of democracy is a moral requirement of some sort, but it is far from clear that authenticity has anything whatsoever to do with *morality* properly speaking (although Taylor does cast it in explicitly ethical terms). And if one were intending to educate in order to prepare students to live meaningful lives, one would still have need of authenticity, even if one’s goal were to promote monarchial citizenship, or even membership in the dictatorship of an extended family clan ruled by the *paterfamilias*.

Even cursory consideration of the matter shows that a “proper” education must include a certain type of initiation. By educating our children to appreciate the same sorts of things that we appreciate, by pointing out to them what we take to be our community’s “horizons of significance”, we hope that they will come to value the same sorts of expression and activity that we value. If they

¹⁵⁷ See Israel Scheffler, “Philosophical Models of Teaching”, in *THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION* 120 (R.S. Peters, ed., Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1967) at 121-122. Bonnett and Cuypers don’t reference Scheffler specifically, but it seems clear that this is what they are talking about.

do, then what we've given them is the foundation – a shared foundation – for connecting with other members of the community in meaningful ways. Through a process of education (which includes but is not limited to institutional education) we give our community's newest members the tools they need to construct an “authentic” identity, and to engage in projects whose meaningfulness is grounded in mutual recognition of value. Absent this shared foundation, a dialogic process of identity formation is difficult, if not impossible. This claim might be easier to understand by way of a rather silly example:

Let us imagine that I am born into a community that is somewhat fanatically centered around baseball. My family, their friends – everyone in the community plays baseball in order to relax and enjoy themselves, in order to spend time together, in order to settle rivalries. Aside from some labor to provide for basic necessities, playing baseball is just about all the people do. In such an environment, what should my education look like? More pointedly, could an education that did not include baseball possibly be called a proper education? It seems unlikely.

If I am not taught how to play baseball, I will be significantly hampered in my ability to “connect”, for lack of a better term, with my fellow human beings. Certainly there are alternatives, but life is finite, and time spent doing one thing is time not spent doing another; what am I doing when 90% of my community is out to the ballgame?¹⁵⁸ But even if I am taught, it's pretty clearly not enough for me to learn the rules on a purely factual level. I would not become “educated” by learning *how* to play the game, any more than I would become a soldier by learning the mechanical process of how to shoot. In order to draw meaning from my participation in my community's baseball activities, I must also have to come to value baseball – to see it as a worthwhile activity. In

¹⁵⁸ In other words, while I may lead a meaningful life in absolute terms, in relative terms I will have suffered tremendous opportunity cost. See Section 2.2.2.1, at pp. 76-77.

this way, my education in the ways of baseball would lead to my authentically valuing baseball as a part of my identity: I would think of myself as a player of baseball, or perhaps as a shortstop.

Put in Taylor's terms, baseball in this scenario, insofar as it is something that is endorsed and beloved by my community, actually serves as a "horizon of significance." It is something that connects me with the people around me and their values. By participating in the creation of an identity in a dialogic give-and-take with others, against the context of baseball, I might achieve authenticity. And as I suggested before, if I learn how to play baseball, learn to love and value baseball, it will become *my* project, integrated into the ongoing story of who I am, and will be able to serve as a source of rich meaning in my life. It will make my life worth living in a way that sitting on the bench impatiently waiting for the silly game to be over never will.¹⁵⁹

Were I raised in such a community, an education which at no point touched on both the rules and customs of baseball and its value to the community could (and should) be considered woefully deficient. It would be like being raised to be a Spartan without weapons training, or being raised among the Inuit without learning to fish or hunt. In other words, an education that fails to give a student the capacity to engage in the forms of activity that his or her community values is no proper education at all.

The baseball example is obviously caricatured to some extent. It is impossible to build a community around just a single activity; there is more to Sparta than war, more to the Inuit than hunting and fishing, and more to even my fictional township than baseball. There are certain activities – making clothing, building shelter, growing food – that are pretty much *de rigueur* for any human community, the performance of which can surely be meaningful. Beyond those necessities,

¹⁵⁹ I am not proposing that I couldn't live a meaningful life if I were, say, crippled. I could keep score, or umpire – or participate in the activity of baseball in some other way. I might achieve mastery of bat-carving, or ball stitching, or something along those lines. But one way or the other, it seems that I'm going to have to participate in baseball somehow, to make my own contribution to the project. Such is the strangeness of the community in which I live...

there are almost certainly going to be a variety of projects through which one might express one's identity in a meaningful way. Even the Spartans (or what passes for the Spartans in popular imagination) didn't prepare *everyone* to be a soldier: women and non-citizens practiced other trades, and it seems that, as sexist and backwards as it might have been, that the work of at least female citizens in Sparta was considered socially "meaningful" in the sense I'm using it here.

On the other hand, there have certainly been societies (Sparta once again comes to mind) where some people are *not* given an education that gave them access to meaningful activities. Slaves in 18th Century America, for instance, were typically educated only in an extremely limited fashion; they were taught to perform certain skills – almost exclusively manual agricultural labor. But it was not as if the slaves were either expected to love picking crops or that they were being appreciated as persons insofar as they went and picked crops. What was important was the fact of their labor, not their connection to it. In other words, the alienation of the slave from his or her labor (if I can wax Marxist for a moment) is indicative that the slave's identity is not in play, and that the project in which they are engaged is not the sort of project that could serve as the basis for a meaningful life (although much work is done not for its own sake, but for the sake of providing for one's family, which is surely meaningful). The work might be productive, and perhaps certain alternate *characterizations* of it might be meaningful.¹⁶⁰ But the state at which the slave's sparse "education" aims is not, taken as such, going to lead to a fulfilled life, and any meaningfulness that does arise will occur despite, not because of, the slave's education.

Abhorrent? Surely. But this is precisely my point: the sort of education given to a slave (which some might call "training" more than education, but I don't want to dicker about terms) is

¹⁶⁰ I have in mind looking at the slave's projects as, say, a way to provide for his or her family or accomplish some other expressly interpersonal end. To the extent that he engages in his labor as a way of accomplishing some end that really is meaningful, both himself and those about whom he cares, the slave seems to be living as fulfilling a life as possible – *under the circumstances*.

not a proper education in the sense I discussed above. And a large part of why the education is improper, I assert, is that the goal of that education, the development of the slave's capacity for and his performance of agricultural labor – as that activity exists within the slave's social context -- *isn't supposed to* provide the slave with a meaningful life; quite the opposite, in fact. The slave is deliberately kept ignorant of things that might make him into a recognized and appreciated member of the community. The failure of the slave's education to provide that is part and parcel of what makes it improper, though there are obviously dozens of correlated reasons to condemn it as well: racism, violence, immoral principles, etc. That's not to say that cotton-picking could not be a meaningful activity, of course; I hope I put that sort of worry, which arises from viewing the "projects" of people in an strictly objective sense, to rest in Chapter 2. But a large part of what makes the slaves education insufficient is that it is explicitly preparing him for a role that the society in which he finds himself (I won't say "of which he is a part") ***does not value***.

The preceding examples aren't meant to serve as a conclusive argument, but I do think that they paint a persuasive picture of how a "proper" education should provide at least potential access to an authentic identity and to the living of a meaningful, engaged life. Further, I don't think that one needs to have adopted either Taylor's or Wolf's account of meaningfulness and authenticity in order to come to the sort of view of education that I'm advocating; something very similar to it underlies a great deal of work in philosophy of education. In the next subsection, I'd like to very briefly sketch out what I see as the relevant aspects of the pictures of education advanced by both Dewey and R.S. Peters. I think that these views are at once highly consistent with the view I am advancing, and will serve as a useful springboard for the discussion of indoctrination which will follow later in the chapter. Dewey's picture in particular, I think, serves to support my claim – although it's important to note that only Dewey's *initial* discussions in *Democracy and Education* are so

compatible; Dewey and I quickly part company once, having finished with his conceptual preliminaries, he moves on to the more substantively normative parts of his work.

Of course, that my claim is consistent with two thoughtful accounts of education hardly is enough to make it true; still, though, it seems unlikely that they are both *completely* wrong in how they think about education, and if my claim is compatible with and supported (at least in part) by their accounts, I think that serves as a powerful argument that my claim is at least plausible.

3.2.1. Dewey's Significance

Although he doesn't often use the word, Dewey appears to view education, on its most basic level, as a type of cultural initiation. Moreover, the "point" of this initiation is something like the meaningfulness I've discussed in Chapter 2. It is bad practice to pull quotes out of context merely because they seem agreeable, but Dewey comes right out and claims that education's *main effect* is to "achieve a life of rich significance."¹⁶¹ I don't think it's a stretch at all to cast "a life of rich significance" as roughly the same type of experience as living an (intersubjectively) meaningful life, and that Dewey's picture of education is consequently one in which students are brought about to share values so as to engage in meaningful activities.

To those only casually acquainted with Dewey's philosophy, it might seem strange to think of him as supporting a view of education based in *conformity* of values. Dewey is, after all, an educational Progressive and an advocate of child-centered learning. I have even heard it said, from time to time, that his philosophy of education is cut of the same sort of hyper-individualist cloth as, say, Rousseau.¹⁶² And Dewey surely advocated for an education that approaches the student as an

¹⁶¹ Dewey, DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION, *supra* n.8 at 236.

¹⁶² This isn't a common view, but I've run across it in teacher training programs from time to time, and in conversations with people in the field of Education where the focus is not on philosophical nuance but on practical preparation for classroom life. I take it that what's going on is that Dewey's more general theories about human nature and individualism are pushed into the background, and his democratic approach to education is deployed within the modern cultural context of the United States, in which the classical liberal conception of the atomic individual is quite

individual. But just stopping there wouldn't give credit to what Dewey thinks an "individual" really is – and it is through his account of the nature of individuals that one can see the connection between meaningfulness and his conception of education played out most strongly.

Dewey's project, from the outset, casts the education of an individual as something undertaken within a social context: it is the "development within the young of the attitudes and dispositions necessary to the continuous and progressive life of a society."¹⁶³ Indeed, he saw social life as not merely an influence on the individual, but as its creator: to be an individual is just to have come about within a particular social context.¹⁶⁴ Education is the process of becoming, in the fullest sense, just such an individual.

The first Chapter of *Democracy and Education* proclaims education "as a Necessity of Life." He does not here mean life for the individual, but life for *humans*; what it means to be an individual human being on his account is to be part of a society that ensures its survival through communication. Education is necessary, in other words, for society to survive. And in order for a society to exist in the first place, its members must share a common end (or ends), and they must also be both aware of and interested in that end.¹⁶⁵ One of the hallmarks of Dewey's philosophy is that a society's members' engagement with these shared, common ends must be both active and genuine. It is not sufficient that students participate by habit or for instrumental reasons such as coercion: they must understand what they are doing, and their actions must have a meaning that comes about within the context of those shared ends.

strong and oft taken for granted. Something similar happens, I argue below, when people start to theorize about "indoctrination", but do so explicitly from within the perspective of what is commonly called "liberal education".

¹⁶³ Dewey, *supra* n.8, at 22.

¹⁶⁴ See John Dewey, "The Future of Liberalism", 32 J. OF PHILOSOPHY 225, 227 (1935).

¹⁶⁵ See Dewey, *supra* n.8, at Ch. 1.

Consistent with his view of the individual as social *ex ante*, Dewey actually urges that we should reject the commonly assumed (even today) dichotomy between the “inner” life of a student – that “which does not connect with others” – and the external, instrumental demands of “social efficiency”¹⁶⁶ There is no primal, atomistic individual who *comes* to adopt culturally endorsed ends; there is, rather, an individual whose existence arises within the culture, whose individuality is in part through an education that makes the “common understanding... *intrinsic* to the disposition” of the student.¹⁶⁷ The role of social efficiency in education, on the other hand, is to see to the “cultivation of power to join *freely and fully* in shared or common activities.” (emphasis added) This cultivation, Dewey asserts:

...is impossible without culture, while it brings a reward in culture, because one cannot share in intercourse with others without learning – without getting a broader point of view and perceiving things of which one would otherwise be ignorant. And there is perhaps no better definition of culture than that it is the capacity for constantly expanding the range and accuracy of one’s perceptions of meanings.¹⁶⁸

These activities, then, are shared and common through a meaning shared from within a culture. Presumably an individual can generate meaning¹⁶⁹ -- intentional connections and so forth – without being immersed in a culture, but the purpose of education is to add to the meaning of experience, to allow students “[t]o have the same ideas about things which others have, to be like-minded with them, and thus to be really members of a social group [and] therefore to attach the

¹⁶⁶ *Id.* at 122-123.

¹⁶⁷ *Id.* at 39 (emphasis added).

¹⁶⁸ *Id.* at 123.

¹⁶⁹ I don’t want to attempt to stretch the interpretation or misappropriate Dewey’s work by assuming that his use of “meaning” is coextensive with what I mean when I say “meaningful”. I think it is safe to assume that Dewey means by “meaning” here what he means elsewhere in *Democracy and Education*, namely the connection between certain types of activity or experience and certain outcomes or values, taking place intelligently, as a result of thought and intention. See generally *Id.* at Ch. 3 (esp. pp. 23-30).

same meanings to things and to acts which others attach.”¹⁷⁰ Meaning, then, is the very medium through which shared (and not merely collective) activity becomes possible; we become not only capable of understanding what others mean by their actions, but become capable of making our own actions understood as well.

Education for Dewey is, on its most basic level, a value-laden initiation into society. (Indeed it actually involves initiation into the life of the many, various societies of which a child is or may become a member at different levels: family, neighborhoods, nations, etc.¹⁷¹) “Education is a social process,” he writes, which works towards a particular social ideal.¹⁷² The content of that social ideal is culture, and what makes for a life of “rich significance” is to become part of that culture, and more importantly, to *participate* in it. It is to be active in connection with that culture, that is, if I may grossly paraphrase, to express oneself against proper horizons of significance.

I’ve rushed through this a bit: I don’t think that in a few short pages I’ve given anything like a complete account of what Dewey thought of education. Indeed, I’ve focused exclusively on his “opening moves” – the first few chapters in which he explains what education is up to at its most basic, descriptive level. As I indicated above, he and I part company somewhat once his normative account gets under way. But I also don’t think this reading of Dewey has done any violence to his views at all. I just wanted to highlight the fact that Dewey’s conception of education is a fundamentally social one, and that the end of education is to be able to engage in activities that take place within a cultural context, and which have meaning – “rich significance” – within that cultural context. It is in this way that my claim – that one purpose of education is to grant students the

¹⁷⁰ *Id.* at 30. *See also* p.76 (noting that education “adds to the meaning of experience”).

¹⁷¹ *Id.* at 20-21.

¹⁷² *Id.* at 99.

ability to engage in meaningful activities – is perfectly consistent with Dewey’s philosophy of education (such as Dewey’s beliefs can be seen as a unified, synthetic whole).

Does this compatibility mean that Dewey necessarily endorses my views of meaningfulness and authenticity, of intersubjectivity as a source of objective value, or the importance of authenticity to human experience? Of course not. Dewey’s account is, at this level, primarily descriptive and nearly empty of a source of objective value: he does not at any point seem to describe precisely what it is about “rich significance” that should matter.

T.H.B. Hollins took up this shortcoming of Dewey’s at length in the collection of essays on educational aims that he edited.¹⁷³ His criticism is, essentially, that while Dewey allows that “shared experience” must be the greatest of human goods, Dewey gives no real basis for asserting why this should be a good in the first place. Hollins sees Dewey’s relentless empiricism and focus on the *facts* about human growth and experience as falling victim to a sort of naturalistic fallacy. It’s not that Dewey doesn’t have a theory of values in education – he certainly does. But his focus on values is more methodological than substantive: an emphasis on children’s active participation in discussions of value, the bringing to bear of scientific methodology, and the role of experience in shaping what values might turn out for the best.¹⁷⁴ Still, it seems that this methodological approach is either a black box of sorts – one that simply produces morals in a mysterious way – or that Dewey really does run up against the problems of naturalism.

Perhaps this is a genuine shortcoming of Dewey’s account: but it need not be. Even if Dewey’s account cannot be reduced to some objective, transcendental moral principle, there may

¹⁷³ T.H.B. Hollins, “The Problem of Values and John Dewey”, in *AIMS IN EDUCATION* 91, *supra* n.10. Hollins’ critique is strongly influenced by his own placement in mid-20th Century English culture, and he shares the deeply moral and even somewhat theological foundations of the likes of Flew and Wilson.

¹⁷⁴ *Id.* at 106.

well be other “goods” besides the moral and the practical. Indeed, one such good might be the sort of meaningfulness I’ve been discussing.

And perhaps Dewey’s account of education makes more sense if we interpret Dewey as accepting – as I urged in my advocacy of the intersubjective account of meaning – that a plausible source of “objective” value just is the interests of other people, taken as such. But even tentatively advancing such a claim would be another substantive chapter in a somewhat different dissertation. For now, I am content to note that this possibility exists, and it exists precisely because Dewey’s account of education is compatible with what I am claiming.

3.2.2. Peters’ Initiation

It’s one thing to take a few early Chapters of Dewey and do a little song and dance to show that my claim is compatible with at least a portion of his views. But for the sake of thoroughness, and because I think he puts it *so well*, I’d now like to do the same thing with R.S. Peters as I just did with Dewey. If I can establish that Peters and Dewey at least are not arguing expressly against me – I’ll feel much more confident going forward. And if I can show that there is some support to be found in their accounts, so much the better.

Peters is widely considered to have been among the first to take a rigorously analytical approach to the “philosophy of education”.¹⁷⁵ While he had been critical of Dewey’s account, and while there are certainly points of contention to be found, I think Peters’ own views of what’s going on in a proper education (again at the most basic level) differ from Dewey’s more in approach than in overall substance. While I will mostly be discussing those views as they were advanced in *Ethics and Education*, first published in 1966, it should be noted that Peters later declared that his work had

¹⁷⁵ See, e.g., Robin Barrow, “Was Peters Nearly Right About Education?”, in *READING R.S. PETERS TODAY: ANALYSIS, ETHICS, AND THE AIMS OF EDUCATION* Ch. 1 (Stefaan Cuypers & Christopher Martin eds., John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. 2011). I’m not sure if this claim is really fair to Dewey, whose approach to defining the process of education is nearly Scholastic in its analytical precision – at least at points.

some substantial shortcomings.¹⁷⁶ His goals in *E&E* included not only explicating the concept of education – which he meant to be distinguished from mere training – but also an account of what is worthwhile about education: what gives the process of education its normative and moral force. I think it is fair to say that, at its most general, Peters’ theory of education is that it is *initiation into something of value*.

Where Dewey starts his account with society and education’s role in preserving it, Peters’ perspective begins within the mind of the person being educated. As far as I can tell, he believes that the basic operation of the mind is inherently discursive: to think, value, or appreciate is, in other words, to engage in a sort of linguistic – and thus social – activity *ex ante*. “[T]he ideas and expectations of an individual...” he writes, referring to the sorts of things that separate consciousness from, say, mere persistence, “...are the product of the initiation of an individual into public traditions enshrined in the language, concepts, beliefs, and rules of society.”¹⁷⁷ Our introduction into social conventions, including a public language and perspective, thus shapes not only the words we use but the content of our thoughts as well. The very sorts of things about which we think, about which we have desires, are “first and foremost objects in a public world that are marked out and differentiated by a public language into which the individual is initiated.”¹⁷⁸

Even the very operation of reason seems to have this intersubjective character on Peters’ account; it is a habit we come by through our associations with others of similar inclinations and capacities, and critical rationality is something that gets internalized through what seems to be

¹⁷⁶ See R.S. Peters, “Philosophy of Education”, in *EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND ITS FOUNDATION DISCIPLINES* Ch. 2 (Paul Hirst ed., Routledge, 1983). Specifically, Peters thought that while his basic conclusions were “defensible”, he had done his work on too narrow a concept of education, and had not sufficiently justified what made certain parts of the curriculum – the very parts, I take it, that were part and parcel of his overly-narrow view of “education” – more worthwhile, in objective terms.

¹⁷⁷ Peters, *supra* n.52, at 48-49.

¹⁷⁸ *Id.* at 50.

something like an Aristotelian process of habituation. As Peters puts it: “[t]he dialogue within is inseparable from the dialogue without.” This is not to say that the individual doesn’t actually exist independently or even that he is a mere vessel for some socio-linguistic inheritance. It’s just to say that it’s more or less impossible to imagine a consciousness that didn’t exist within a social and linguistic milieu of some sort. The individual consciousness – which we may or may not take to be coextensive with the individual, full stop – exists in a sort of give and take with the public language, on which he “imprints his own individual style and pattern of being.”

A naïvely reductive version of this inherently discursive view of education might characterize it solely in terms of the introduction to the public language, in the sense of understanding and being able to employ words, phrases, and idioms according to an established grammar. But there is obviously much more to it than merely learning reference, denotation, and structure. Customs and values are embodied in language, and “learning the language” involves coming to understand certain things about what it means to take the point of view of a speaker of the language. An inappropriately simple example: when American schoolchildren learn to say, “*Je veux la feuille de papier*” they may have mastered the grammar of the first person present conjugation of *vouloir*, but they are almost certainly ignorant of the connotative difference between *veux* and *voudrais*, between sounding somewhat brashly demanding and appropriately polite. A more complex but still superficial example: calling someone “Comrade” or “Citizen” in a thoroughly Communist society is not merely an acknowledgement of a customary greeting: it is a statement of political allegiance, fraught with value in the hearing, if not necessarily in the speaking by an outsider.

Peters argues (persuasively, I think) that education properly involves becoming acquainted with these sorts of value-laden understandings. A proper education requires promoting things that are either valuable, or at least seen as valuable. Indeed, much of what he does is set apart *education* from skills or vocational training by invoking a model of an “educated person”. Peters readily

admits that his conception of education is more or less identical with “liberal education,” so his model of an educated person is a liberally educated person.¹⁷⁹ Such a person – and in this sense Peters and Dewey seem to be on exactly the same page – is not merely responsive to certain kinds of stimulus: he also *understands* what he’s up to in his responses to that stimulus. What’s more, insofar as Peters maintains that education must be “described as initiation into activities or modes of thought and conduct that are worth while,”¹⁸⁰ the *educated* person – as opposed to the person who is merely trained or conditioned – sees the value in what he is taught.

The discussion of what is worthwhile takes up a tremendous amount, perhaps a plurality, of *Ethics and Education*. I won’t get into the details of that discussion, particularly not in light of Peters’ own sense that his discussion was not successful. But I do think that we can extract an important and useful theme from his efforts. First, there seems to be a sense in which the requirement that the educated person see his education as valuable necessitates education’s social and discursive character. Peters argued elsewhere, the standards of what it is to be educated are “built into” the notion of being educated – it’s impossible to become educated without simultaneously coming to see the purpose of that education. One must not only learn whatever one is learning, but come to *appreciate* it in a certain way, a way that is inherently embedded in the language and culture into which the student is initiated.

Put another way, becoming educated means understanding the answer to “why this, rather than that?” And in order for us to understand what an activity *is*, we must be “inside” that activity,

¹⁷⁹ *Id.* at 43. Note that this limitation of education to a liberal conception may be the way in which Peters believed his conception of education to be too “specific”, as indicated in his 1983 comments. See n.184, *infra*. I will take up the idea that we might not wish to limit our conception of what counts as a “properly educated” person so narrowly below in Sections 3.3 and 3.4.

¹⁸⁰ *Id.* at 55. There’s more to it than this, of course. That definition comes about by way of a fairly intensive analysis of education.

sensitive to the “standards of correctness and style” that are inherent in the activity.¹⁸¹ Activities, like every other idea or object of apprehension, also exist within our public language (or so I think Peters would say) and insofar as they do, they “presuppose public principles that stand as impersonal standards to which both teacher and learner must give their allegiance.”¹⁸² This sort of linguistic perspective applies not just to doings, but to the conception (or perception) of things taken as problems as well; to the extent that problems present themselves to us, and to the extent that an educated person is able to operate effectively within the discourse of his education by tackling those problems and presenting solutions, those problems are presented from *within* our shared discourses. Without our first being within that discourse, no problems would (seem to) exist for us to solve.¹⁸³

So does any of this mean that Peters believes that a proper end of education is the provision of a capacity for engaging in meaningful activities, as I’ve described them? There are reasons to think not: he seems to think, for instance, that education does not involve things such as games or skills or (less certainly) vocational training. So it seems unlikely that Peters, at least in 1966, would have been willing to fully endorse the claim I’m making, which I think absolutely includes things like games and vocations. But I’m not examining his account to find additional voices to add to my overall chorus: I’m just trying to establish my claim about the nature of education, and to show that it is compatible with some major theories of education in the field. And Peters’ inherently social picture, I think, provides that sort of space.

¹⁸¹ *Id.* at 146.

¹⁸² *Id.* at 54.

¹⁸³ *Id.* at 57. Note also that “problem-solving” is not really a fundamental part of Peters’ account in the way that it is for Dewey. Indeed, one of his few specific criticisms of Dewey’s philosophy is its heavy emphasis on practical problem-solving. See R.S. Peters, “John Dewey’s Philosophy of Education”, in *JOHN DEWEY RECONSIDERED* Ch. 6 (R.S. Peters ed., Routledge 1977). I also want to shy away from any implication that problems “don’t exist” simply because we don’t see them; what Peters seems to be getting at is that “the problem” is seen as a *problem* only because it is perceived in a certain way, not that the underlying situation or facts somehow do not obtain.

Education for Peters, then, is an initiation into a socio-linguistic discourse of value in much the same way that for Dewey, it is an initiation into a social life through which we are able to have significant experiences by applying meaning to the world. True, Peters is searching for some objective quality of the finest activities, something that can serve to set those fine things apart from games and other things that are *merely* valued by people. But that is just to say that he would want a more specific statement than the more general one I am proposing. He would want to say that only a certain subset of meaningful activities are worthy as being taken as the ends of education – and that is presuming, of course, that what counts as an education is what results in Peters’ conception of an “educated person”.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Peters’ model of education necessarily involves internalizing values that allow one to participate in social life through shared activities, and that it is important that those activities be the sorts of activities that are valued within the discourse into which the student is being initiated.

I think, between the discussion which opened this Chapter, and the analyses of both Dewey’s and Peters’ theories of education, it’s entirely reasonable to view education as having as one of its proper ends, and perhaps as its most basic end, the embedding of the student within his or her society’s social discourse, a discourse that is rich in meaning and value. It is only within this discourse that a student is able to engage in the projects – meaningful projects – that allow for a life of what Dewey called “rich significance”. In other words, it is a proper (and fundamental) end of education to equip a student with the basic tools needed to live a “meaningful life” in the sense I was advancing in Chapter 2, and by which I mean (even if Dewey and Peters would disagree on this count) living a life in which there are activities of intersubjective value.

¹⁸⁴ It’s not clear to me whether or not this particular conception of education is what Peters meant to criticize when he called his conception “too specific”. See n.179, *supra*. If so, then perhaps he and I are much in closer agreement than I suspect.

In the next section, I want to talk a little bit about how this comes about, and why indoctrination is an important part of it. I will also look at how certain critiques of “modern” education -- critiques which might be thought to be hostile to the notion of indoctrination – can be seen as not aimed at indoctrination *as such*, but rather responding to ways in which the educational systems under critique are failing to provide their students with the capacity to live meaningful lives.

3.3. The Necessity of Indoctrination to a Meaningful Education

The next claim, I think, follows fairly intuitively from the discussion above:

Indoctrination, or something very like it, is necessary for the carrying out that proper end of education which involves initiating the student into the social discourse.

One of the reasons that I spent time going through Dewey’s and Peters’ accounts of education is to show that, fundamentally, proper education requires not just providing information but *directing the values* of the student in an intentional way, so as to produce (or at least encourage) a certain sort of reflective, intentional activity. In other words, education involves instilling into a student the values of a community, values that shape not only how that student acts, but how he or she thinks, what he or she takes as evidence, and what he or she sees as problems to be solved. Meaningful action is impossible unless the student is brought to see the value in that action, and as we’ve seen, education necessarily involves giving students the ability to see that value. Indeed, it requires not just giving them the mechanical ability to perceive the value, but requires initiating them into the values themselves, so that they *feel* the value. As Peters states, the student must see the value in the activity as stemming from reasons inherent in the activity; they must come to value the activity *for its own sake*, independent of other instrumental concerns.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Alisdair MacIntyre said much the same thing of “practices” – which he said included any “socially established cooperative human activity through which goods *internal to that form activity are realized* in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity.” Alisdair MacIntyre, *AFTER VIRTUE* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), quoted in Kenneth A. Strike, “The Ethics of Teaching”, in *A COMPANION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION* 509 (Randall Curren ed., Blackwell, 2003) at 517.

This process I've just described is pretty clearly indoctrination as we've discussed it: the installation of "free-standing", non-derivative value. And one can feel echoes of the "Authentic Subject" in the notion that the "educated" person, once educated, almost without fail fully endorses what he or she has become.¹⁸⁶ If education involves being indoctrinated into a discussion that gives rise to meaningfulness, and if a lack of authenticity appears to undermine meaningfulness in one's life, then it seems clear to me that Bonnett and Cuypers are correct in asserting that a proper education requires authenticity. But it also seems to me that indoctrination has an important role to play in generating that authenticity.

And that means that attempts to indoctrinate within the context of education creates a situation with a deep moral tension: one must create authenticity using a tool that has the inherent capacity (perhaps even a tendency) to annihilate that very authenticity. This does not mean that the task is impossible: the dangers of inauthenticity from indoctrination arise when the indoctrination is deviant, where it drives the subject against his or her own values. And it is possible to indoctrinate a compatible or indifferent subject without causing substantial deviation. And here it is the indifferent subject that should interest us most: the fact that indoctrination, when it is successful, instills sincere beliefs means that an indifferent subject's holding certain values as a result of indoctrination can very easily be authentic; it is difficult (though not impossible) to "deviantly" indoctrinate the truly indifferent subject. One must have a heading before one can deviate "off course".

It would be easy to say that a young child is just such an indifferent subject, that he or she is a sort of *tabula rasa* on which we might imprint whatever set of values we wish without worry of inauthenticity. But this is probably not correct. It's actually more likely the case that there is something in a very young child that *wants* – perhaps in some naturalistic, functional sense – to

¹⁸⁶ I don't mean to imply that education, as such, presents an Authentic Subject *Problem*, although it might if one undertook to morally investigate educative processes in the same way I looked at indoctrination in Chapter 2.

adopt the values of his or her community, that values being part of a group. (And there may be other natural inclinations of a more personal nature as well; Feinberg argues something like this, and we will take it up in earnest in Section 3.4, *infra*.) Thus, far from being deviant, it seems that an indoctrination into the values of the group can, for an infant, be perfectly in line with his or her “pre-existing” values, and thus empoweringly authentic.¹⁸⁷

So the claim for this section is this: first, that a child passing through an institutional educational system that is properly functioning is given an authentic identity and thus the means to engage in meaningful activities. Second, that process is, following Peters and Dewey, one of benign, non-deviant indoctrination (Peters says “initiation”) into the community’s values. I want to stress that when I say that indoctrination has a role to play in education, I am referring to the account I’ve offered in Chapters 1 and 2, an account that I think more coherent than most and which more accurately captures the nature of indoctrination’s harm.

With that in mind, it is possible to see many philosophers who have attacked the issue of indoctrination in other ways as, sometimes implicitly, endorsing something like the view I’m advancing (even if some of them claim at the same time that “indoctrination” is inimical to education). Our differences here are terminological, I think, stemming primarily from what we see as deserving the title “indoctrination” rather than reflecting an actual underlying disagreement about what sorts of things and practices are proper, moral, or appropriate. Hare and Kilpatrick, for instance, both affirmatively believed that processes that looked like what they considered to be indoctrination might be a necessary part of what, by virtue of the teacher’s final goals, would not

¹⁸⁷ There is also a possibility that humans have certain inherent values – such as valuing one’s life or valuing a minimization of pain. At the most abstract, generalized, and (frankly) useless level this is probably correct. But a child who grows up within his culture receives as part of his or her education a *notion* of what it means to value one’s life, or to experience pain. Some cultures – Sparta comes to mind once more – have very different notions of what is *really* important: “Come back with your shield or on it” is not a saying of a human culture that values life for its own sake. So the claim that there are probably “basic” human values such as life is, I think, likely reducible to the claim that whatever values humans have are *values* that place importance on some things over others. The things that are important in this way – happiness, honor, whatever – are the things called “life”.

ultimately count as indoctrination.¹⁸⁸ The later stages of the education would “redeem” the earlier, non-evidential steps. Wilson conceded that indoctrination *would* be a necessity in the education of young children, were indoctrination a question of method rather than content.¹⁸⁹ Even Peters allows for some version of this claim.¹⁹⁰ Harvey Siegel may have put the admission of indoctrination’s necessity most forthrightly:

It must be granted that we sometimes have no alternative but to teach children, or at least to inculcate beliefs, without providing them with reasons that justify those beliefs, for, before we can pass along reasons which the child can recognize as reasons, she must come to understand what a reason is.¹⁹¹

Siegel actually calls this line of thought the “indoctrination objection”. When Siegel says the word “indoctrination”, though, he is decidedly in the Snook camp, and firmly of the mind that it necessarily involves non-evidential styles of belief, and that these initial, necessary sorts of implantations can be redeemed by working to “develop an evidential style of belief.” That notion of redemption is an important one that we will come back to shortly.

Thomas Green actually wrote the words, “Indoctrination... has a perfectly good and important role to play in education. * * * * Like the development of attitudes, indoctrination may be useful as the prelude to teaching.”¹⁹² Green obviously meant indoctrination in the sense of

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter 1, *supra*, n.15-16 and accompanying text.

¹⁸⁹ Wilson, *supra* n.21, at 34. Wilson’s invocation of “method” here seems equally applicable to indoctrination in terms of “aims” or “results”, insofar as certain methods are themselves only useful to bring about certain types of results at which one might aim if one were an indoctrinator.

¹⁹⁰ See Peters, *supra* n.52, at 261-262. Peters affirmatively rejects that teaching and indoctrination are compatible, but his view of indoctrination appears to be in tune with some of the aim theorists such as Heard and Kilpatrick, who believe that what is at issue is the *ultimate* outcome of the educational process. Specifically, Peters is of the mind that what separates indoctrination from initiation (which he holds to be the core of education) is the development of a “critical attitude” towards what is taught in order to advance the activity in question. See R.S. Peters, “What is an Educational Process?”, in *THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION*, *supra* n.157. To some extent, he may be aligned with what I call the “democratic conception” of education, below, in Section 3.3.2.

¹⁹¹ Harvey Siegel, *EDUCATING REASON* 89 (Routledge, 1988).

¹⁹² Green, *supra* n.9, at 45.

inculcating “non-evidential” beliefs, but the reasoning behind his claim was consistent with what I mean by indoctrination. Even J.P. White concedes that the moral education of young children involves teaching rules that are simply not amenable to reasons at first: such reasons would be incomprehensible to the child in question.¹⁹³ While many of these writers reject on moral grounds what they call indoctrination, they all seem to endorse the view that there must be some first set of values instilled in the course of a proper education, some mechanism by which subsequent arguments can be evaluated, subsequent evidence can be appraised; a child must have some lens through which to view and discover the rest of his or her culture. In other words, to hold views based on reasons, one must first discover what counts as a “reason”.

A similar claim is made by C.J.B. MacMillan, who claims that Wittgenstein seemed to believe that a failure to indoctrinate (or to do something quite similar) would be to shut out a student from communication with others, to cut off the very sort of discourse described by Dewey and Peters in the preceding section. What is necessary (and, really, inevitable) is the “inheritance” of a world-picture, an unshakable ground of conviction upon which other beliefs are built.¹⁹⁴ This world-picture is not itself justified in terms of any other beliefs or values: it is fundamental, and its imposition is a sort of indoctrination. This is a compelling view, but it also presents a serious problem for certain notions of “proper” education, namely the tension between the necessity of indoctrination on the one hand, and its being inimical to education on the other. Indoctrination, if we take it in this Wittgensteinian sense, once again stands in need of some sort of redemption to save it from *actually being* indoctrination (and, therefore, not proper education).

¹⁹³ White, *supra* n.41, at 117.

¹⁹⁴ C.J.B. MacMillan, “‘On Certainty’ and Indoctrination”, 56 *SYNTHESE* 263 (1983). I’ve not made the necessary forays into Wittgenstein to verify whether this reading is correct or not. Though I hope eventually to make my way there, I take it that reading Wittgenstein is a serious undertaking. But the claim seems plausible from MacMillan’s arguments.

James Garrison, for instance, suggests that the tension raised by MacMillan can be resolved by exercising a sort of Cartesian program of doubt and, into the space created by that doubt, introducing a second “world picture”.¹⁹⁵ The student, on this view, then gains the ability to choose his world picture as a rational agent. Nevertheless, Garrison does not refute the necessity of that initial imposition, indeed it’s what drives the perceived problem to which he is responding.

There might be some worry that I’m cheating here. I’ve said previously that the Aim Theorists (who allow for seeming indoctrination to be re-classified based on ultimate intentions) have the better of the indoctrination arguments. Yet at the same time I am claiming that it is *indoctrination* that is necessary to education. Accordingly, I must believe that an act of seeming indoctrination really is an act of indoctrination, even if it is later redeemed by allowing the child to come to see the reasons for his or her beliefs in a more critical way. I don’t think that I am in any grave danger here, though, because it does not follow from the fact that I think their account the strongest that I think the Aim Theorist is entirely correct.

The Aim Theorists view indoctrination as relating only to belief, and so they see the process of instilling a *critically* held belief to sometimes involve first instilling that same belief in a “non-evidential” way.¹⁹⁶ It is a single process, in their view, that is either indoctrination or not. But I have defined indoctrination in terms of not just beliefs, but values as well. There is thus a natural division between the instilling of a set of values that will serve as the basis for the acceptance and deployment of evidence, on the one hand, and a belief which is based on evidence accepted under that values set on the other. The installation of a critically-held belief on my view is simply not the same sort of process as the earlier “indoctrination”, but rather takes place within the context of that

¹⁹⁵ James W. Garrison, “The Paradox of Indoctrination”, 68 SYNTHESIS 261 (1986).

¹⁹⁶ It is arguable, I think, whether a belief held critically and a belief held non-critically could ever be the “same” belief, but it isn’t my intention to get drawn into such matters here.

indoctrination, within the discursive picture that the student has been given that allows the belief to be justified and supported. In other words, the *belief* isn't the issue when it comes to the sort of situations in which this problem arises.

So that's the view: indoctrination is necessary for education. I don't think there's much more to it than that. What is almost certainly still required, though, is a great deal of "clean up". While the claim itself is (I hope) persuasive and internally consistent, it seems ill-suited to the philosophical landscape into which I am trying to insert it. What I'd like to do with the balance of this section is to try to "smooth out" some of the seeming incompatibilities that my claim has with some of the more prominent and applicable views in this ontologically-addled field called "the philosophy of education". I will do this in two steps.

The first order of business is likely the least pressing of the two, philosophically: I want to address some of the more well-known radical critiques of education – specifically Illich and Goodman. I think it's important to address them precisely because they take themselves as arguing against institutional school systems that seem to them hell-bent on mass-producing students with a sort of "cookie cutter" value system that they believe cannot be authentic. The picture of education that I'm advancing, complete with its approving invocation of "indoctrination", risks running afoul of these critiques (I confess that I am generally sympathetic to them and wish not to so run afoul). But I think I can credibly show that there's much common ground between us, and that the differences are mostly terminological. If this is really more an expression of philosophical loyalty on my part than any necessary analysis, so be it.

The real mess to clean up, though, is that in arguing that indoctrination is a necessary part of a proper education, I appear to be running against a fairly common view, one advanced in its earlier form by William Heard Kilpatrick and Dewey (!), and more recently by Garrison, Cuypers, and Haji: that indoctrination – even indoctrination as I've described it -- is *incompatible* with proper education.

So the last thing I will do in this section is try to explain why it is that this particular view of things – which I’ll somewhat clumsily lump together and call the “democratic conception” of education, isn’t really an objection to my view at all, but instead represents substantial adherence to a particular view of what education should be – one that may, in fact, be right, but which isn’t threatened by indoctrination in the way that its supporters believe. Along the way, I will revisit my definition of “indoctrination”, and try to explain why I think that Dewey and others are wrong when they use the word the way they do.

3.3.1. Radical Critiques

The two radical critiques I want to address are those offered by Ivan Illich and Paul Goodman. Of these, only Goodman offers anything like a *philosophical* critique. Both have important things to say about education and schooling, however, and it is easy to read them as criticizing the sort of view that I am advancing. Let us start with Illich.

3.3.1.1. Illich

“The institutionalization of values leads inevitably to physical pollution, social polarization, and psychological impotence.” That’s what Peter (Ivan) Illich has to say about the sort of institutional education I’m saying is necessary, or at least that’s what it seems like. The grounds for disagreement are plain.

Illich is not an analytic philosopher in any sense of the word – and it would be silly of me to try to treat his arguments as if they were meant in that spirit. He’s a radical of the first order with (very vaguely) Marxist undercurrents; his *Deschooling Society* is a polemic, not a philosophical treatise. It wanders and digresses and jumps from topic to topic with enthusiasm. But it’s also an undeniably important work of educational theory, and I want to try to harmonize our views. To that end, what I will try to do here is present his case against institutional schooling, specifically insofar as it involves teaching values. That will be sufficient, I think, to show the danger of his critique to my

account. Then I will show that what Illich is actually concerned about is not really institutional education, but a very specific vision of institutional “schooling” that operates both on a scale large enough to alienate it from the day-to-day lives of students and other learners as well as to propagate a substantive values system that Illich finds (rightfully, I think) abhorrent.

We should probably start by looking at what Illich thinks “school” actually is. He thinks it is something very distinct from education:

I shall define “school” as the age-specific, teacher related process requiring full-time attendance at an obligatory curriculum.¹⁹⁷

This is a surprisingly narrow definition, though it likely covers nearly every primary and secondary educational institution in the Western World. It is a definition offered specifically for the purpose of conceptually severing the institution of school (which Illich thinks dispensable) from the process of education (which is not). The root of Illich’s critique is found, I think, in the following two phrases: “teacher related” and “obligatory curriculum.”

“Teacher related” schooling is problematic because of the way in which institutional schooling sets a teacher up as a sort of absolute authority, not to be questioned. But more than that, the teacher in a “school” becomes something of an omnipresent authority. School makes a “total claim on the time and energies of students”, which makes the teacher into “custodian, preacher, and therapist,” the wearer of “an invisible triple crown, like the papal tiara, the symbol of triple authority combined in one person.”¹⁹⁸ Far from buying into Dewey’s vision that a proper education would introduce students into the culture of their society in a democratic way, Illich sees the teacher as a sort of ultimate monarch, exercising a power over students that is at once far too personal, far too

¹⁹⁷ Ivan Illich, *DESCHOOLING SOCIETY* (Harrow Books 1972) at 13. The pagination to which I cite herein is found in the PDF version available at: http://monoskop.org/images/1/17/Illich_Ivan_Deschooling_Society.pdf .

¹⁹⁸ *Id.* at 15.

morally charged, and far too intrusive. In the person of teachers, “several orders of value collapse into one.”

None of that would be possible, though, were it not for the obligatory nature of the curriculum, which is imposed on the student under force of law (though “obligatory” has far more than mere legal scope here) and through the person of the teacher. The curriculum – and by this Illich is referring not just to the course of study set forth in guidebooks, but to the “hidden curriculum” that includes an induction into consumerist culture and credentialism – is obligatory insofar as it is presented to students as *the only* way to achieve success, happiness, and self-validation.

That brings us to the root of Illich’s critique: that the institutional school sets itself up as a sort of nexus for the twisting “the natural inclination to grow and learn into the demand for instruction.”¹⁹⁹ Rather than learning, students pursue credentials that the schools say are necessary for living a good life (a “good life” defined in terms of a consumerist morality, but more on that in a moment). The performance of tasks for the sake of those tasks, and a relentless push to amass the formal approval of teachers and boards of trustees crowds out any instinct that a student might possess to engage with material in an authentic way. What becomes important is not what is known, but one’s established pedigree.

Nor is it a defense to these charges to say that the school system that Illich is criticizing is somehow violating its proper educational role by invoking a Progressive model of education. Even something like Dewey’s vision of initiation into social norms is seen as a way of seducing students “into the dream world of their elders.” Illich, it seems, sees Dewey’s attacks on the traditional model of education not as a restriction on the scope of institutional schooling, but as a massive expansion of that power, one that reaches out to encompass not just immediately practical learning,

¹⁹⁹ *Id.* at 27.

but “all valuable learning.”²⁰⁰ I should think it is obvious why this might be a threat to my account of the role of indoctrination in education: Illich thinks that those who seek to impress values through institutional schooling are something like oppressive monsters.

But I think it’s possible to parse Illich’s critique in such a way that we preserve its more trenchant criticisms and underlying values, while still making a distinction between “institutional schooling” on the one hand, and “institutional education” on the other. Illich’s objections, after all, aren’t to institutional education *as such*. What he’s really on about is “schooling”, and those criticisms can, I think, be usefully reduced to two major issues: (1) the substantive particulars of a modern, consumerist culture that Illich finds offensive, and (2) the detachment of institutional goals from the immediate lives and communities of learners.

Time and time again, Illich rails against a consumerism that urges everything of value to be relentlessly measured, to be commodified and translated into a paradigm of economic efficiency. “The institutionalized values school instills are quantified ones. School initiates young people into a world where everything can be measured, including their imaginations, and indeed, man himself.”²⁰¹ Illich finds this all rightly disturbing. But I think that it’s possible to see this as a symptom of an unfortunate distancing of the institutional school from the organic lives of students. Illich’s critique is grounded on the notion that the schools are something alien, something imposed on students. In a large, essentially pluralistic country, the more distance a school has from the immediate individuals in the community, the more it will have to rely on “larger scale” norms and values to inform its schooling. In the developed and developing worlds, where Illich saw these problems as at their worst, school systems are not local affairs: they are large establishments, often established by state or national governments (with varying degrees of local input and oversight). Is it any wonder, given

²⁰⁰ *Id.* at 29.

²⁰¹ *Id.* at 19.

this distance, that the “shared values” of community that end up being propagated in these schools is one of the only possible candidates for such a role, that thin, impersonal fabric that manages to bind all of Western culture together – namely economic efficiency and consumerism?

Indeed, by looking at Illich’s positive account, we can see that he is not objecting to institutional education: he is, in fact, proposing the establishment of just such an organization. His “skill centers” are institutional; they are just flexible and local rather than monolithic and national. Illich’s proposals are highly decentralized and driven by individual choice, and by bringing institutional education down to the level of the individual, the individual’s values are more directly engaged.

Which brings me to my last point: it is possible to read Illich’s substantive critique of consumerist culture as an objection fundamentally rooted in a lack of authenticity and meaningfulness. Illich, at many points, seems to assume that a student *possesses a self* that is capable of being oppressed, and misguided; this suggests either that he ascribes to an overly romantic view of the atomic individual self, or (more likely) that his critique may be aimed primarily at the upper grades and universities, and less at the nurseries and primary grades in which students learn the language of their culture for the first time. He speaks disapprovingly of how “[o]nly by segregating human beings in the category of childhood could we ever get them to submit to the authority of a schoolteacher.” But wouldn’t an infant or very young child *naturally* submit to the authority of one who would instruct him, at least to some extent? Rousseau may have been wrong about many things, but he was right, I think, that children do not naturally wish to exceed their own natural boundaries, and they can be brought to recognize their own helplessness.

Even if natural submission isn’t the case, Illich seems to be asserting that there’s some “there there” in terms of a child’s *a priori* psychological make-up, something that a certain kind of institutional education ill-fits and degrades or destroys. And if that’s the case, if what Illich has in

mind is an objection rooted in the imposition of consumerist values over a child's already-existing values, then what we are concerned with could plausibly be cast as a case of authenticity-destroying deviant indoctrination. The unspoken premise behind Illich's account is that no human being would *naturally* adopt these strange, alien, institutional values. So we are left with the thought that what a system of institutional schooling is really up to is indoctrination – but of the very bad sort.

And that I have no problem condemning.

3.3.1.2. Goodman

Goodman's critique is, in many ways, substantially the same as Illich's, and to the extent that they overlap each other, I am not going to bother repeating the same arguments over again. Where they differ is in this: Goodman *has* a commitment to the idea of institutional education in the larger-scale sense: he supports it, but believes that it is terribly mismanaged and has exceeded the scope of its mandate. Goodman concedes that "every child must be educated to the fullest extent, brought up to be useful to society and to fulfill his own best powers. In our society, this must be done largely at the public expense, as a community necessity."²⁰² Yet schools, on Goodman's account, present an alienating environment, one that prevents the expansion of a child's powers and actively hinders them from becoming fully-functioning adults. They promote the same sort of consumerist mentality that Illich criticizes, and are unnecessarily conformist.

But Goodman relies on a strong distinction to be made between education for young children, and the sorts of education properly given to young adults and adolescents. "Primary schooling," he writes, "should be, mainly, baby-sitting. It has the great mission of democratic socialization—it certainly must not be segregated by race and income; apart from this, it should be happy, interesting, not damaging."²⁰³ Goodman generally seems to approve, for instance, of what

²⁰² Paul Goodman, *COMPULSORY MIS-EDUCATION* (Horizon Press 1964) at 172.

²⁰³ *Id.* at 68.

he takes as Dewey's purposes for education: to make students feel "at home" in the actual world in which they find themselves, the industrial and technological world of their experience.

It is after this initial period of socialization, however, that schooling turns pernicious and veers away from these laudable goals, if it ever was engaged with them in the first place. Higher learning for Goodman is not merely a continuation of primary socialization, but should be geared towards careers – something not always best addressed in dedicated educational settings. In a moment of dark speculation, Goodman suggests, by way of quoting Edgar Friedenberg, that the primary purpose of later education may actually be a sort of "spirit breaking." Because of his obligations to his 'education', the student "cannot follow his nose in reading and browsing in the library, or concentrate on a hobby that fires him, or get a job, or carry on a responsible love affair, or travel, or become involved in political action."²⁰⁴ Instead, the student is turned into something of a faceless cog, an "Organization Man" fulfilling the impersonal imperatives of a consumerist culture. As I said, in many ways Goodman and Illich are of a piece.

He also argues that the compulsory and universal nature of later schooling serves to prevent proper maturation in students. Proper growth is undermined by the separation of adolescents from adult culture; this segregation foments a distinctly "adolescent" culture which threatens and inhibits any genuine engagement with the adult culture, a culture into touch with which – ideally – school is supposed to be putting them. Instead, what is created is a sort of hostility: "youth culture" props up as a defense against the now-foreign adult culture. Why would the youth need a defense? In Goodman's estimation, an adolescent is not stupid, and he or she can tell when he or she is not being treated as a person, when he or she is being threatened or infantilized.

It is in this line of argument that Goodman's critique seems to present a much more serious problem for my views than Illich does. One consequence of what I've been arguing is that there is a

²⁰⁴ *Id.* at 107.

tremendous amount of room for cultural relativism so long as the student's initiation into the culture is, in fact, of the sort that allows him or her to form an authentic identity and to engage in meaningful projects with other people. Here is my dilemma: if indoctrination, taken as such, is only a harm if it is inconsistent with what is already present, and if the culture that the student is growing up in is a culture that prizes economic efficiency and consumerism, shouldn't this be able to provide the basis for meaningful interaction, and shouldn't it be perfectly permissible to raise children into that culture? Goodman says no, but it appears at first as if I must say yes.

The resolution of this problem, I think, requires taking very seriously the notion that an institutional consumerism of a certain type is not just another "cultural option", but is in fact somehow inimical to the nature of human beings, at odds with their natural dispositions in such a great degree that it can never be consistent with the values the student holds *ex ante* – even the most primitive sorts of values. And Goodman is, I think, fairly explicit that this is the case:

It is said that our schools are geared to "middle class values," but this is a false and misleading use of terms. The schools less and less represent *any* human values, but simply adjustment to a mechanical system.²⁰⁵

As I said, I am generally in-step with radical critiques of education. And while I don't wish to argue *towards* political points, neither would I wish to openly contradict things that I tend to consider true. If my account of education would allow for the (admittedly exaggerated) nightmarish scenarios of Illich and Goodman's account, I would think that I must have said something deeply, deeply mistaken. Frankly, I'm skeptical if the sorts of regimentation and passivity that Goodman complains about are really *part of* the culture he condemns; it strikes me as easily possible that the conformity and compliance is simply a *means* to the end, and not the end itself. Their imposition

²⁰⁵ *Id.* at 26. The schools, however, may be both mechanical and middle class. It may be that middle class culture, at least of a certain type, is no longer hospitable to at least a certain brand of humanity. In other words, the problem (if there is one) may actually be the "middle class values" and not the schools.

may even be counterproductive and destructive means that undermine the very educational ends in the service of which they are deployed. But let's allow, for argument's sake, that Goodman really is leveling a critique not just of a misguided school system, but of an emerging culture that is affirmatively destructive of its children's energies, futures, and spirits, one that is antithetical to what it means to be genuinely human.

I think in that case we can add a further qualification to my claims about indoctrination and education: education may have among its proper goals the provision of meaningful engagement, and indoctrination may be necessary towards that goal as a way of placing the student within the socio-linguistic contexts in which the generation of meaning (in the Deweyan sense) is possible. But in addition, we should hold that the socio-linguistic context itself must be the sort of context that is conducive to the meaningful social operation of human beings. Part of the critique of the mass-commercial culture that Dewey and Illich have in their sights is, I take it, that it separates us and *prevents* us from engaging with each other meaningfully, that the Organization Man is not really a man at all but that he has been thoroughly *organized*, that is, made into a mere organ of some greater body.

I'm more than willing to accept this limitation: it would not surprise me that we should be capable of denying what we really are. (That is, after all, part of the basis of Taylor's authenticity argument.) But I wouldn't want to give it too much substantial weight: people are amazingly adaptable creatures, capable of living and thriving and finding meaning in a tremendous variety of social and cultural contexts. Reading Plato, *Gilgamesh*, The *Lais* of Marie De France, the ostensible words of Jesus Christ, the prose of Nietzsche, the poetry of Wadsworth, the memoirs of Erwin Rommel or Robert E. Lee... I cannot help but think that we do not require too terribly specific a type of culture in which to find satisfaction and fulfillment, to lead meaningful lives filled with rich significance.

But at the same time, I will not deny that some cultures seem more fraught with meaning than others, and that initiation into those cultures may be, in terms of authenticity and meaningfulness, a “better” educational experience. I will take this up briefly in a Coda at the end of the dissertation, but for now, the discussion of whether some cultures are better than others brings us to our next (and far more serious) challenge: the democratic conception of education and its fairly strong stance *against* indoctrination.

3.3.2. The Democratic Conception of Education

A number of Philosophers, including John Dewey (in the context of whose work I’ve attempted to place my claims) appear to expressly deny my claim that indoctrination is compatible with education; on their view, indoctrination and education are simply inimical to each other, and an indoctrinated student has not been educated in the proper sense of the word.

There are two ways in which my claims run afoul of these views. The first area of disagreement is in the use of the term “indoctrination”. While most of these accounts agree that it may be the case that some indoctrination is necessary in order to instill the “initial” cultural schema in the student, to get them to see the purposes of the project and so forth, they hold that this initial stance must be remediated by developing critical habits and ultimately casting off the indoctrination, replacing it with a full-blooded, proper education. Indoctrination, then, is something that is *inherently* harmful, but its harm is defeasible in some way.

Our differences about the harmfulness of indoctrination are made possible, I think, because of a second and far deeper disagreement. The accounts I’m discussing in this section, Dewey included, appear to lay claim to exclusivity in defining the proper ends of education in a way that I find unjustified. More specifically, their conceptions of what counts as “proper” education constrain the applicability of my claim in the following way: a “proper” education, they assert, is a democratic, liberal education that opens the mind up to a critical, rational stance that is to be taken, at least

potentially, to every belief and value that comes within range. The end product of such an education, its advocates claim, is expressly *not* an indoctrinated subject. And to the extent that anything in the child's upbringing is left "off limits" to this sort of critical examination, the subject has been indoctrinated – which is bad.

For reasons which, if they are not already clear, will shortly become obvious, let us call the opponent view the "Democratic Conception of Education". And by way of example of our deepest disagreement, let me advance the following: I think that that an education that prepares someone for, say, a deeply and fundamentally religious life – an education comparable to, say, that of an Amish Farmer (we'll talk more about the Amish in Section 3.4, *infra*) – is a perfectly *proper* education insofar as it prepares someone to take up a meaningful role in their community and to engage in projects that touch on the horizons of significance that define authenticity within that community. I am not asserting that this is necessarily the best education, but I do not see such an education as being deficient *insofar as it is an education*. It may be deficient by the standards of one society or another, or deficient if it takes place within a certain given social context with which it is incompatible, but it seems to me to fill the requirements of an education – again, just taken as such – wonderfully. The driving thought for my opponents here seems to be that a "proper" education must necessarily aim at the best possible type of society. This seems to me to put too much burden on the concept of education, which I think must be free to describe cross-cultural phenomena. Were the world filled with naught but the Amish, for instance, I would be hard-pressed to say that there was no real education going on in the Amish schoolhouse or in the instruction of an apprentice. It seems blindingly obvious that there would be.

By contrast, theorists like Dewey, Kilpatrick, Cuypers, and Garrison who support the Democratic Conception of Education think that someone who is devoutly religious, and who appeals to, say, religious texts and precepts as evidence in their deliberations, has been crippled in a

way, deprived of a proper education and indoctrinated in the sense that they are not “rationally autonomous.” He or she has, in their view, been *indoctrinated*, not educated. I agree with the use of the term, but not with the moral implications behind it.

At bottom, our disagreement might seem to be, like the disagreement of whether indoctrination is “necessary” to education discussed above, merely terminological: what counts as “indoctrination” and what counts as “education”? But it is also, I think, a dispute of some substance. The Democratic Theorists see “proper education” in a very specific, value-laden light that substantively informs what they mean by “critical” and “rational”. As outlined above, my own view of a proper education is less value-laden, and more descriptively functional. That is not to say I do not think that the word “proper” has no application to education, merely that my application of it circumscribes a more inclusive and generally defined set of imperatives.

I reject the notion that some particular fundamental world-pictures, described with words like “democratic” and “rational” and “critical”, have any *irrefutable* claim to our hearts and minds except perhaps insofar as we might already be adherents. (Of course, once we are adherents, it becomes obvious to us that this is the way we should look at things.) Those supporting the Democratic Conception, on the other hand, see these perspectives as privileged, as special in their merit. It is that specialness, I take it, which is thought to give these perspectives the status they need to stand as inherently and fundamentally opposed to the process of indoctrination. And that opposition is fairly severe; Mary Ann Raywid described Dewey’s view of this incompatibility in the following way:

[Dewey claimed] that a commitment to democracy, and to the scientific method, can be truly learned only through the application and exercise of intelligence. One cannot “stamp in” or indoctrinate such commitment; only what is made automatic and non-reflective can be stamped in, or indoctrinated, or imposed. Reflection, judgment, reasoning – which are central requisites of the true democrat and the faithful pursuit of the scientific method – simply cannot be acquired via impositional methods of education. Thus, for

the same reasons that a totalitarian society *must* indoctrinate in order to assure its perpetuation, a democratic society *cannot* do so.²⁰⁶

Yet, as we know from our previous discussion, there is a worm in this particular rose. The sickness is regress: what reasons shall we give the child in the first place, and how shall the child know to respond to them as reasons? It seems that democracy *requires* a certain amount of indoctrination to perpetuate itself.²⁰⁷ MacMillan called this the “problem of indoctrination”, that “students must be indoctrinated in order not to be indoctrinated.”²⁰⁸ I don’t think this is a problem at all, per se, because – and I should remind the reader that this is really my point – I think that indoctrination is *necessary* to a proper education. Yet the Democratic Theorists disagree, and so they tackle the problem of indoctrination.

There are, it seems, two main lines of response to this problem, neither of which I find philosophically satisfying. By looking at these two lines of response, I hope it will become clear that the adherents to the Democratic Conception have a particular view of indoctrination that is simply not a threat to my account: we aren’t talking about the same things.

3.3.2.1. The First Response: Denial.

The first, which I take is Dewey’s, is to simply deny that a problem exists. His response to this argument is startling in its certitude:

The objection seems to me purely dialectical, due to taking a concept formally without regard for its content. The value which is prized is that of permitting and encouraging each student to do his own observing and reflecting and arrive in the end at his own scheme of valuations. If the result is called indoctrination it is at least a self-

²⁰⁶ Mary Ann Raywid, “The Discovery and Rejection of Indoctrination”, 30 *EDUCATIONAL THEORY* 1, 7 (1980).

²⁰⁷ See the various writings of George Counts on the subject, notably *The American Road to Culture* and *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*. See also Richard Gatchel, *supra* n.1 at 13-15. Counts seems to have avoided invoking the “bad” sense of indoctrination, which still hadn’t come to the fore by the time he was writing.

²⁰⁸ MacMillan, *supra* n194, at 370.

correcting indoctrination, not one which demands subordination of critical discrimination and comparison. For the unified end is based on method, not on pre-established conclusions to be arrived at.²⁰⁹

Here, Dewey is focused on the *ends* that are sought in the process of democratic education: those ends (and the means that are necessary to reach them, for Dewey was adamant about means matching ends) transform the character of what is going on in the student. Rather than becoming a slavish devotee to some ideological project or another, the properly educated student is able to engage in reflection and critical inquiry, coming to his or her own conclusions. While I recognize that this is not, in and of itself, an argument – I cannot help but note that this seems like an incredibly thin distinction, and one that is not grounded at the level of inquiry in which it needs to be grounded in order to be either fruitful or stable. Let me explain what I mean.

It seems fairly obvious to me that the democratic and scientific ideals invoked by Dewey are being justified by appeal to *the standards of the democratic and scientific ideals* that Dewey is promoting. “The value which is prized” is arriving at one’s own scheme of valuations, so long as one does not dispose of the prized value along the way. Here, Dewey appears to be advocating a sort of scientific inquiry – observation and reflection of a certain kind. Why should we think that scientific inquiry gives us what we need from education? Why? At the risk of sounding flippant, it seems that the answer is something like, “Because it lets us engage in critical inquiry, of course!”

This circularity should hardly be surprising: Peters already informed us that to be educated into a socio-linguistic paradigm is to come to see things from that point of view. This is how education – a proper education at the most fundamental level – operates. Dewey wants to carve out

²⁰⁹ Dewey, “Discussion of Freedom, in Relation to Culture, Social Planning, and Leadership”, in *THE LATER WORKS OF JOHN DEWEY, 1925-1953: VOLUME 6 - 1931-1932* 142, 144 (Boydston, Ed., Southern Illinois University, 1985) I do not take this remark as an indication that Dewey was willing to concede that indoctrination is necessary. At most, he seems to have made a rhetorical concession in order to strengthen his denial; Dewey does not think that an indoctrination that does not subordinate critical discrimination is any true indoctrination at all.

indoctrination, to say that the instilling of other worldviews, not his, is indoctrination. The justification has little to do with indoctrination, however, and everything to do with what is not included in Dewey's own worldview. That is fine insofar as one is pushing the merits of one's views, but it is a *strange* place from which to philosophically argue for the exclusivity of one's views. And exclusivity is really what is at issue here, for it is the exclusivity of those views, I take it, that underlies the move to exclude indoctrination in *other views* as something to be avoided at all costs.

Let me be clear: I do not actually have any real problem with someone arguing that their point of view is justified because it's right, even if such an argument is necessarily made from within their own particular perspective. I think that's probably how we make most of our evaluations of things as we go through life, and it may be a necessity. But I take it that part of what we are doing in attempting to philosophically sketch out theories of education, of what is proper in education and how education can lead to a good life, is to consider the options carefully and objectively, and to engage in reflection uncolored by dogma to the extent possible. Yet it seems to me that in defending the democratic conception of education, Dewey is violating the very principles that he is advocating.²¹⁰

I'm not terribly bothered by hypocrisy on a moral level: without a strong dose of moral hypocrisy idealism would likely be impossible. But philosophical hypocrisy is another matter entirely; and I think that there is reason to suspect that advocates of the Democratic Conception who argue that "their" indoctrination isn't indoctrination at all are simply not seeing things the way they really are.

²¹⁰ I could very easily see it being the case, though I will not actually argue the point here, that a non-dogmatic evaluation is impossible. Perhaps the best we can hope for is to understand our dogmas and commitments, to recognize them, embrace them, and pursue them without reservation.

3.3.2.2. The Second Response: Remediation

The second line of responses accepts that the implanting of initial values – democratic values, and the values of rational and scientific persuasion – *is* in fact indoctrinative. But having granted that, it asserts that this indoctrination can be usefully replaced or ameliorated at a later date with a “mature” point of view which is genuinely critical. In this way, the incompatibility of indoctrination and the Democratic Conception of Education is maintained. Two of the best-developed versions of this are, I think, offered by James W. Garrison on the one hand, and Stefaan Cuypers and Ishtiyaque Haji on the other.

Garrison starts by conceding MacMillan’s outline of the problem of indoctrination (which Garrison calls “the paradox of indoctrination”), including the Wittgensteinian notions of “world pictures”. He admits that there must be an initial imprinting of a rational scheme. But Garrison argues that what is created by this process is not in fact “full rationality”; this indoctrinated, defective rationality requires an “inoculation” of doubt to cure it. That doubt is caused by introducing a *second* “world picture”, the operation of which will be able to give him sufficient distance to engage in critical self-reflection (presumably of the first world picture), but which can be “suspended” when it threatens to become debilitating. The cure for Wittgenstein, it seems, is Descartes.

Yet the notion of a “second world picture” seems deeply problematic to me – and its invocation seems like the employment of the word without any regard to what it actually means. A world picture is, by its nature, stable; it is also “the substratum of all... enquiring and asserting.” If it is not, then I take it that it is simply not a *Weltbild* in the Wittgensteinian sense, but rather some artifact that depends on (and in turn supports) that which is actually the operative world picture. How does one have two such fundamental grounds, let alone dance between them? To the extent that this “second world picture” is able to be introduced at all, it seems *extremely* likely – if not

metaphysically necessary – that it’s only introducible at all because it is compatible with of the content of the first picture, which has “primed” the ground. Indeed, it’s not clear to me that there really is a “second” picture at work at all in the so-called “inoculation”. Rather, it seems like a natural maturation of the first world-picture.

To be rational – but not fully rational – one would have already had to accept certain notions, such as testing hypotheses and perhaps looking for certain types of evidence, as fundamental. The initial world-picture, then, demands of *explanation* of a certain, perhaps limited kind. The seeds of later doubt are thus already planted, because despite its initial indoctrinating nature, religious-like certainty about conclusions simply isn’t at a premium in the initial picture. In other words, the “doubt” is already there in the first world-picture at the outset; it’s part of the “rational” *Weltbild*, though perhaps it does not spring from the subject’s brow fully-grown

If I can indulge in metaphor for a moment, the scientific, skeptical worldview is like a very hungry man at a banquet; he can’t devour everything at once, and his attention is limited: he needs to digest his food. Yet he will, given time, get to every dish; and when he runs out of food, he will begin to devour himself. At the end, the doubt of the scientific world-picture will run out of food and will turn itself on the very supposed nature of reality – but at no point does he ever stop being hungry. It is the hunger that defines his operations. More directly, it does not seem to me at all that the world-picture has been *replaced*; perhaps it evolves, but it seems to evolve in a way that is perfectly organic and consistent with the way in which it is first instilled in the student.

I am not, after all, doubting that our world pictures can change and evolve; our values change all of the time, and sometimes, through Damascene-like moments of conversion, or through extremely deep and effective *deviant* indoctrination, the breaks and discontinuities between our world pictures from one time period to another can be stark and wide. But this talk of “second world pictures” – and by that I mean second *simultaneous* world pictures, for it seems possible that a person

could be introduced to another world picture and that its introduction could so drastically change the landscape that what emerges could plausibly be called a third, but still *singular* picture – seems like a purely Scholastic exercise, the creation of fictional distinctions in order to justify theoretical arrangement that appear to accomplish some sort of ideological goal. I will say no more of it here.

Cuypers & Haji make very, very similar arguments to Garrison's, but what seems at first to be a much more promising vein (though their prose is not nearly as accessible). They are responding to the indoctrination paradox as it makes its way from Siegel, not from Wittgenstein. Their approach thus deals not with *Weltbilder* but with more generalized, perhaps less fundamental “evaluative schemes.” Indeed, their work seems at points somewhat hostile to the notion that there are any perspectives that should be viewed as fundamental, but we will get to that shortly.

They tentatively accept that indoctrination is necessary for a rational evaluative scheme, but their worry is that such a process might produce what they call “proto-critical thinking”.²¹¹ A proto-critical thinker is one whose “evaluative scheme” reflects the rules of logic and rationality but whose possession of that scheme is nonetheless deeply problematic insofar as it isn't held *autonomously*. A fully rational thinker, they argue, is autonomous.

Their account of autonomy, however, is premised on an account of authenticity. At times, they seem to be thinking of authenticity in a similar way to the way I approach it here: an “authentic evaluative scheme” is “truly the agent's own, and not alien or foreign to their bearer.”²¹² This sense of proper ownership is described explicitly in terms of moral responsibility.²¹³ The result is that their

²¹¹ I take it that this fills the same sort of space as Garrison's “full rationality”.

²¹² Cuypers & Haji, *supra* n.138, at 735. Technically, it is the *elements* of the scheme which are the agent's own, though it is not clear to me what exactly these elements are.

²¹³ The notion of moral responsibility that they are using to ground their discussion of authenticity is very similar to the one employed by John Martin Fischer, which I used to get at what I meant by “expression”. Their use of moral responsibility is much more substantive, however, and less poetic. For Cuypers & Haji, moral responsibility for something is the benchmark of authenticity.

notion of authenticity has far more to do with *actual control* than consistency, and they use moral responsibility as an epistemic tool for determining whether or not authenticity obtains. The structure of their argument is to use moral responsibility to establish authenticity, and authenticity as a way to establish autonomy. The real concern, then, is whether beliefs are held autonomously.²¹⁴

To set out their account, they invite us to imagine a child, playfully named “Ratio”, who has the scientific principles of reason and evidence either (a) beaten into him or (b) indoctrinated in less morally objectionable means.²¹⁵ Their account, I think, can be summed up in terms of this thought experiment in the following way:

- Ratio is not fully a rational thinker in case (a) because he would not be morally responsible for the operation of his critical faculties.
- The reason he would not be morally responsible is that he would have resisted *acquiring* those critical dispositions in the manner he did – so his acquisition was neither authentic nor autonomous.
- Thus, while he may *act* rationally in case (a), but he does not do so “freely”.
- Ratio is not a fully rational thinker in case (b) because he is “not autonomous [read: not morally responsible] with respect to the possession of many of the critical desires.”
- He is not autonomous because he is incapable of either shaking those beliefs or suspending their operation should he determine either of those to be the best course of action.
- Were he able to do this, then the critical desires would be genuinely “his”.

²¹⁴ I find the way autonomy predominates what is supposed to be a discussion of indoctrination to be a matter of some concern. To bring autonomy to the fore, it seems, is either to confuse process with result, or to simply deny the Authentic Subject Problem outright. Indoctrinated subjects, I take it, *are* autonomous, and I would even say that they are morally responsible. (Which isn’t to say, though, that just because the post-indoctrination subject is morally responsible, the pre-indoctrination subject is also responsible; I postulated something like a break in identity in Chapter 2.)

²¹⁵ The authors actually have two separate cases which I am lumping together here due to their similarity.

Thus, to be *autonomously* rational and thus also to be morally responsible for one's rationality apparently necessitates coming voluntarily to one's rationality, and also being able to shed oneself of rationality at will (a deeply Incompatibilist picture, I think). Where either of these is not the case, the conditions are "authenticity-undermining" rather than "authenticity reinforcing", and the rationality in question is only "proto-rationality." Their view, then, is that anyone subject to indoctrination *of any sort* necessarily holds views which are really not "theirs", because they are not fully in control of their possession.

Cuypers & Hajii thus discount the Authentic Subject Problem completely—which I think reflects a deep misunderstanding of how indoctrination differs from other forms of more overt, less insidious manipulation; an indoctrinated subject is fully sincere, and fully autonomous. They are able to do this, I strongly suspect, because they disagree with Flew that the history of how one comes to a belief is analytically irrelevant to *what* the belief is or how it is held. I simply disagree. With respect to Flew's point, while the history of our beliefs *may* have some special meaning to us, they need not (and even if they do the history need not be true). I might have a special story of why I came to love opera, but that is distinct from the fact that I do love opera (particularly if the belief is the result of indoctrination, and the indoctrination was successful).

There is a paradox inherent in the view advanced by Cuypers and Hajii: to say that it matters how we come to some particular state is to assume that the same state may be achieved by different means. Yet to say that how a belief is held (autonomously or not) is *necessarily* determined by how the belief was acquired is to simultaneously deny this. Cuypers & Hajii cannot have it both ways, and Flew has the better of this argument.

I also wonder if there isn't a deeper incoherence at work. An "autonomously held" evaluative scheme (or an element thereof) is, on their account, one that can be cast aside at will. That is, it appears to be an implication of their account that an autonomously held scheme is one

towards which the holder may then exercise *full* autonomy, without reference or obligation to the scheme itself. The example they give is a bizarre one: autonomous authenticity in one's commitment to "rationality" would require that one be able to shed that commitment in order to, say, sincerely join a religious community. Let's assume this example could happen: what could *possibly* serve as the basis for making that decision in the first place? Surely it would have to be evidence of some sort, interpreted through an evaluative scheme as being a reason for joining the religious community. Our hypothetical convert would need a reason for shedding the first scheme, and for seeing it as "the thing to do": perhaps they are in love, perhaps they were moved by a religious experience, perhaps they want rest from the tumult of commercial life. The will that wills such a thing is not an empty will; it is a will that evaluates, that judges and acts on reasons. It is a will informed by evaluative schemes. But now regress is visiting us once again. There are, as I see it, two options.

The first is that if we are *entirely* "authentic", then we are utterly and completely adrift, unmoored from any overarching way of looking at the world. This decision is here made on that evaluative scheme, that decision there on another; there is neither rhyme nor reason as to which scheme applies at any given time. Were there rhyme or reason, it would be according to some scheme or another, and that would then be the fundamental scheme whose unquestioned rule would thereby be rendered "inauthentic". We call this state mental illness, and I wouldn't want to confuse it with authenticity of any kind. Hume was right: to not have a stable core guiding one's actions is not freedom, but madness.

The second possibility, and the one I think is probably indicative of what Cuypers and Haji are up to, is that there really is an evaluative scheme that sits in the background, quietly carrying out its work. That scheme would be the one that is truly important, and the "authenticity" of any other scheme would be a function of whether it is properly subordinated to that underlying master. In

fact, a very close reading of their article shows what is likely the true nature of this underlying scheme. Their notion of autonomy -- the autonomy that one is supposed to exercise towards ones “critical desires” -- is itself dependent on a *rational* evaluative scheme.

Cuypers and Hajji never actually explain what they mean by autonomy; the most explicit thing they do is “suggest that one’s desires are autonomous... only if these desires are... authentic.”²¹⁶ But it is clear from their earlier discussion that they have acknowledged that autonomy requires that...

...in addition to being a chooser, a person must adopt a code of conduct as *his own* and also subject it to critical reflection in light of *rational* principles. Autonomous choice has to be ‘authentic’ as well as rationally informed.”²¹⁷

This element of rationality disappears from their argument as they move to talk of authenticity and moral responsibility, but having once poked its head up from the brambles, it seems to me to be the only plausible explanation for how it is that the autonomous chooser is to choose to (supposedly) abandon the principles of rationality and join his religious community.

Cuypers and Hajji are sincerely worried about the victims of an initial indoctrination being “reason’s slave”, and their account is supposed to provide us with a way of seeing how an authenticity-preserving presentation of rational norms can bring about an autonomously-held rationality that avoids the problem of indoctrination. But their subjects have not gained appreciable distance from their shackles as far as I can see.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Cuypers & Haji, *supra* n.138, at 731.

²¹⁷ *Id.* at 726 (emphasis in original).

²¹⁸ There is actually a third option: that there is in each person a fundamental evaluative scheme already in place, one fine-grained and textured enough to be able to make distinctions and decisions among things like rationality and religion. I have no idea what such a fundamental scheme would look like, nor on what basis it would make its decisions. I find the entire notion utterly implausible.

Of course, the fact that no one has satisfactorily solved the “problem of indoctrination” is hardly a proof that it is not really a problem. But I think that, in looking at the way that various philosophers have attempted to tackle the problem, one can see a certain pattern of question-begging that goes back to Dewey, who I think can credibly be called the father of the democratic conception. Dewey’s critique is explicitly made from within the paradigm of a certain kind of scientific worldview – and it is the very sort of worldview which he argues necessitates a democratic approach to education. (And it very well may.) But if we adopt that view, then any teaching that results in a dogmatic belief is thereby suspect, Dewey’s denials notwithstanding. Given the realities of educating children, we confront the paradox of indoctrination, and even the most thoughtful and scientifically oriented early childhood education would then need to be explained, justified.

Garrison’s response to the problem is simply incoherent once one considers the nature of the “world pictures” that he is discussing; the pictures aren’t the sort of thing that can “compete”, and it’s reasonable to see the doubt about which he is writing as just the *Weltbild* of the democratic conception itself coming to fruition.

Grappling with the same problem, Cuypers & Hajji find themselves implying, apparently, that there is some underlying evaluative scheme in place in relation to which their notion of “authenticity” can be judged. Once again, proponents of the Democratic Conception are operating from an underlying worldview which is taken for granted and which by all accounts seems to be the very rational scheme whose imposition was supposed to be ameliorated in the first instance by ensuring authenticity.

I take it from all this that the Democratic Conception’s arguments against indoctrination are based on an implicitly *content*-based definition of values indoctrination that seems to exclude the content inherent in the Democratic Conception itself outright; indoctrination appears to be unshakable conviction in anything other than the propriety of a rational sort of empirical (and

internally reflective) skepticism. The Democratic Conception's rejection of indoctrination, then, is premised on an underlying commitment to a *substantive* and culturally specific ideal of education that presupposes a particular set of values: liberal, democratic, scientific values that are not themselves seen as ideological, despite their obviously ideological content. (How many times have we heard people loudly proclaim at the need to get ideology out of politics? As if such a thing were even possible!)

Yet as I indicated at the outset of this section, I am not convinced that, to the extent that living a meaningful life is an important end of education, one needs to operate within the values of the Democratic Conception in order to accomplish this goal. I am simply not willing to cede to them sole use of the term education in its proper sense, and unless I were to do so, I do not see any reason to think that indoctrination is necessarily incompatible with a proper education.

I am not claiming that the Democratic Conception of Education is simply wrong; I am attacking it solely on the grounds of its distaste for indoctrination. Perhaps its approach is correct on moral or even practical grounds, and in order to spread happiness and prosperity, education needs to be devoted to a sort of rational autonomy and critical dispositions and all that other stuff. But while spreading happiness and prosperity are worthy goals for education to have, it is not at all clear to me that those are goals that are goals of education *taken as such*. The early parts of this Chapter were devoted to showing how one of the most basic functions of education is initiating students into a sort of meaningful life; and meaningfulness, I have argued in Chapter 2, is *intersubjective* in its nature.

If one opts for a more strictly objective standard to satisfy Wolf's objective criterion for meaningfulness, one will be more likely to point to some substantive system of value and say "That system there... that's the *right* system for determining what's valuable." In such a system, certain activities just won't cut the mustard, no matter what their social context. And I take it that this is

exactly what is going on with the Democratic Conception: they think that they're right. But even if that were the case (and I think it is because, for the most part, I myself operate within that paradigm) I do not find the associated commentary on indoctrination to be particularly illuminating because of the way that the ideological context dominates the discussion.

I think that what counts as “indoctrination” for these theorists can be best characterized as indoctrination that yields results with which they ultimately disagree, given their own values and world pictures. MacMillan suggested that “indoctrination may only be a problem for people who already have this game or practice of giving reasons and evidence for beliefs.”²¹⁹ There's probably something to that, though I hope I've made it clear that I think indoctrination is necessary even for perpetuating such beliefs.

“Indoctrination”, the way the theorists of the Democratic Conception use it, may be a term of art, a bit of inside baseball for referring to the sorts of views that are not welcome within that values system. Thus, the Democratic Conception of indoctrination risks boiling down to a very philosophically sophisticated version of the view of indoctrination that I dismissed at the outset of Chapter 1, namely “the teaching of those damn lies from the other side.”

And that seems at once uncharitable and unhelpful.

3.4. Why Open Futures Aren't Important

The account of education that I've offered here, one in which indoctrination is necessary to attain the proper ends of education, is a fairly relativistic one. While I wholeheartedly agree with Peters that education necessarily involves transmitting some cultural or linguistic legacy of value, I haven't taken up any particular perspective on what makes a particular legacy valuable. In fact, I've offered a picture that runs contrary to many claims that education must, to be proper, be either aimed at “rational autonomy” in the modern sense, or “democratic” (to the extent that there is any

²¹⁹ MacMillian, *supra* n.194, at 371.

space between those two conceptions). Because my account of a proper education (again, taken as such) is based on meaningfulness, and because meaningfulness finds its objective value in *intersubjectivity*, the education of, say, Spartans in the ways of war esteemed by their culture is every bit as much a “proper education” as the education of Athenians in politics, the education of young modern Americans in computer programming and mathematics, or even the education of Amish children into the skills and crafts of their community. What is important in each case for ensuring that the education is proper is that the student comes to value and participate in certain types of activities that his or her community find worthwhile, and is given the knowledge and skill needed to participate in those activities.

Unfortunately, the picture of education I am endorsing is one that runs squarely into the conclusions of Joel Feinberg’s fairly well-known “Open Future Argument,” and not for a loving embrace. I have argued that a substantial portion of the value of an education is in *becoming* a certain type of person, of joining a society in its views and values. And while I am generally willing to advance the views of this dissertation as holding *ceteris paribus*, with my normative conclusions subject to being overcome by specific situational factors, if Feinberg’s argument is correct, then the moral justification for education actually depends on its ensuring that students are not limited in the scope of their futures by virtue of their being impressed with a particular cultural horizon. While I have not cast my characterization of education in explicitly moral terms, preferring to concentrate on how education plays out in terms of authenticity and meaningfulness, I also do not want to be in a position where a “proper education” education on my account is meaningful, but *inherently* immoral. Feinberg’s conclusions, if true, threaten to undermine so much of my account that there simply wouldn’t be much left. So I find myself compelled to respond. A brief sketch of the argument would, of course, be useful.

3.4.1. Feinberg's Open Future Argument

Feinberg's argument is an autonomy-based argument aimed against a class of behaviors undertaken with respect to children, which behaviors seem to obviously include at least several forms of indoctrination. Children are, he asserts, the bearers of certain "rights in trust" – rights that their parents and guardians must act to protect until such time as they are properly able to exercise them for themselves.²²⁰ Parents and similar authorities go wrong when they act to prevent or limit a child's future exercise of those rights in an unnecessary way, in much the same way that someone who cut off a child's legs would be violating that child's *future* right to walk down the sidewalk.²²¹ These future rights secure the opportunity for a good life that is determined not by *the child's* own preferences and desires; rather, "[i]t is the adult he is to become who must exercise the choice, more exactly, the adult he will become if his basic options are kept open and his growth kept "natural" or unforced."²²² In other words, it is incumbent on parents and teachers and the like to ensure that the child is in a position to make the best possible choices for him or her later on; to that end, futures must be kept "open".²²³

To see how Feinberg means his argument to play out, we can look at one of his central examples: the education of children in Amish communities. Much of the article is a discussion of *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, a 1972 Supreme Court decision which found that a state could not require the Amish to continue to send their children to school after finishing the eighth grade educations that

²²⁰ Joel Feinberg, "The Child's Right to an Open Future", *supra* n.75, at 125-127.

²²¹ *Id.* at 126. This is Feinberg's example.

²²² *Id.* at 127.

²²³ Kenneth Henley makes a very similar argument, premised in notions of liberty rather than future rights. Kenneth Henley, "The Authority to Educate", in *HAVING CHILDREN: PHILOSOPHICAL AND LEGAL REFLECTIONS ON PARENTHOOD* 254 (O'Neil & Ruddick, Eds., Oxford University Press 1979).

the sect provided.²²⁴ Chief Justice Burger set forth a majority opinion that indicated²²⁵ that he found convincing the arguments that the additional schooling would endanger the Amish way of life, and held that the rights of the parents to “guide the religious future and education of their children” would be affirmed.²²⁶ But why, Feinberg asks, should we put the parents’ rights to guide the child’s education ahead of the child’s future rights-in-trust as to what sort of life they want to lead?

Feinberg’s criticism of Chief Justice Burger’s opinion is based on the view that the Amish education amounts to a violation of their children’s right to an open future (although he appears to agree with the decision on practical, legal grounds insofar as the relevant interests may have been properly balanced).²²⁷ The specific right undermined by an eighth-grade Amish education is the right to choose one’s own vocation in life.²²⁸ He makes this point fairly explicitly:

An education that renders a child fit for only one way of life forecloses irrevocably his other options. He may be a pious Amish farmer, but it will be difficult to the point of practical impossibility for him to become an engineer, a physician, a research scientist, a lawyer, or a business executive.²²⁹

The implication is obvious: an 8th grade education geared towards being a farmer is not a proper sort of education. A proper education, or at least the best sort of education, should be “neutral” towards these sort of outcomes: one should be able to become a research scientist *or* a farmer. A critical issue here is whether this sort of neutrality is possible at all, and it is here that I

²²⁴ Wisconsin v. Yoder, 406 U.S. 205 (1972)

²²⁵ I say “indicated” rather than “held” because it is not clear that these parts of the opinion are not *dicta*, in the legal sense.

²²⁶ See also Pierce v. Society of Sisters, 268 U.S. 510 (1925).

²²⁷ Feinberg, *supra* n.75, at 136-137.

²²⁸ *Id.* at 134.

²²⁹ *Id.* at 132.

think Burger and Feinberg have a significant disagreement.²³⁰ On the one hand, Chief Justice Burger seems to think it is not possible – at least not in the case of the Amish. The *Yoder* court indicated that while two years of high school may be a necessity for 1970’s industrial, commercial society, those same years are not only less necessary in “the preparation of the child for life in the separated agrarian community that is the keystone of the Amish faith,” but potentially fatal to it.²³¹ If there is a choice between an Amish way of life and a “modern” way of life, Burger seems to think the choice is exclusive.

Feinberg, on the other hand, asserts that it would be *just as wrong* to view “the goal of education” to be preparation for Amish life as it is to view it as preparation for commercial-industrial life. Instead, he claims, we should strike a balance, and attempt to equip a child with “knowledge and skills that will help him choose whichever sort of life best fits his native endowments and matured disposition.”²³² Feinberg invokes Justice White’s concurrence to cast the role of education as nurturing and developing “human potential: “to expand their knowledge, broaden their sensibilities, kindle their imagination, foster a spirit of free inquiry, and increase their human understanding and tolerance.”²³³ Feinberg also endorses White’s claim that “education can be compulsory... only because, or only when, it is neutral.”

There are thus two distinct strands to the open futures argument. The first is the conclusion of the argument itself: that children have rights-in-trust to open futures. I’m not necessarily in

²³⁰ Feinberg appears at points to concede that this sort of neutrality may be impossible, but he also later endorses Justice White’s claim that “education can be compulsory... only because, or only when, it is neutral” While perfect neutrality may not be an option, Feinberg thinks that there is “hope that it can be approached or approximated to some degree.” *Id.* at 136. I take it, then, that Feinberg thinks for all practical purposes that neutrality *is* possible, even if perfect neutrality may not be.

²³¹ *Yoder*, 406 U.S. at 213, cited by Feinberg, *supra* n.75, at 134.

²³² Feinberg, *supra* n.75, at 134-135.

²³³ *Yoder*, 406 U.S. at 237-238, cited by Feinberg, *supra* n.75, at 137-138.

disagreement with Feinberg here. The second strand appears to be asserting that the way to protect and enforce these rights-in-trust, at least with respect to education, is to engage in a sort of neutrality with respect to the exercise of the child's future rights. Furthermore, the way to exercise that sort of neutrality seems to be, on Feinberg's account, an open, tolerant, liberal sort of education that we are to believe doesn't "close off" futures unnecessarily.²³⁴ It is with this conclusion that I take issue, for the reasons I described above in the introduction to this section.

In addition to setting out his argument, Feinberg also takes on two potential problems for his account – and they are variations on the critique I will eventually advance, so it is worth looking at his responses here. The first rests on two seemingly undeniable facts:²³⁵

- (1) that "whatever policy is adopted by a child's parents, and whatever laws are passed and enforced by the state, the child's options in respect to life circumstances and character will be substantially narrowed well before he is an adult;" and
- (2) that this narrowing will in turn have a profound outcome on what sort of person the child will want to become.

To these two facts is added an imperative: if this narrowing of open futures must take place, Feinberg claims, it should take place in a way that respects the child's natural talents and inclinations and preserves his self-determination. And now we can see the problem: we must respect the child's inclinations and talents in deciding how we will limit its future (for such limitation seems inevitable). But the child's inclinations and talents are themselves going to be a product of the limitations that are imposed. The problem is in one sense epistemic: how can we *know* which limitations to impose? But it is also metaphysical: is there even a "self" to respect in the developing child, and if not, what are we worried about?

²³⁴ This last point does not seem to be part of the formal conclusion of his argument, but it is telling, I think, that it emerges in his account at all. It will be discussed more below.

²³⁵ Feinberg, *supra* n.75 at 146.

The second problem Feinberg addresses is identical in structure but applied to self-fulfillment rather than self-determination. As he puts it: “if a person’s own good is to be understood as self-fulfillment, we cannot fully know the small child’s long term future good until its ‘nature’ is fully formed, but equally we cannot determine how to best shape its nature until we know what will be for its own good.”²³⁶ Or more succinctly: “[T]he parents help create some of the interests whose fulfillment will constitute the child’s good.” There are echoes of the Authentic Subject Argument in these counterarguments; Feinberg seems concerned that the value of various open futures will be determined with respect to the value systems which arise from the “closed” futures that are put in place. These “closed” futures, of course, are supposed to be imposed only with respect to the value of the open futures. Though Feinberg doesn’t phrase it this way, I take it that the worry is that “closed” futures then become self-justifying in a way somewhat similar to the way that I was worried that the values imposed by indoctrination seem to justify it, *ex post*.

Feinberg’s response to both of these arguments is fairly straightforward.²³⁷ He asserts that there is a core “initial” self – one with a “kind of rudimentary character consisting of temperamental proclivities and a genetically fixed potential for the acquisition of various talents and skills.” These initial inclinations push the self in an initial direction, and then over time an increasingly well-defined self emerges. “Always,” he asserts, “the self that contributes to the making of the new self is itself the product both of outside influences and an earlier self that was not quite fully formed.” At every stage, and to a growing degree over time, the personality of the child is (at least partially) self-determined. Likewise, Feinberg argues against the second problem by asserting that a child’s self-fulfillment will be found through “strengthen[ing] the basic tendencies of the child as manifested” at each stage of his or her development. These tendencies – be they that the child is “naturally

²³⁶ *Id.* at 147.

²³⁷ *See id.* at 148-151.

gregarious” or of a more private nature, more given to order and structure or to spontaneity and freedom, more or less respectful or doubtful of authority – are “the germ... of fundamental convictions and styles of life that the child will still be working out and trying to understand and justify when he is an adult.” It is thus possible to get the open future argument ‘off the ground’, as it were, and to know how to go about setting the inevitable initial sorts of limitations.

3.4.2. The Value of “Closed” Futures

As I indicated above, to the extent that a parent or guardian is charged not only with looking after the child’s interest, but can also be said to be holding certain “rights in trust” – I think Feinberg presents an excellent point. I’m also willing to grant that to the extent that a child’s education is stunted in such a way that he is prevented from engaging in meaningful, productive activities, the future adult that the child will become is harmed. That’s just to say that harms sometimes play out over time. The decision not to teach American slaves to read in the seventeenth century, for instance, was a harm at the time it was committed in part because it prevented slaves from engaging, *in the future*, in meaningful activities, and from pursuing a good life. Indeed, it was a deliberate tactic to keep the slave as a slave and to cut off any other possible, better future for the slave.

So certainly, I think, a person’s future self can be harmed by crippling them now in some way. And I can even accept that the measure of such future harm will be measured, to one extent or another, counterfactually, that is, against some “might have been” scenario. If I cut off your leg as a child, the harm you suffer as an adult is measured against some counterfactual projection of what your life might have been like. I do not, however, think that any of this thereby bestows a present value on any specific “open futures”. In other words, the fact that harm is suffered in the future and is measured against alternative futures does not mean that the alternate futures thereby have an independent value that should be protected.

3.4.2.1. Mills' Critique

Unlike Claudia Mills, who has offered probably the most straightforward critiques of Feinberg's views, I do not take the very idea of pursuing "open futures" to be impossible.²³⁸ I would cede to her that whether a future is "open" or "closed" is not binary but is rather a matter of degree. Yet I don't see that that provides an insurmountable obstacle to Feinberg's account. In fact, as I will argue below, I think this helps it survive some of Mills' later attacks. And while I think she is right to note that what should matter in keeping options open is a question of variety rather than mere quantity, I also think that Feinberg can easily enough be read as endorsing something like a "variety"-based view of the value of open futures rather than some odd preference for mere numbers, so I am unmoved by Mills' critique in that respect.

Her critique, however, is premised on a thought that I find very intuitive and plausible: that the "keeping open" of certain types of apparently incompatible futures really results in closing them off to a certain extent. I think her discussions of community – particularly the point that in order to be a part of a community one must *become a part* of that community and not dance around the fringes – are well-taken. And I share her intuitions that if I leave open to a child the possibility of being a deeply devoted Catholic *as well as* a deeply devoted Muslim, there is a real sense in which what I've really done is "close off" both futures to a significant degree. Being *in* the religion (and more specifically in the religious community) seems to be a practical prerequisite to counting wholehearted religious devotion count as a practically "open" future in the first place.²³⁹

²³⁸ See Claudia Mills, "The Child's Right to an Open Future?", 34 J. OF SOCIAL PHIL. 499 (Winter 2003).

²³⁹ See *id.* at 502-503 ("I do not think this child-rearing plan [of Feinberg's] is neutral in effect, however neutral it is in intention. It simply provides further evidence of the degree to which meaningful neutrality is impossible. * * * * For this little boy, in his weekly surveys of various creeds and rituals, is not really being given the experience of *belonging* to a religion.")

Mills thinks that this means that Feinberg's proposed "neutrality" is impossible – so far removed from attainment that even the pursuit of an approximation is misguided.²⁴⁰ But I also think that Mills' very own critique of a binary conception of "open" and "closed" actually serves to undermine this conclusion: if certain futures are never entirely closed off but only made more or less difficult, then there is at least some conceptual space in which "neutral" education – or something approaching it – is possible. The trick becomes not keeping everything "fully open", but rather managing the metaphorical apertures of every possible portal to the future in such a way as to preserve possibilities to the maximum possible extent. Doing this well requires a much more difficult calculus than simple counting, but it seems at least theoretically possible.

3.4.2.2. The Value of Closure

My own problem with Feinberg's argument is different: I think that open futures, even if they make sense as a potential goal towards which one might work, are by themselves valueless; specifically, I think that they only have *value* insofar as they become "closed" – though closed in the sense of being realized rather than cut off. (By analogy, one can be "closed out" of a room, or "closed in" – though most likely not both.) Mills comes close to saying something like this in the latter half of her article: she argues that one simply cannot learn how to play *every* instrument, and that to fully learn to play any one instrument is necessarily to have to pass on learning the rest. What's really at stake, she says, isn't the multiple futures of playing each and every instrument, but

²⁴⁰ Mianna Lotz seems to think that Mills is wrong about this, and that it is worthwhile to attempt to "approach or approximate" (to use Feinberg's terms) the type of neutrality in question. While I am not going to set forth her defense of Feinberg against Mills in any detail, I wish to point out that the arguments I make in this section can be viewed as launching the same sort of attack on Lotz's position as on Feinberg's. See Mianna Lotz, "Feinberg, Mills, and the Child's Right to an Open Future", 37 J. OF SOCIAL PHIL. 537 (2006).

whether or not the child is going to have music in their life.²⁴¹ The value of options isn't in the future, but "in their opening up... a more rich and diverse life right now."²⁴²

I don't think one can doubt that there is value to be found in the present in this way. But as I said above, I also don't think it's incoherent to talk about a real, future harm that is inflicted by depriving a child of certain types of futures. Cutting a child off from music now does appear to harm the future adult the child will grow to be; and cutting the child off from music now also cuts off a wide variety of possible futures. But that doesn't mean that it's the *futures themselves* that are carrying the lost value. The question we should ask is not whether some specific open future is open or closed to me, but whether or not some capacity that I have is going to be capable of meaningful expression in the future. In other words, with respect to the infant whose legs are sliced off, we shouldn't engage in the potentially endless series of inquiries centering on specific possibilities – has the infant been denied the right to walk down the street at 10am on Tuesday? On Wednesday morning? The right to participate in the 2008 Olympics? The 2012 Olympics? The right to engage in Indian leg wrestling with his cousin Murray? With his brother?

Rather, we should ask ourselves the more general question: has the infant been robbed of the ability to express his or herself in some important way in the future? I think that the answer is obviously yes. There's a right that is lost when you lose your legs in this way, but it's a generalized right: the right to do leggy-type things as and when you please. And the harm takes place both now and in the future: as an infant, you've lost it now, but you've also lost it with respect to the future adult-to-come.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Mills, *supra* n.238, at 507.

²⁴² *Id.* at 508.

²⁴³ Mills, for her part, seems to firmly reject the view that Feinberg's "open futures" could be re-categorized as generalized options of some sort. But her rejection seems to rely on a view of education that is relentlessly present-oriented. We do not engage in education, on her view, "as a means to providing all-purpose life options" for children,

There's another way of making this point more graphically: while we are born with what seems like, conceptually, to be nearly limitless possibilities, the fact of the matter is that no matter what occurs, eventually it will be the case that we are only going to be able to become the one person we in fact become. Eventually, only one future is "open" to us.²⁴⁴ Let us say that instead of writing this dissertation, I'd been shot dead at the age of 18. That's a loss. It's a loss to me, to my family, to my friends, to my community. And it's a loss of future value if anything is. But what, exactly, is lost?

Surely it's wrong to say that the world lost a Fortune 500 CEO *and* a mediocre professional singer *and* a philosophy professor *and* a struggling but professional poet *and* a mathematician of middling talent *and* a Supreme Court Justice *and* an accomplished spy *and* a tank commander. I'd have to be a blend of Paul Bunyan, St. Pat, and Noah Webster to even approach having lived such a life. Now on Feinberg's account, it seems that each of these open futures has an independent value. And they were, indeed, open futures: I had the potential to become any of these things – at least at some point (perhaps it was earlier than 18). ***But I did not have the potential to become them all.***

Thus, at "most" (if we must engage in a calculus of the value of these futures) what I've actually lost is the value of the most valuable one, the most fulfilling one that might have "closed" but didn't.²⁴⁵ Yet even there, what I've lost isn't the open future, but the value of that future's

and the goal of education is explicitly *not* "primarily preparation for something else, which comes later in life." This seems, however, to blur the lines between talk of the purposes of education (which is what she seems to be discussing) and talk of harms suffered by people in the future (which is what I take it Feinberg is discussing). I do not see how it must be the case that, even if the purpose of education were *wholly* to produce present benefits, that certain forms of education would not cause future harms by depriving children of a chance to exercise certain capacities.

²⁴⁴ Lotz argues that even if they do get closed off, it is "meaningful to classify unpursued options as having been open." Lotz, *supra* n.240, at 540. Her point, however, was made as a counter to Mills' claim of the impossibility of keeping futures open. I take it that some possible outcome's having once been "open" is not going to be a problem for the argument I am making here.

²⁴⁵ You might analogize this to calculating future damages in a personal injury lawsuit (although I'm never 100% comfortable with using legal examples for philosophical points). Someone whose hands are lopped off would not receive as damages the *cumulative* total of every lost profession he or she might have pursued. At most, he or she will take as economic compensatory damages the *highest* possible income total that will have been lost.

becoming closed (again, in the sense of being realized). The open futures themselves are of no use, of no value simply by being open. They may be nice to think about, but they don't need to be realistic possibilities in order for me to enjoy them in that way. I often think about my alternate lives that will never be. They bring me great joy, but they are closed to me.

3.3.2.1. The Value of Openness' Being Closed

Of course, one could imagine a strange sort of person whose great joy came in contemplating his or her endless open possibilities – in not just imagining, but perceiving that he or she actually could become any number of things. For such a person, it is the mere *possibility* that matters; the actual attaining is not just unimportant, but could actually be counterproductive given that becoming one thing forecloses becoming others. (Frankly, the upper-class 18-24 year-old of the late 20th century fits this description somewhat.) It's a very strange value, one that doesn't seem capable of being held for very long, if at all. Still, we can imagine that such a thing is possible.

Would such a person's "open futures" themselves have value? Perhaps. But there are considerations that I think bear some mulling. Primarily, it strikes me that even the state of having open futures is itself a future that must be closed (again, realized) in order to have its value. There's no value to be had in having an "open" future in which one's futures *might* be "open". Such a person wants a "closed" future in which one's futures *are* "open." Having open possibilities, after all, is an affirmative state of being; one cannot exist as mere potential.

I might be willing to entertain this as an exception to my critique of Feinberg's view, but it seems as if one would have to have been brought up to be (or had a conversion leading to being) a Feinberg disciple of sorts in order to have this view at all. If the realization that he or she had actually *become* a "Feinbergian" (a Feinbergist?) would itself be too traumatic for our theoretical Feinbergian, then perhaps Mills is right and Feinberg's position is incoherent, after all. But it also

seems to me that cutting such a person off from their open futures in some way is only a harm because it is what the person presently values, and in cutting off these futures you are preventing the person from achieving what he or she sees as valuable *right now*. It is just that right now, what they are focused on is the future.

If I am correct that the loss suffered in what Feinberg calls a violation of rights to an “open future” is in fact not the loss of the *open* future itself but is more properly characterized as loss of an opportunity to express either oneself or one’s capacities in an important way, then I think we need to revisit Feinberg’s treatment of the Amish education example. What we should be discussing is not whether or not a child has an opportunity to become *a nuclear physicist*, but whether the child is – in virtue of being raised in the Amish faith with an 8th grade education – being deprived of a chance to express some part of him- or herself that would be expressed by becoming a nuclear physicist. And the answer to that question, I think, is no. I’ll explain why in the next subsection.

3.4.3. Cultural Relativism and the Vagueness of the Initial Self

I take it that Feinberg would not be willing to take the stand that Amish culture *itself* is straightforwardly inferior to modern Western culture, with all of its industry and commercialism. After all, our “neutral” education is supposed to keep open the possibility of becoming an Amish farmer, just as it is supposed to keep open the possibility of becoming a member of modern, Western commercial civilization. The choice is to be made based on the developed preferences of the adult-to-come.

3.4.3.1. Expression within a cultural context.

Now, one of the things that *really* bothers me about Feinberg’s article is its insistence that the Amish education only prepares you for life as an “Amish Farmer.” Let’s put this notion to rest immediately: there are a *lot* of different trades one might take up in an Amish community: there are farmers, yes, but depending on the community in question, there are also leatherworkers, carpenters,

blacksmiths, masons, wheelwrights, and tailors. More importantly, however, is that as best I can tell – and I am no expert on the subject – the Amish do not see themselves as defined by their careers in quite the same way that modern Westerners do, but primarily by their role in their families and churches.

The reason I mention this is that Feinberg seems to find it unfortunate that someone with an 8th grade education will be effectively cut off from being an “engineer, a physician, a research scientist, a lawyer, or a business executive.”²⁴⁶ The child’s innate potentials and inclinations are, on Feinberg’s account, supposed to act to set limits as to how far and in what directions the parents or guardians can push the child’s future (assuming that some limitation is indeed, necessary), and where the parents or guardians infringe on those limits, they are closing off futures unnecessarily.

But one of the things that I hope I’ve shown above is that the open future of becoming a *lawyer*, as such, isn’t really what’s at stake. What’s at stake is whether or not the child in question has an opportunity to put to use their particular potentials and inclinations in meaningful, important ways. Rather than “becoming a lawyer”, what is at stake is something like “expressing one’s analytical and rhetorical abilities.” Someone with a mechanically-oriented mind might make a fine engineer *in our modern world*. But that same person might also make an excellent blacksmith or machinist in the Amish culture; the person inclined to become a lawyer might become a preacher.

Feinberg states, in defending his view, that what must be respected are the initial inclinations and proclivities of the young child. That doesn’t strike me as far-fetched; it’s probably right, as far as it goes. But it seems incredibly obvious to me that a young child is **not** born with the proclivity to be a physician, a research scientist, or – God forbid – a lawyer. These descriptions are far too specific for the sorts of inclinations and proclivities that young children have. It simply can’t be the

²⁴⁶ Feinberg, *supra* n.75, at 132.

case that some genetic disposition points a child towards *plumbing*, for instance. What would such a person do if they were born into a culture without plumbing?

We can see this more easily by considering the sorts of futures that were available to someone born to a farming community in the year 3000 B.C. Such a person could never become a computer programmer, a television star, a journalist, a physicist, or an attorney – any more than I ever had a chance to become a warp coil engineer servicing the dilithium matrices on starships, a navigator folding space and guiding human commerce among the stars, a psychohistorian planning the future of the human race, a Jedi enforcing order and good morals, or a Cap Trooper dropping onto an enemy world.²⁴⁷ The former careers simply didn't exist in 3000 B.C., and the latter may never exist at all. But I take it that no one thinks that somehow, over time, the rudimentary inclinations and potentials of human beings have drastically changed. It's not as if our genetics instantly transformed themselves with the advent of the printing press, or the assembly line, or the integrated circuit, even though those inventions profoundly changed the sorts of careers that are available to people.

What seems to be the case, if there is anything to this potentials-and-proclivities talk, is that there are inclinations and preferences in children not towards any particularized way of life, but rather towards general types of expression, activity, and interaction, and that these general categories manifest themselves as specific potentials for roles that exist only *within whatever cultural context that the child is raised*. A thousand years ago, someone like me would have found fulfillment and realization of their talents as a monk. Today, it is as a philosopher and an attorney. A thousand years hence... who knows what sorts of options there might be for someone like me? The world might be a

²⁴⁷ Just for the record, these are all references to careers found in science fiction universes: Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek*, Frank Herbert's *Dune*, Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*, George Lucas' *Star Wars*, and Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*, respectively.

nuclear wasteland, and I'd have to be a farmer like everyone else and find room for expressing myself in other ways than my vocation. Maybe I'd tell clever stories around the fire – who knows?

If this is what's really going on – if children have only very vaguely defined directions in which their natural inclinations push them, then it seems like there's no harm done, in terms of sacrificing open futures, in guiding a child to his *Amish*-potentials rather than his *modern*-potentials: in both case, what's happening is that the child's own nature is guiding their development within a particular culture. A child should, assuming that Amish culture is rich enough, be able to find fulfillment and realization of his or her potentials and inclinations just as easily in the West Pennsylvania countryside as he or she is to realize them in New York City.

3.4.3.2. Determining the cultural context.

The decisive factor in this analysis is what defines the relevant social context in which the child is raised. It seems clear to me that giving someone an education that renders him fit only for the Amish way of life is a *terrible* thing to do if there are simply no Amish around. The child's education would assume the character of a cruel joke: for years the parents urge the child, "Become this sort of person... it's important... it's important... it's important..." and then one day when the child is ready to assume a role in the supposed society, "SURPRISE!" I take it that, viewed in their most charitable light, Feinberg's arguments boil down to the much larger claim that despite the fact that the Amish are located here and now, in modern America, that in light of the overall social context of the country what they do to their children is something of a disservice.

That's not an unreasonable view to hold, but neither is it clear to me that it's correct. Preliminarily, I must accept that Feinberg, the Amish, and I all live in a larger society of sorts. But I also take it that this society is (at least theoretically) deeply committed to a sort of cultural pluralism that respects the fact that there may be several complexly arrayed layers of intimacy and community

that surround a person.²⁴⁸ Moreover, a commitment to pluralism implies a commitment to making sure that the “higher levels” of cultural and social involvement do not, by their very natures, stifle, suffocate, or simply exclude a wide variety of “lower” levels of belonging. A robust pluralism requires a certain degree of decentralization, with the overriding cultural imperatives kept as “thin” as possible while still accomplishing the goals that the overall society wishes to accomplish. (Of course, how extensive those goals are will go a great deal to defining just how committed to pluralism the macro-society really is!) These are, of course, considerations only for those who take themselves to be committed to the same sort of pluralism, as I take it my opponents are; I’m certainly not intending to offer here any strong philosophical argument in favor of such pluralism.

But what we must remember that what is at stake here is what counts as a proper *education*. Even if we do not accept a strong pluralism as normatively fundamental, at best what Feinberg and others like him have done is, like the theorists of the Democratic Conception, argued for what education should be *within* their chosen macro-society. Henley heavy-handedly pronounces that in “our society” it is simply the case that “[a]t the birth of a child, there are only two candidates who might act as authorities over education: the family (whether natural or adoptive) and agencies of the state.”²⁴⁹ His discussion, then, is thereby specifically limited to how questions about the authority to educate manifest themselves in what he unilaterally takes to be “our society”. But if education, taken as a general human phenomenon across cultures, has as its goal the preparation of the student for a meaningful life, then the question of which society’s values should prevail is of secondary concern: what really matters is whether a given society, of whatever scale, is capable of providing a meaningful experience to its members. And it seems to me that there are plenty of Amish around to

²⁴⁸ See generally Dewey, Democracy and Education, *supra* n.8, at 20-21 (“a modern society is many societies more or less loosely connected.”)

²⁴⁹ Henley, *supra* n.223, at 255.

make for a meaningful community; perhaps at some later date, there will not be and the culture will wither and die. But for now, the culture is strong and robust enough to survive – at least in certain locales. And that really makes the difference. I'm put in mind of a story I read recently:²⁵⁰

Vernon Yoder considers the valley between Springdale and Hunters a “paradise,” except for one thing. There aren't enough Amish people.

Yoder is the patriarch of four Amish families who will conduct a giant farm auction Saturday and return to their native Wisconsin. Two other families who came five years ago to establish a settlement nine miles west of Springdale will stay awhile at least, in hopes that others of their faith will join them.

“It's paradise here,” Yoder said. “It's going to be hard to leave it. But it's for our families' sake. We've got to do it if we're going to keep our family together. That's one of the most important things in life.”

The main problem, he said, is that some of their children are growing up and need to find mates who share their religion and background. Those who are leaving are all part of Yoder's immediate and extended family.

Mr. Yoder raised his children in a particular way, but he found himself unable to put them into the community in a way that was, in terms of the values he taught his children, meaningful. They could not find Amish husbands and wives – and family is at the core of Amish values. It was his obligation to his children, whom he had raised to observe those values, to find a place where those values could be put meaningfully into practice, in a community. If he did not do this, then the education he afforded his children would not have fulfilled its purpose: they would not have been prepared for meaningful lives. Likewise, one could imagine that a tolerant, open-minded child was raised with proper liberal values... in ancient Sparta. That child's parents would have done that child a severe disservice, for his life would no doubt be a painful and short one.

I am not foreclosing the possibility that there may be harms in an Amish education if it turns out to be the case that the Amish culture itself is somehow inferior. Feinberg – somewhat

²⁵⁰ John Craig, “Washington Amish settlement dwindles as four families depart”, THE SPOKEMAN-REVIEW, May 21, 2004. Available online at: <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2004/may/21/washington-amish-settlement-dwindles-as-four/>.

disingenuously, I think – slips “objective” standards into his account in several places: the parents are free to raise their children “subject to the state’s important but minimal standards of humanity, health, and education,” for example.²⁵¹ He similarly circumscribes the court’s rights to impose a particular conception of “the good life” by invoking “reasonable moral standards of care and education.”²⁵² That standard of reasonableness is, I suspect, essentially a hammer with which to bludgeon cultures that don’t “measure up”. (And I tend to think that one should always view the invocation of “reasonableness” as an indication that the speaker doesn’t really wish to argue specifics.) Any particular standard of reasonableness is, of course, also a product of a certain cultural viewpoint.

The reason I think that this invocation is disingenuous is because Feinberg seems to already have committed himself to a sort of cultural relativism. He takes himself to be, in effect, a pluralist of the sort I discussed above. (Otherwise why would “open futures” matter at all?) that there really could be such “reasonable standards” is also, I think, implausible: at the least, it seems ridiculous that these standards could somehow be absolute. Is it really plausible that humanity wanders in an unreasonable moral darkness until some arbitrarily chosen level of health, education, and social welfare is established? When did that occur – 230 B.C.? 1300 A.D.? Last night? Will it happen in the year 3415? 10,345?

But if the standards Feinberg invokes are, in fact, a “moving target” of sorts, pushing forward with human progress, then it seems that they must necessarily come from a particular cultural viewpoint; and in Feinberg’s case, that viewpoint is one that is modern, Western, perhaps secular, liberal (in a classical sense), and democratic. From such a viewpoint, perhaps it really *shouldn’t* be the case that a properly neutral education leaves open the possibility of joining the

²⁵¹ Feinberg, *supra* n.75, at 140.

²⁵² *Id.* at 139.

hopelessly backward and outmoded Amish sect. That, of course, is precisely where Feinberg's argument ends up. Yet this process of arriving at the conclusion is, I take it, one that Feinberg would eschew.

Perhaps the argument is that the Amish are inappropriately insular – that their culture is one that deliberately closes itself off from other cultures. Criticism of this sort comes from all sides: Even Mills allows that the “shunning of Amish adults who choose to leave the fold” is “problematic.”²⁵³ Henley puts it even more strongly: he explicitly states that if the only way for the Amish to survive is to require that their children not go to school to learn about the “larger community... science and technology”, then they “have no right to survive, for their survival is at the expense of the liberty of the children who are born to them.”²⁵⁴

While I find this position morally revolting, I am not here discussing the *moral* merits of Henley's cultural values. If he wishes to claim the Amish's children as “his society's” own, well, that's a question of political and physical power and their application. My topic here is education, and whether or not the “authority” to educate a child exists or not within a particular political or moral system is not really of concern. I simply do not see any reason why it should count against something's being *educational* simply because the society into which one is being initiated is one that is self-consciously exclusionary or even limiting in some way. If the entire society is aware that there is literacy in neighboring countries, but has sincere, authentic reasons for despising the act of reading, then so be it. Raising a child to read in such a society is to cut that child off from a certain kind of discourse into which he or she is born. And that seems to me to be the opposite of education, every bit as wrong as if Mr. Yoder were to fail to leave for more populated pastures.

²⁵³ Mills, *supra* n.238, at 505.

²⁵⁴ Henley, *supra* n.223, at 262.

None of what I am saying here is meant to argue that any particular culture's values are justified, or that their imposition through education is a *good idea*. As I said above in Section 3.3, perhaps the Democratic Conception is right on moral or utilitarian grounds; and if one rejects my account of intersubjective meaning, perhaps the Democratic Conception (or Henley, or Feinberg) has the right sort of bead on what is "objectively meaningful." But the intersubjectivity of meaningfulness seems absolutely right to me, and while I'm not here to settle this question definitively, I do tend to think that it should be equally possible to live "the good life" in an Amish sect, in New York City, or even in Medieval France – at least when there wasn't plague or war going on. Socrates and Aristotle had their eyes on a particular sort of philosophical prize, and I doubt that that prize required computers, automobiles, or even vaccinations. Someday people in the future may look back on us in scorn: we still *die* from getting old, after all. They may look at each other in horror and say, "What sort of life is that?"

But it's the life we have, the life we have been given by our parents and our society. And as long as we can express ourselves meaningfully, connect to each other in ways that allow us to recognize what is valuable in ourselves and each other, then it seems like "the Good Life" should be within reach, regardless of whether our futures are limited to being farmers, carpenters, wheelwrights and blacksmiths, or to being attorneys and physicians, clerks, and fast food workers. All that is required is that we come to see our society's values, come to appreciate them. Perhaps we come to them from the outside, as an immigrant, a convert. But if we are "born" unto them, then they become ours through our proper education, because we are raised to those values – because we are indoctrinated to them.

3.5. Conclusion

My ultimate conclusion for this Chapter is just this: that indoctrination is a necessary part of a proper "institutional" education, and that such an education can take place in a large – perhaps

nearly infinite – number of ways that give rise to human happiness, excellence, and meaningfulness. One can be “properly” educated in the ways of a savage barbarian culture and achieve a fulfilling life. One can be “properly” educated into an Amish farming community and achieve a fulfilling life. One can be “properly” educated into modern Western culture and live a fulfilling life. Neither tolerance, nor democracy, nor liberalism is required for education to meet this end. What is required is that the education fit the social context in which the education takes place; one cannot escape the reality into which one is born.

There may be other reasons to pursue specific types or ends of education. It may turn out (and many have argued) that education needs to be democratic, or informed by principles of rational autonomy. It may be that what we all really need at the end of the day is to become Kantians. Yet even were that true, it would still be a mistake to think that the proper end of education is achieved by teaching a child to be a Kantian in a world filled with bloodthirsty honor-bound savages who exult in trial by combat. The child’s life would be bizarre, unhappy, and short. (There is of course room for a person to raise their children not just to the immediate social circumstances, but in order to participate in some other culture, or even to be an “agent of change” to one’s own culture. The worthiness of such a goal, in educational terms, will be determined in great part by whether such an upbringing leads to a meaningful life.)

Furthermore, and this is really my point, it is a mistake to think that what stands between us and the achievement of these educational goals is *indoctrination*. As Dewey said in his first few chapters when he was treating with education more philosophically and less politically, education is among other things a way to shape a person into something greater, deeper, more responsive to certain types of inputs, stimuli, and situations. The particular goal of institutional education for the young is to bring these blank, wild, yet empathic and sensitive creatures we call infants into our society, to bring them into the discourse of our values and to impart unto them the ability to engage

in projects which will at once express the identities that they have, dialogically, formed within the community, and through which they shall be appreciated as the individuals that they consider themselves to be. There's really nothing "paradoxical" about the fact that we need to use indoctrination to get those conversations and projects started: it's part and parcel of education.

A life well-lived, a *meaningful* life, is a worthy goal. And indoctrination, properly understood, is not at odds with that goal. Particular brands of indoctrination may be at odds with particular conceptions of the good life, but some people are allergic to peanuts.

Appendix I: An Epilogue for Educators

It's an unfortunate truth that in the vast majority of cases complaints about "indoctrination" in our schools are really just complaints about the content that is being taught, and not a comment on the methods employed, or the effect on the students' psychology more generally. If I can play in generalizations for a moment, the story goes like this: teachers "instruct" the children of liberals in the principles of environmentalism, recycling, and global warming. But those same teachers "indoctrinate" the children of conservative parents in those very same principles. Nothing I have said in this dissertation is going to be of the slightest use in resolving those types of disputes. If on such matters there really is a "superior" view, an objectively better set of values to hold, then it will either win out in the end or it won't, which will either be good or bad for us.

Yet there is little question that there is a great deal of indoctrination that takes place in our schools – indoctrination in exactly the sense in which I have been discussing it herein. And it's not an entirely bad thing, at least in principle. It's at least arguable that a cohesive society requires shared values, and values that run a little deeper, perhaps, than the sort of soulless pragmatism that informs corporate structures. That, of course, is part of what Goodman, Illich, and other writers such as Holt are trying to warn us about. For better or worse (and I find myself more commonly in the "worse" camp), a very large portion of our public schools have among their goals the production of students with a particularly tractable disposition, one that recognizes and accedes to authority and which is able to cope with a certain degree of institutional tedium. Perhaps insofar as these may be qualities that will come to serve these students well in his or her life, their imposition could be justified. But we should be mindful that what we are doing is indoctrinating.

For it is clear not just that the institutions *actually* produce such students, but that they are specifically designed to. It is not for nothing that Philip Jackson's *Life in Classrooms* opens with a Chapter called "The Daily Grind."²⁵⁵ I quote at some length:

The denial of desire is the ultimate outcome of many of the delays occurring in the classroom. The raised hand is sometimes ignored, the question to the teacher is sometimes brushed aside, the permission that is sought is sometimes refused. No doubt things often have to be this way. Not everyone who wants to speak can be heard, not all of the student's queries can be answered to his satisfaction, not all of their requests can be granted. Also, it is probably true that most of these denials are psychologically trivial when considered individually. But when considered cumulatively, their significance increases. And regardless of whether or not they are justified, they make it clear that part of learning how to live in school involves learning how to give up desire as well as how to wait for its fulfillment.

* * * *

In a sense, then, students must try to behave as if they were in solitude, when in point of fact they are not. They must keep their eyes on their paper when human faces beckon. Indeed, in the early grades it is not uncommon to find students facing each other around a table while at the same time being required not to communicate with each other. These young people, if they are to become successful students, must learn how to be alone in a crowd.²⁵⁶

Jackson very skillfully goes on to paint a picture in which students come to understand that the point isn't just to have the right answer to academic questions, but to deliver those answers in a way appropriate to the functioning of the classroom.²⁵⁷ Over all of this is an authoritarian veneer – a habituation to following instruction, to the asking of permission. The habituation goes beyond mere conditioning though. In the classroom, "the good life consists, principally, of doing what the teacher says."²⁵⁸ To this I would only add that the important thing here is not merely that the children are expected to *be* this sort of student – the sort that sits still, doesn't interrupt, does their

²⁵⁵ Philip Jackson, *LIFE IN CLASSROOMS* (Teachers College Press, 1990).

²⁵⁶ *Id.* at 15-16.

²⁵⁷ *Id.* at 23.

²⁵⁸ *Id.* at 26.

work, follows the bell, etc. The crux of the matter is that the child is supposed to think that this is the sort of child that he or she *should be*. Many of a student's interactions with his teacher, his peers, and even himself, implicitly involve the student's learning to evaluate his or her behavior in a certain way, to come to see him or herself as participating as a student of a certain type, and to see that this is a good thing.

Recently, the Los Angeles Unified School District had a series of discussion about whether to continue issuing suspensions for students' "willful defiance" – a sort of catch-all term for the student who won't take of his hat, who won't sit down, who generally won't conform to the teacher's rule. The reason I raise this here is that it was never seriously questioned *whether* "willful defiance" should be punished; the debate was over two main issues: should suspension be the punishment, and is there a problem in the way such punishments are distributed unequally among the various racial groups in the district? It's clear that the vast majority of people involved in this sort of decision agree that willful defiance is a bad thing, and that adolescent students (among others) should be *punished* for failing to follow a teacher's instructions.

Now unless our educational system is truly schizophrenic (certainly an option) this is pretty clear evidence that the vision of a *good* student that our schools want our students to internalize and admire is one who does what he or she is told, who sits when the bell rings and who is quiet when asked. It is also clear that this process does not involve presenting facts to the student and letting his or her own values and judgments reach their next level of development organically. Nor is it a simple matter of threats intended to get the student to sit still and shut up out of a sense of self-interest. This is a case of punishment, shame, and reward being used to extrinsically bring about a change in or a development of the students' values.

This is a generalization, of course. There are certainly teachers who do not see themselves as indoctrinating, and for whom the various practices and evaluations that make up most educational

indoctrination are, in fact, purely instrumental. In other words, such teachers do not care whether their student's good behavior is *sincere* or not.²⁵⁹ But I take it not only that this is a more rare sort of educator, but that in some serious way such an educator's approach to his or her role in the school system may be viewed as flawed on most popular conceptions. Most teachers do take themselves to be shaping their students to some extent or another, to be imparting values. Many of them would never call themselves "indoctrinators", but it seems clear that this is exactly what they are doing. And that means that the teachers are walking on morally treacherous ground, for indoctrination is a dangerous tool.

As I said, I don't want to engage with the question of whether the values that are indoctrinated through our educational systems are the *right* values or not – that's a debate for another day. It's enough that indoctrination – the intentional shaping of students' values and identities – is, in fact, taking place. And if I am right about the various things I proposed about indoctrination in the preceding Chapters, then indoctrination, taken as such, presents a far greater moral hazard for teachers of secondary and middle-school students than it does for those in the primary grades – simply because of the fact that a child's personality develops with age, gaining strength, self-awareness, and perhaps even a bit of self-guidance. Adolescents regularly think about what type of person they are, and what sort of person they want to be, in a way that often simply eludes children of more tender years. And, at the risk of waxing poetic, in many a teenager's angry exclamation, "Don't tell me what to do!" one can hear his or her own emerging moral authority pleading, "Please don't tell me who I should be."

²⁵⁹ Whether such teachers are, in fact, *not* indoctrinating though is a murky question: surely they are deliberately engaging in a course of conduct that – even if they profess to reject or be indifferent to its effects – is not only foreseeably going to bring about a change of values, but seems to have been designed to do precisely that. It is not a defense against a charge of homicide that one simply pointed a loaded gun and pulled the trigger, but did not specifically intend to kill.

The danger is obvious: if a school is designed to instill a single set of values – those reflected in the notion of a “model student” – then as students grow older and more emotionally mature, there is an increased risk that the student subject to this indoctrination holds personal values that are incompatible with those held by model students. Whether this incompatibility is one of direct conflict or a simple desire not to be subject to external constraint and control is irrelevant: teachers who act to instill the school’s sought-after values on these “incompatible” students is performing deviant indoctrination, and inflicting the sort of specifically indoctrination-related harms I discussed in Chapter 2.

I am not saying that a teenager who angrily shouts, “Reading is for girls!” shouldn’t be exposed to the value of reading. Showing students what is interesting about the world of literature isn’t necessarily indoctrination (it can easily appeal to a student’s existing interests and values), nor is teaching how to read anything other than the imparting of a technical skill. Perhaps there are certain personalities and value-sets that can develop among adolescents which deserve to be stamped out through processes that could easily be called indoctrination. For the last several decades, for instance, there has been a tremendous all-hands-on-deck effort at changing the teenage culture of “bullying”.²⁶⁰ Workshops, assemblies, skits, lectures, PSA’s, seminars... there’s no way that this can’t be called indoctrination. And to the extent that it’s running roughshod over some pre-existing values systems and snuffing out opportunities for authentic activity, it nevertheless seems at least *prima facie* justified.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ I find it unfortunate that this movement has chosen the word “bullying” – which when I was growing up was in my community used to refer to a particularly nasty pattern of physical violence – to signify a general social nastiness and subordination that goes on among children. But that’s the word that is being used.

²⁶¹ It is, of course, questionable whether an authentic expression of bullying is ever going to end up being meaningful in a full-blooded sense, given that the act of bullying tends to *dehumanize* people. And so perhaps it is impossible for bullying to be valuable in a way that indoctrination can undermine. But that’s another discussion.

But I am saying that indoctrination is dangerous, and that teachers should be on their guard about respecting the people that their students *are*. In a perfect world, perhaps, the later years of institutional education would include explicit and non-indoctrinative discussion of what it means to be in control of your own identity, and what sorts of considerations might go into deciding what sort of person to be. Maybe this is one of the ways in which the study of Philosophy could improve schools. (Philosophy is seeing something of a comeback in Australia, but its application in the United States remains the province primarily of private schools.)

But the teacher in the modern classroom cannot wait for a dialogue that may or may not ever start. The teacher who is tasked with carrying out his or her school's institutional policies, with setting moral examples, with regulating student behavior, must act in the here and now. "You go to war with the army you have," the saying goes.

There are, I think, three fairly intuitive things that teachers can do to minimize the dangers of engaging in harmful indoctrination, assuming that the teacher is worried about inflicting such harm, and the teacher's firm belief in the values being instilled is not enough to operate as a justification for inflicting that harm. In other words, these are suggestions for teachers who want to *avoid* deviant indoctrination, not for teachers who have decided that the way to a genuinely better life lies at the end of the student's undergoing a conversion process .

If one is stumbling around in the dark, one should turn on the lights so as to see where one is stepping. First and foremost, a teacher must take the time to *know the student*. This probably seems both obvious and unbearably platitudinous: most teachers know already that the key to good teaching is to "know your students." But the sort of knowledge and familiarity I am suggesting is not the sort of practical familiarity that makes for good and engaging teaching: it is not simply understanding how a student reacts to certain sorts of situations, requests, and demands, or understanding the peculiarities of how a particular student learns. I am suggesting that teachers

must take the time to investigate what sorts of *people* their students are, and more importantly, what sorts of people their students want to be.

Finding this out may be as simple as watching closely with the right sorts of questions in mind. Students may reveal a great deal about themselves in their day-to-day behavior. It may be as simple as asking, in an unguarded moment, “So what sort of person are you?” Sometimes, though, finding out what sort of person a student is and wants to be may require that a certain degree of interpersonal intimacy be introduced into the teacher-student relationship. This may simply be impossible in our current school system (though perhaps we should take that as a criticism of the system). Such intimacy may not only be difficult to obtain given that many students are compelled to attend school against their will, but it may also be frowned on by other educators and administrators who have a strong preference for a sort of objective professionalism. Moreover, the temporal and emotional demands of this sort of relationship-building may simply be too much for teachers.

Second – and much easier – a teacher should take the time to *question the motivation of his or her practices* in the carrying out of the school’s indoctrinative mission. I am not saying that the teacher should stop what they are doing, or even that the teacher should open him or herself up to critique, necessarily. I am merely advocating that there should be a certain open-eyedness in how the teacher goes about things like assigning punishments for “willful defiance” or setting up his or her classroom rules and policies. While the knowledge that they are trying to make their students into better people and spreading the values of perseverance, deference, respect, etc. may sit in the back of teachers’ minds, if it is brought to the forefront the process of translating that goal into action will receive additional scrutiny. “What lesson, exactly,” a teacher may ask him or herself before letting loose with the administration’s preferred punishment, “Am I trying to teach here?”

Just by having those two pieces in place – knowledge of the student and an immediately conscious awareness of exactly what is intended to be “taught” – the avoidance of deviant indoctrination can really be almost trivial: if the student doesn’t want to become the sort of person who submits willingly to authority, the teacher knows not to try to change that.

But – and Jackson raises this point himself – is it really possible to run a classroom without subjecting these students to rules and regulations of these sorts? Doesn’t the entire enterprise of institutional education, at least as we practice it, depend on students shutting up and doing what they are told? This brings us to the third thing that teachers can do: they can (honestly, we would hope) ***be explicit with students that they are not attempting to change their values.*** If the indoctrinative mission of the school is dictating that a certain student’s behavior should be punished, likely because it is indicative of a failure to adopt some desired attitude, the teacher need not fail to inflict the punishment. But the teacher can “inoculate” the student against the accompanying indoctrination – at least to a degree – by explaining to the student what’s going on.

Consider the following exchange, recounted in John Holt’s *Instead of Education*:

Power cancels out moral rights and obligations. The slave has no *moral* duty to his master. He has every moral right to dodge and escape the whip if he can, any way he can. No one is *morally* obliged to hold still for punishment. A ten-year-old, a proud, brave, stubborn child of great character helped me to see this. One day she refused to go to French class, which she (sensibly) hated. She sat at her desk reading, while I kept telling her to go. Finally I said that it was my job and my duty to make her go to French class, and that if I could not get her to go any other way I would drag her there. She did not move. I approached her desk, ready to carry out my threat. When I was about three feet away she suddenly looked up, slammed the book shut, banged it on the desk, stood up, and said, “All right, I’m going. But it’s just *brute force* that is making me go, just *brute force*.”

One thing to be said about this situation is that this story is **not** one of successful indoctrination (at least not immediately). The girl is fully aware of what is going on, and is keeping her pre-existing values firmly in hand. But the explosive nature of the situation was due, in part I suspect, to a primitive understanding on the child’s part that Holt was *expecting* her to come around

to the desired view and attitude. It seems that indoctrination might be avoided, and without the fireworks, if teachers were instead very up front about what is going on. I have something like the following in mind:

Teacher: That's a detention for you.

Student: Why? What did I do?

Teacher: You called Suzie a b----. Profanity gets you a detention.

Student: It's a stupid rule.

*Teacher: Look, I'm not trying to control who you are. You can be whoever you want to be, and think what you want to think. What you can't **do** is speak like that in my classroom. I want you to understand, I'm enforcing the rules. I'll do it again, too: you talk to your classmates like that, you will get detention every single time. I happen to think that the rules are good rules, and if you ever want to talk about why, I'll be glad to have that conversation. But you don't have to share that view; you don't need to like the rules. You can hate them or think that they are stupid if you want. But if you continue to break them, you'll continue to get punished.*

Such a teacher is still carrying out the enforcement of a school policy designed to indoctrinate, and is still exercising control over student behavior and thus promoting an orderly classroom. But he or she is doing so in a way that serves to minimize the odds that the student's *attitudes* will be changed. The teacher, by being explicit, at once puts in the student's mind the possibility of compliance without conformity (of values) and reassures the student that what is being punished is actual conduct, not the student's *being* the "wrong sort of student."

These measures are, of course, band-aids at best. And I have to be realistic here: it may get a teacher fired in the long run. (The dismissal wouldn't explicitly be for "failing to fully endorse our indoctrinative mission", of course, but such a teacher might find themselves out on the street nonetheless.) I am also pessimistic about the possibility of a teacher, operating within the bounds of something like the United States' current educational systems, being able to substantially avoid imposing the various values entailed in the model of a "good student" on his or her students, even if the teacher would *like* to avoid it. There are too many students, not enough time, and too great a

(perceived) need for institutional efficiency to make the sort of individualistic, sensitive adaptations needed.

But even if we can't avoid bombing a city, maybe we can avoid hitting the nursery schools. The suggestions above are just a way to do *less* harm, to minimize perhaps some of the more egregious instances of “spirit breaking”, to use Goodman's term.

To eliminate the *harms* of indoctrination altogether, deeper changes would almost certainly need to be made. Those changes could go one of two ways: either far greater immersion, control, and indoctrination in the younger years (such that the possibility of conflicting values systems is minimized or eliminated), or a much less centralized and standardized vision of how education works in the later years. I, perhaps predictably, am firmly in favor of the latter.

Appendix II: A Coda on Consumerism

One of the implications of my discussions in Chapter 2 is that advertising is, very often, a form of indoctrination – and not always of the morally permissible kind. Advertising, at least as it exists in the popular imagination, is a calculated undertaking the goal of which is often the creation of deep emotional bonds between the consumer and the trademark. Oftentimes, these bonds are formed not on the basis of any sort of rational process, but are deliberately formed by the invocation of totally unrelated images: the attractive lady in the bikini really has *nothing* to do with how well the motorcycle runs, and it's not at all clear that buying clothes from one store over another is going to get you any closer to the sort of imagined life that the models on TV pretend to be leading as they carry their shopping bags through the doors and out into their fairy-tale world without potholes, clogged drains, screaming children, and leaky roofs.

Now, it's not as if the consumers don't *consent* to the interference after a fashion: they get to watch their television shows and need only "rent" their attention. But it's questionable whether or not the consent is informed. Most people probably think that advertising is designed to let them know what's out there for sale, and aren't really aware that what they are doing is subjecting themselves to a process designed to deeply alter their values and commitments. Indeed, one can see echoes of the military recruiter in the situation of advertisers: the recruiters don't tell the recruits that they're in for indoctrination: instead what the recruits are told is that they will learn valuable skills, be part of a team, travel, have a steady paycheck – all of which is absolutely true.

In any event, I've argued above that consent is really a red herring in such situations, and that consent is only an epistemic marker for whether or not a certain type of harm is going to be committed. The harm, of course, is *deviant* indoctrination. If I watch a number of McDonald's ads, and I start to think of myself as only happy with a Big Mac... have I been indoctrinated in such a way as to undermine my authenticity, my capacity for meaningfulness?

I think that, to a certain extent, the answer is obviously “yes” – at it would be least *for me*. I love to cook, for instance. Last night I made the most delicious Provence-style Lamb Chops. I take great joy in my cooking; it’s an expression of who I am, the sort of activity that can be truly meaningful for me. Just the other morning, I cooked breakfast for five of my friends, and their appreciation was at once sincere and heartwarming, for it wasn’t just that they loved the food, but that they loved *my* food. One of them said, “This is an absolutely perfectly cooked English muffin.” That made my day. If, through the operation of advertisements, I am brought about to seek out the local fast food restaurant as a way of feeling that I am providing healthy meals for my wife and I, or as a way of expressing that I am leading a certain kind of life, well... such an expression may be no less sincere, but it’s certainly not an expression of the “me” that loves cooking.

Of course, the fact that there would be such a stark contrast is probably why such advertisements are going to have little effect on me. (That, and the fact that I had a teacher named Barbara Lynne Tubbe in 7th and 8th grade who took it upon herself as a personal crusade to inoculate her students against advertising – its own form of indoctrination, I suppose.) Not everyone is going to be so resistant to advertisements, however. And most of the population is probably comprised of “indifferent subjects” where such things are concerned. But nevertheless, advertisers are *reckless* about whether they are indoctrinating compatibly or deviantly: they concern themselves with pre-existing values only insofar as those values serve as the medium in which they perform their work.

Of course, the most effective advertising seems to be that aimed at children, and there the dangers of deviant indoctrination seem far lessened, though there is no doubt some collateral tension between what parents wish their children to become and what advertisers have planned. But that does not mean that there is no harm to be found in the effects of consumerist advertising, only that it is not harm peculiar to indoctrination. The content can, of course, be problematic as well. And if we remember the discussion of Illich and (particularly) Goodman, it appeared that it wasn’t

institutional education that they found distasteful, but the particular sort of values being instilled in the schools that they saw working around them.

The advertiser's goal, I take it, is total identification and devotion. If the advertisers for Purina Dog Chow could make every single person into someone who thought, "Purina Dog Chow expresses the sort of values that I hold," or "I am the sort of person who wouldn't feed my pet anything other than Purina Dog Chow," they'd go home feeling like they had done their jobs well. And so they would. (I note that many of the marketing surveys one is asked to take these days asks this sort of question *explicitly*: does this product express your values? Are you a [product] sort of person? And so forth.)

But what sort of values are in play when a person *identifies* with a commercial product? On the one hand, it obviously depends on the product: different companies plump for different characterizations and connotations in their ads, and the values associated with certain types of guns are going to be very different than the values associated with certain types of organic hummus. That's not what I mean by a "sort of values." I mean to ask whether there is a quality or tone to a person's values *insofar* as they are values identified with products or brand names generally. I suspect that there is, and I suspect that having such values is at once unavoidable in our modern society and somewhat deleterious to our ability to relate meaningfully to each other.

A year or so ago – maybe a bit longer – I saw an advertisement that really changed the way I saw the world, though not in the way its creators intended. It was a billboard for some new Apple product. The product was sleek and elegant, as Apple products usually are. And the billboard showed six or seven of the product, each in a different color. These were accompanied by a legend that said something more or less like "Express Yourself." The implication of course, was that one could express themselves by choosing a different color device. There would be, then, two different sort of expressions going on. A person would express themselves by being the sort of person to

have an Apple product (that part of their advertising is inescapable), but a person would further express their *individuality* by choosing, say, the green one. That's the idea, anyway, and schematically it's not one that I've seen limited solely to Apple products.

That billboard horrified me in a way that few things have. It wasn't the idea that a person might express themselves in some trivial way by choosing a particular color of product: that happens all of the time. Just yesterday I picked a particular USB flash drive over others on the same rack because of its color. A woman might pick out the red dress over the blue, a man the pinstripe suit over the herringbone. But that's just preference; the advertisement seemed to be asking for more than just an expression of preference. The advertisement, in its 6-foot high letters, seemed to be calling out for an adherence, a submission: it was less "pick your favourite color" and more "*be this sort of person.*" The "expression" of choosing your own color seemed almost like a palliative – something to put the consumer at ease as his or her identity became what the advertisers want it to be. It's assumed that you'll be an Apple person – the *only* question is whether you will be a Blue, Pink, or Green Apple person.

This isn't to say either that the ideal goal of advertisers is ever reached (it almost certainly isn't) nor that the shared values of brand loyalty can't produce some sort of meaningful interactions (one need think only of the "cult" of Apple to see that this isn't so). It's just to say that there isn't a tremendous amount of room available for depth of expression in being a commercial consumer. Meaningful interactions require that we recognize each other and engage with each other on some level or another. Being an interesting, thoughtful, engaged person who pays attention to others takes effort. It takes time. It also takes practice of a sort. And I worry that there is a limited amount of "space" in our heads, and that the relentless indoctrination that is thrown at us on a daily basis on the television, on the radio, over the internet, on billboards, and even in our mail can "drown out" what else we might become.

It's not so much a worry about deviant indoctrination as it is a worry about content, or, really, a lack thereof. The "opportunity cost" to meaningfulness in becoming just a consumer may be quite steep, and advertisers would, I take it, see you incur it.

The Burning Bones

I see them crying, knees in dirt,
Glad but aching from the loss,
And grieving now that I am gone.
My bones, well not quite all of them.
Lie buried quiet, safe.
Some few, though, distant are ablaze
Beside the still once-valiant corpse
Of he who took my hand.

His flesh it crackles, now and smokes,
A rhythm for the joyous laughs
And shouts that prove his ending worth.
His shieldmates, soon-departing host,
Who play now stumbling at their games,
Drink to his honor in defeat.
And mine.

Four steps – that's it, that's all I took
Past when he fell, enough to free my folk
From this scourge that came across the seas
To lay upon our gates in siege.

Four steps enough, though; they cheer him now,
And set his spirit free,
While others pack their gear.
And yet what strikes me most of all
Is how just miles hence, around my gloomy grave,
My brothers, wife, and children, too
My dearest friends condemn
With bitter breaths the defeated host.

While yet those distant warriors sing
My victory and their loss,
Drinking, clashing in my name.
A line in foreign verse, I ken
May live, give voice where lonely stone
Crumbles as my name smooths out.

Mine own could never understand.
They will not know but loss.
But I have seen the face of God,
Unlearned enough that now
I see it all just perfectly.
They love me.

All of them, in their ways.

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