

Perspectives on the Struggle Against Indoctrination

As a teacher, I have long been interested in the problems presented by indoctrination: a teacher certainly wants to influence—or why teach? However non-directive and non-authoritarian, any teacher who can say of a student “My course seemed to influence neither his knowledge nor beliefs” is making a statement about failure (the student’s, the teacher’s, or both). On the other hand, however, not *all* attempts to exert influence seem legitimate. Moreover, the more one pursues the matter, the more it appears that the most effective means of influencing knowledge and belief are proscribed if one takes seriously a proscription against indoctrination. And under such circumstances, what are the teacher’s primary obligations?

A couple of years ago, I set out to investigate censorship in the classroom. What I wanted to do included a conceptual mapping or logical relating of several obviously connected phenomena, including censorship, indoctrination, and academic freedom for students as well as teachers. Clearly there are ties, but the precise nature of those connections is unclear. I began the kind of task that has characterized much of the work of twentieth century philosophers: the sorting and ordering intended to yield clarity and new understanding of the nature and boundaries, the operation and inter-connections of objects or processes.

I have been working on the indoctrination matter for several years now, examining its history and manifestations and analyzing just how we came to identify indoctrination as opprobrious.

I have made a fairly extensive investigation of the now numerous conceptions of indoctrination, and I have added to existing typologies the identification of a new form—one that is just emerging and which seems of considerable prospective import. I have selected several things from this work for presentation in this article: the discovery and rejection of indoctrination and the case made against it; the attempt to pinpoint the nature of indoctrination and the several conceptions which have emerged since the 1950s; and the methods of prevention and counteraction which have evolved to date.

Let us begin this attempt to understand indoctrination by noting our almost universal rejection of it. Teachers condemn it, and I have never seen one who would accept it as a designation for his or her own practice. Students, too, oppose indoctrination. There was extensive complaint a decade ago against the "laying on" the young of the adult "trip." Some went so far as to characterize formal education as an essentially imperialist process: the "colonizing" of the young.¹ The point is not just historic either. It has not been so many months since one of the best selling albums among adolescents proclaimed,

We don't need no educayshun
We don't need no thought control.²

One reason adults seemed to take a bit less warmly to this modern classic was precisely its failure to distinguish education from indoctrination. So even across age groups, then, there is extensive agreement that indoctrination ought not occur in American schools. However, I want to explore why we feel that way. How did we as individuals come by the conviction that education is good and indoctrination bad? To be pointed about it, were we *educated* or *indoctrinated* into such a belief? For most of us, I suspect, it is a bit of both. Is that bad? If so, what can we do about it? What should we do about it? Besides, how did the indoctrination part happen in the first place?

History of Indoctrination

Let us address this list of questions by noting that our rejection of indoctrination is a relatively recent phenomenon. Prior to this century the words *indoctrination* and *education* were used interchangeably and considered synonyms. It was not even until 1934 that the first major dictionary attached derogatory meaning to the term *indoctrination* and, even then, the negative connotation applied only to a second usage. The first definition offered for indoctrination in the 1934 edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language* was:

1. to instruct in the rudiments or principles of learning . . . ; to instruct (in) or imbue (with), as

principles or doctrines; teach.

But in the second definition a negative note appeared for the first time:

2. sometimes in a derogatory sense, to imbue with an opinion or with a partisan or sectarian point of view.³

Prior to the present century there are no known recorded hesitations about such distinctions.⁴ Lest you doubt it, let me share a couple of examples of how educators and textbook writers saw the function of education. In 1909, the foremost educational historian of his day—Ellwood P. Cubberley—described the task of the school this way in relation to the immigrants then pouring into the nation. It is nothing less than:

... to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government, and to awaken in them, a reverence for our democratic institutions and for those things in our national life which we as a people hold to be of abiding authority.⁵

Textbook authors spoke with pride and eloquence of their intentions. Noah Webster, in the preface to his text on reading and speaking, recorded his wish to “transfuse [the noble sentiments of liberty and patriotism] into the breasts of the rising generation.”⁶ In the introductory pages of his *American Spelling Book*, he declared:

The author wishes to promote the honor and prosperity of the Confederated republics of America; and cheerfully throws his mite into the common treasure of patriotic exertions.⁷

It was a matter not only of patriotic but of religious “exertions” as well. The reason was neatly summed up by Benjamin Rush, who is often credited as one of the first influential advocates of public education for all in the new nation: “Without religion there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments.”⁸ What sort of religion and virtue? “*Christian* virtue” was the dominant response, here stated again by Webster: “Christian virtue consists in the uniform practice of moral and religious duties in conformity with the laws both of God and man.”⁹ An early text in pedagogy made explicit just why it must be the *Christian* religion:

We live in a Christian land. . . . Very justly we attribute our superiority as a people over those who dwell in the darker portions of the world, to our purer faith derived from the previous fountain of truth—the Bible. Very justly, too, does the true patriot . . . rely upon our faith and practice as a Christian people for the permanence of our free institutions and our unequaled . . . privileges. If we are much indebted, then, to the Christian religion for what we are, and so much more dependent upon its lifegiving truths for what we hope to be,—how important is it that *all* our youth shall be nurtured under its influence.¹⁰

It is fairly apparent, then, that the distinction between education, instruction, and teaching on the one hand and indoctrination on the other is of relatively recent origin. It is not yet fifty years since the drawing of this contrast, which we commonly hold to distinguish between education and *miseducation*—and to which we tend to attach fundamental moral significance. Sixty years ago, it would seem, few worried about such niceties regarding the inculcation of knowledge and belief. Today, however, it is only the armed forces which are open about the fact that they indoctrinate: the military still title introductory courses for new personnel “Indoctrination.” Elsewhere, it tends to be a dirty word—even for those who are accused by others of practicing it. For instance, although some people may have qualms about whether the Moral Majority’s program for schools is not heavily indoctrinatory, Moral Majoritarians are far more likely to reject the charge than to accept and defend against it. But why such widespread agreement on opposing indoctrination? Just what is it that is wrong with it?

The Case Against Indoctrination

The case against indoctrination was built largely in the 1920s and 1930s. I know of no major additions since, despite the several rounds of fairly extensive discussion that have occurred among philosophers subsequent to those decades. The group who first drew the distinction and then elaborated the case for rejecting indoctrination consisted largely of the educational progressives, i.e., those who were committed to the general position of John Dewey. The question arose as they deliberated the proper role of the school in rejecting authoritarianism and in paving the way for social reform. In the course of their discussions, most came by the end of the thirties to reject indoctrination as a legitimate form of instruction, irrespective of what might be the virtues of any content so imparted. I have separated the rationale for this rejection into eight distinct arguments. Although typical-

ly mixed and combined, here they are presented as separate elements.¹¹

It is misguided in the first place to try to indoctrinate into a democratic system, since such an effort is doomed to failure. The disposition and ability to reflect, reason, and judge cannot be stamped in, and these are the intellectual powers important for democracy's citizens. Only what one wants to render automatic can be imposed by indoctrination. Thus, it is self-defeating to try to prepare democratic citizens that way. It simply will not work. A totalitarian society has an understandable interest in conditioning people in a number of beliefs; a democratic society only cultivates nondemocratic behavior by doing so.

Second, the very idea of indoctrinating a commitment to democracy is self-contradictory. Democratic conviction and indoctrination are so fundamentally opposed that, by the very employment of indoctrination in obtaining a commitment to democracy, one has denied and obliterated the democracy being sought.

Third, and relatedly, democratic ends call for democratic means. For both moral and practical reasons, if the end be a commitment to the exercise of intelligence and judgment, then the means must involve the exercise of intelligence and judgment also.

Fourth, indoctrination violates Kant's categorical imperative: it treats human beings as mere means or instruments to others' purposes. To indoctrinate beliefs is to seek to perpetuate an ideology or institution at the expense of the individuals being indoctrinated. They are treated merely as means to the preservation of a doctrine; thus they are denied the moral right to be held as ends-in-themselves.

Fifth, indoctrination can permanently damage the learner. Indoctrinated learnings tend by their nature to be unavailable to later examination and assessment, and hence they are not subject to modification. Thus the effect is to enslave the learner to his or her indoctrinators permanently. Indoctrination thus clamps a lid on the individual's ability to change, and, to the extent that the indoctrinated ideas thus possess the individual instead of vice versa, the effect is a permanent denial of freedom.

Sixth, to indoctrinate can only perpetuate the belief system of the present. If that system represents a stable consensus, there could be some advantage in trying to perpetuate it. However, if the present represents a cacophony of belief—such as ours—then there is not much to be gained by perpetuating the cacophony. Schools might wisely become oriented toward preparing the young for a future yet unborn than for perpetuating a present with problems. And that is a job for education, not indoctrination.

Seventh, freedom—and particularly intellectual freedom or freedom of thought—is a value *per se*. Education, which conduces to such freedom, is thus desirable. By the same token, in-

doctrination, which is inimical to freedom, is undesirable.

Finally, and relatedly, indoctrination is repugnant because it stunts human growth. Education's purpose is to bring the young to full intellectual maturity. Such maturity involves the disposition and the ability to think autonomously, reflectively, and critically. Any barrier set in the way of these processes—and indoctrination is surely a barrier—serves to stunt the individual's growth.

These several arguments show that a fairly extensive case against indoctrinating knowledge and belief was erected during the twenties and thirties. It took a long time for people to distinguish education from indoctrination, but it did not take long to reject the latter once they had done so.

The Analysis of Indoctrination

Perhaps it is no accident that the indoctrination issue lay quiet during the 1940s. We made good use during that decade of the moral condemnation that had been forged earlier—bringing it to bear, for instance, in displaying the tyranny and malevolence of Germany's Ministry of Propaganda. But the 1940s was not a period that continued the investigation into indoctrination. That decade absorbed us first with fighting World War II together, then with welcoming peace together, and then with waging a "Cold War." All loomed as such compelling concerns within the public sphere that there was little heed to protecting the private. That, of course, is what the indoctrination matter represents: to worry about indoctrination is to be concerned about the proper limits of the group vis-à-vis the individual, the dominance of the public over the private. Urgently compelling matters of state are likely to render such concerns a prohibitive luxury.

During the 1950s, though, the earlier interest in the indoctrination question was picked up again and this time by thinkers quite willing to accept the notion that indoctrination is wrong, but who also wanted to pursue what it *is*. "In what does indoctrination consist?" they asked. There have been four major types of responses. These responses associate indoctrination primarily with *intentions*, with particular *content*, with *methods*, or with what I call a form of *osmosis*. All four continue to persist because of the problems associated with each.

First, let us look at the view holding indoctrination to be largely a matter of *intent*: if my intention is the inducement of uncritical belief, and I intend to have you accept without challenge what I am teaching, then on this view I am indoctrinating or, at least, trying to do so. This conception has several obvious difficulties: as a full definition it would make indoctrination impossible, apart from the explicit motive to bring it off. Even more important, perhaps, is that uncritical belief is exactly what we intend about a great deal that we teach, e.g., in asserting that $2 + 2 = 4$, and that *cat* is spelled c-a-t, or than an *ed* ending

denotes the past tense. These are not matters where discussion is likely to prove welcome. We want students to accept them as accurate and not subject to challenge. Yet it would appear odd, and somehow wide of the mark, to call spelling, grammar, and arithmetic the stuff of indoctrination.

Indoctrination must then be more a matter of the *content* of what is taught, said others. To intend full and unquestioning acceptance that $7 \times 9 = 63$ is not indoctrination, but to intend full and unquestioning acceptance of the idea that liberalism is superior to conservatism *is*. How about intending full acceptance of the idea that freedom is preferable to slavery? Or that God watches over us? Or that scientifically verifiable truth is the only appropriate kind for the public sphere? Or that justice, equality, participation, and due process are values which ought to be prized? This conception focuses on the verbal root of indoctrination, in the word *doctrine*, suggesting that the content subject to indoctrination is material associated with a creed or set of principles. This seems to approach ordinary use of the term more closely, but the content criterion for defining indoctrination is problematic on at least two counts.

First, we are not all going to agree about just what sort of content poses the indoctrination problem. (As one cynical philosopher has put it, "One man's indoctrination is another man's learning, according to their evaluations of the propositions learned."¹² And that seems a fair account of the current struggle between the evolutionists and the creationists.)

A second problem with the content conception is it turns out that a lot of things we want to teach—particularly in the humanities and in civic education—centrally involve the possibly offending subject matter. Does that mean, then, that history teachers, for example, can avoid indoctrinating only by sticking to brute facts; by avoiding interpretations and values and sticking to descriptions stripped as bare and colorless as they can make them? And on this conception, how do we ascertain whether those dealing with sensitive content have in fact indulged in indoctrination? How might one defend against such a charge? Would the only truly effective demonstration that one has *not* indoctrinated lie in boasting minimal effects on students' values and perspectives? Would the optimal defense against the indoctrination charge lie in determining, for example, that only one-fourth of a social studies teacher's students turned out to be democratically inclined, while the other three-fourths divided rather evenly between communism, fascism, and anarchism?

Obviously there are problems with the *content* criterion that identifies indoctrination with the subject matter perceived. There is just too much we want youngsters to accept—and that we believe it to their advantage to accept—to be comfortable with the thought we do them harm by instilling this knowledge. Surely there are ways to seek to teach values that are not indoctrination. It would have been very hard for me as a history and civics

teacher to have had to feel that all my citizenship-related goals were tantamount to indoctrination—and it seems that the *content* conception of indoctrination would tend to make them so. (The conception would create similar problems for me also, of course, as a teacher of philosophy of education. Does the wish to impart commitment to knowledge and reason mark me as a prospective indoctrinator?)

Thus, a third element has come to be stressed by some analysts. For them, indoctrination is not so much a matter of *intent* or of *content* as of *method*. With this view, irrespective of purpose or subject matter, if one uses certain methods, he or she is likely to be indoctrinating. By and large these methods have to do with ignoring or violating the canons of evidence or suppressing one side of the story. They also have to do with rendering automatic intellectual content which might otherwise be challenged by the learner. As one spokesperson for this conception has framed it, "Indoctrination is the deliberate use of non-rational means, or the dishonest use of irrational means, to induce belief."¹³

This is the criterion which many have found the most satisfactory for a long time. It is the one framed by the progressive educators who initially discovered and rejected indoctrination, and it probably remains the most widely accepted conception. It manages to avoid the difficulties we have cited in connection with the first two conceptions. It is, however, beginning to appear increasingly problematic in its own right. One reason is that it obviously cannot speak to early education: the first grade teacher who teaches "Police officers are our friends" would only bewilder the students by inviting the class to reason together about the validity and warrant for this proposition. Moreover, the way in which that early lesson in citizenship education is typically taught involves the provision of positive experiences with police officers. But is this not inducing belief via non-rational means? Does it not involve conditioning? What makes the situation even more puzzling is that I doubt there is any other way to deal with young children that is as pedagogically sound and adequate.

If we want the young to grow up with positive assumptions and dispositions toward the state and its agents—or with a number of the other attitudes and values our culture prizes—the cultivation of these must begin *before* the age of reason and, typically, through a combination of cognitive content plus affective reinforcement. This is something that elementary school teachers have known for a long time. What has only recently come to many, however, is the awareness that a large number of the beliefs and dispositions acquired by adults are also shaped by non-rational means. Taking on a new role, or entering a new institution, makes each of us subject to socialization processes that are primarily non-rational. This is so, even if we are well aware of and alerted to what is going on. It is not just the very

young, then, who are subject to indoctrination; it is all of us. Moreover, some of these non-rational means appear beyond control or even awareness.

Thus, the *methodological* conception of indoctrination is insufficient at best and perhaps even a bit misleading. It lulls us into thinking that if we teachers are careful about our methods of trying to induce belief—avoiding some and sticking to others—then those in our charge can avoid being indoctrinated in our classrooms. We are learning in more and more detail that this is not true. Indoctrination often occurs in such ways that teachers cannot avoid it. It is not only beyond their control, but they too may be its victims! This is the message of sociologists of knowledge and ethnographers and others, who in the last decade have alerted us to an additional kind of indoctrination which occurs through such media as the hidden curriculum, the socialization process, and the power of hegemony. A brief word about each of these may be useful.

The hidden curriculum, as most of us know, is associated with the latent teaching of the school, which is largely conveyed not in syllabi or textbooks or discussions, but in the way the institution is organized and operated. It is not the lessons explicitly taught, but those which lie implicit within them, i.e., not the lessons, but their syntax. McLuhan's dictum that "the medium is the message" seems to be a claim about the hidden curriculum (which somehow, by the way, always seems easier to characterize metaphorically than directly).

Socialization is a bit easier to define. It represents the sum of the processes whereby the young come to internalize the culture into which they are born; they take on the particular intellectual and moral states, the social skills, rules, attitudes, and beliefs which mark mature members of their society. While some have sought to distinguish education from socialization, others have claimed that, irrespective of whether the overt appeal is to reason or emotion, all education is in fact mere socialization.¹⁴ This seems to suggest that all education reduces to indoctrination. Reductionist charges are easy to deny (there is a plausible presumption of the falsity of any universal claim). But what sociologists of knowledge have unearthed about how our most pervasive concepts and categories are formed, and our behavior patterned, has lent the suggestion considerable force. They have disclosed, for instance, how we acquire such concepts as time, space, and the ordering principles of social control, such as a sense of responsibility and attitudes toward authority.¹⁵ These are among the most fundamental and pervasively-applicable sets of ideas that each of us has. They perform a *regulative* function with respect to the acceptability of new ideas, commitments, and modes of behavior. It appears that the ways in which we acquire these crucial concepts is very hard to distinguish from the non-rational and irrational persuasion processes that are the hallmark of indoctrination.

What compounds the problem even further is that some sociologists of knowledge who have sought the sources of the ideas thus promulgated have responded with the concept of *hegemony*, which asserts the cultural dominance, too, of the ruling class. Obviously the ruling class controls wealth and power within our society, but we are learning that the ruling class also exerts a similar control over knowledge and culture. In fact, the knowledge valued, organized, and presented by the dominant class is the only knowledge considered knowledge and judged worthy of the school's attention. The process applies to people at all ages and educational levels. For instance, as one author has put it with respect to books for the young:

In any society, children's books generally reflect the needs of those who dominate that society. A major need is to maintain and fortify the structure of relations between dominators and dominated. The prevailing values are supportive of the existing structure; they are the dominator's values. . . . children's books play an active part in maintaining that structure by molding future adults who will accept it.¹⁶

However, this is no simple matter of a stacked deck, or an account of how the methodological form of indoctrination works. It describes something at once far more subtle and virulent. It appears to be a complaint against a new form of indoctrination which, instead of tying the latter to particular *content* or *methods* or *intentions*, has made it so extensive as to suggest an *osmosis*-like process. Espousers have seemed to reason that the systematic similarities in belief and perspective marking the adults of any society are sufficient grounds for inferring the pervasiveness of indoctrination-like processes. I want to spend a bit more time with this final conception of indoctrination and the way it occurs, because it is the least familiar form, and it is likely to become a challenge of increasing import for education and teachers. Recognize that, in the face of this new view of the sources of indoctrination, a great deal of the advice on dealing with earlier-identified types appears impotent. Recall, for example, Bertrand Russell's ringing reply to the would-be indoctrinators of an earlier day: " 'I should like to see people exposed in schools to the most vehement and terrific argumentation on all sides of every question.' " ¹⁷ Admirable, perhaps, but extensively irrelevant to the indoctrination danger as we are now coming to perceive it.

The newest version of indoctrination recognizes it to be a far more pervasive phenomenon than earlier views presumed. It holds that we learn what we are born into and grow up with. A great deal of the reality we come to recognize and accept as fixed and immutable is humanly contrived, rather than the natural and

necessary order of things, but we do not perceive or understand that as we become aware of the world around us. As Berger and Luckmann reported, it is the very nature of the socialization process—and its ensuing hold on us all—that “The child does not internalize the world of his significant others as one of many possible worlds. He internalizes it as *the* world, the only existent and only conceivable world. . . .” Thus, our original encounter with reality leaves all of us imprinted with the idea that it is inevitable and cannot be otherwise. In this way, continue Berger and Luckmann, “primary socialization . . . accomplishes what (in hindsight, of course) may be seen as the most important confidence trick that society plays on the individual—to make appear as necessity what is in fact a bundle of contingencies. . . .”¹⁸

Language is a particularly significant dimension of the contingent reality into which we are born. Each of us is born into a language community, and we learn the world as we learn language. What we can perceive is determined to a considerable extent by that language. A primitive language, for example, which classifies objects as to their appearance, groups an inverted basket, a turtle, a half moon, and a cut grapefruit as similar.¹⁹ Our linguistic tendency to categorize by function instead of appearance makes all the difference in the kind of reality we perceive and can know. It has been said that it was our language, with its temporally delineated tenses, which allowed us to develop science. Others have claimed that formal logic owes its origins to the grammar of Ancient Greece; logic being simply the explicated rules of that language. The language into which we are born renders some of reality’s dimensions accessible and others closed. Moreover, for each of us, within the language that we employ, concepts not only summarize the content of what we know but they also function to order and screen the world for us, thus determining what we shall come to know. In this fashion, the concepts we are taught function powerfully to direct our attention. Thus, it seems fair to say that simply living in the world and acquiring its language and taking on its concepts indoctrinates each of us.

It is this sort of ubiquitous and pervasive indoctrination that looms largest for many observers now and is causing some to charge our society with far more manipulation and indoctrination than we have been willing to acknowledge. This is increasingly a charge leveled against schools and colleges. I want to share with you one sure-to-annoy expression of it. Here are Professor Michael Parenti’s recollections of school:

. . . the grade school’s first commitment is to the propagation of values and practices that sustain the sociopolitical status quo. . . . [In] my 1942 grade school classroom. . . there was . . . more political socialization going on . . . than in the average local political club.

... I was taught the religion of nationalism, complete with its hymns (Star Spangled Banner), its sacred symbols (Old Glory), its rituals (flag drill, salutes), its holy scriptures (Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Gettysburg Address), its litany and incantations (pledge of allegiance, patriotic slogans), its Early Church Fathers (Washington, Adams, Jefferson), its harbingers and prophets (Paul Revere, Patrick Henry), its martyrs (Nathan Hale, Abraham Lincoln), its Judases and apostates (Benedict Arnold, John Wilkes Booth), and its myths of divine origin (Plymouth Rock, Constitutional Hall).²⁰

This statement is likely to bother a number of people, and my point is not to ask you to accept the perspective or the argument. Questions about its validity require quite a different kind of attention than we can give it here. My intent is simply to display an instance of an increasingly prominent conception of indoctrination, locating it in what is never made explicit and what is thus never open to conscious examination and rational acceptance or rejection. The new conception is beginning to give rise to new kinds of discussions about indoctrination and it is leading some to question the legitimacy of much that we have tried to accomplish within education. It has even caused some to ask where education ends and indoctrination begins. Can we establish that point and then avoid indoctrinating?

Prevention and Counteraction Programs

It has long been recognized that the complete avoidance of indoctrination in schools and colleges is extremely difficult. Thus, efforts to cope with indoctrination have included both attempts to prevent it and antidotes to counter what has slipped by. The prevention programs have shared the general strategy of limiting the number of conclusions presented in education and proliferating the questions that are posed. The problem-solving approach to the social studies advocated during the 1930s and the 1940s is a prime example. Instead of being organized to chronicle the past or describe the present, it centered on the exploration of unresolved social problems. Since that time, the inquiry approach to educating and various controversy-analysis and decision-making programs have shared the intent of avoiding indoctrination by requiring students to arrive at their own answers and conclusions.

The second broad strategy—the antidote approach—has in effect acknowledged that some indoctrinating is bound to occur, whether in school or out, and the best plan is to arm the young to deal with it. The first program along these lines was that of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, established in the 1930s, which

identified seven tricks of the propagandist trade—including such still familiar names as “Name Calling,” Glittering Generality,” and “Card Stacking.” The institute urged that all of us learn to analyze all attempts to persuade, and that we be equipped with the skills necessary to identifying unfair and unwarranted tactics. These skills were often put to work on sales pitches and ads, but they were also applied to sociopolitical materials.²¹

Some educators began to feel, however, that the tricks of the propagandist trade were so numerous and complex that no list of techniques could ever suffice. The answer to indoctrination would have to lie, then, at a more fundamental level, affecting characteristic thought patterns. These people began to urge the cultivation of “Critical Thinking”—which by the early 1950s was being construed as the conscious adoption and application of the analytical operations of logicians and semanticists. The individual who learned and internalized the rules of logical inference as screening procedures would be equipped to assess what he or she encountered and to identify and reject what was faulty.

There are still people working from these assumptions, but the form of indoctrination of greatest current concern is not very amenable to propaganda analysis or critical thinking techniques. This form of indoctrination is the *osmotic* form associated with socialization, i.e., those teachings that we seem to acquire automatically and breathe with the air. These are the teachings so deeply embedded in the structures of institutions and practices and language as to be unconsciously taught and learned. The source is different, then, and the treatment needs to be also.

Here the strategy calls, as phenomenologists and sociologists of knowledge have put it, for “problematizing the taken-for-granted reality.” What is necessary to counteract these unconscious learnings is first to bring them to the level of consciousness so that we can be aware that we are holding such beliefs (or more accurately, perhaps, that they are holding us) and then to show that they are assumptions that can and should be challenged. The most prominent example of this strategy is probably Paulo Freire, whose adult literacy program for Brazilian peasants began with the assumption that their lives are controlled by the belief that their circumstances are simply the natural order of things—every bit as natural as the falling to earth of objects dropped. Making them aware of their assumptions made it possible for them to find their own error in equating natural with sociopolitical truth. The strategy begins with consciousness-raising and then turns the deeply-buried convictions into questions helping people to challenge and amend their beliefs. (As you might anticipate, some have asked, however, whether this consciousness-raising process is not sometimes as indoctrinatory as those yielding the beliefs to be corrected.²² To the extent that socialization processes have obscured the dif-

ference between natural and man-made reality, espousers of the conventional view are likely to believe they have God and nature on their side, and that challenges to the domination of males or whites, for example, are challenges to "God's way.")

Several educational proposals seem based on a general strategy similar to Freire's. They call themselves "literacy" programs and there has been, for example, a "Social Literacy" Project, at the University of Massachusetts, designed to make people in schools aware of some of the teachings—the hidden curriculum or socialization effects—of school organization and structure. The intent was to make it possible for them to modify the structures if they so desired.²³ Meanwhile, a Political Literacy Project at York University, England, has sought to ensure that students learn the ideologies of multiple groups, not just of the dominant one.²⁴ This program accepts the spreading conviction that a genuinely impartial political education is impossible, because of the auspices and the consequences of particular beliefs. Thus, students must be equipped with knowledge of the beliefs of their teachers and of the authors of the students' books. Such information is necessary to enable them to discount and offset the views of these sources.

To my knowledge, by far the most ambitious effort of this sort is the Cultural Literacy approach recommending that education "... depoliticize the educational process. This means that no aspect of the culture is to be taken-for-granted, but instead is to be brought to the level of consciousness and examined." The crux of the educational task, then, is "raising to the level of conscious awareness the society's pre-definitions, explanations, values, and stereotypes."²⁵ The curriculum is largely a matter of exploring the meanings our culture and society have assigned to such articulating concepts as: work, technology, progress, community, time, space, success, and responsibility. Only by exploring the social and historical dimensions of these fundamental ways to order reality, and by comparing the received ideas in our society with those of other societies, can students become aware of and able to reject the indoctrinated learnings the world has imposed upon them.

It seems to me that the Cultural Literacy proposal, especially, offers much promise as a route to intellectual freedom and as a provocative new curriculum and new kind of curricular organization. But all of the several "literacy" approaches—social and political, as well as cultural—have much potential. A great deal of implementation work remains to be done on all three; but the general approach at least attempts response to our newest views of the indoctrination process.

But in the interim, what? Is there nothing we can do in the meantime? Yes, there certainly is. We may never be able to eliminate or fully overcome indoctrination, but we do have extensive ways to respond to the sorts associated with *intention*, *content*, and *method*. In contrast to the *osmosis* conception, these

three make indoctrination much more amenable to teacher control. It would be unfortunate if the *osmosis* view left some of us so discouraged about the insurmountability of the problem as to shrug our shoulders and give up. Some have already begun suggesting that perhaps the indoctrinated state is the normal human condition and that there seems little we can do about it. But is the phenomenon really so unavoidable that we should just bow to it as inevitable? Should we at best simply acknowledge that indoctrination is largely what education is about and is what accounts for the bulk of our beliefs and convictions?

For me, such a conclusion would be a travesty. Freedom of thought and belief remain among our most cherished commitments. That freedom cannot be absolute in no way diminishes its appeal or its desirability, and to conclude that because it is not *fully* realizable we ought to abandon it as an ideal is to fall prey to the fallacy of the beard. (That we cannot say exactly how many hairs make a beard does not mean there is no difference between being bearded and beardless. That we cannot *always* avoid indoctrination does not mean that we can *never* do so or that we ought not try.)

Freedom—including intellectual freedom—is an elusive ideal or goal. It is never fully realized, nor can any gain in its pursuit be viewed as permanent. Each era must wage its own struggle for intellectual freedom. The form of that struggle changes in response to the source and nature of the major threats, although old sources, generally, are likely to persist and to be supplemented. It seems we are *still* subject to the kind of indoctrination efforts represented in the intent-, content-, and methods-oriented conceptions identified decades ago. A contemporary example of each conception is: the Moral Majoritarians are a good case of the *intent* conception; Frances FitzGerald's recent study of history textbooks supplies abundant material for those who look to the *content* conception; and a recent exposé titled *Hucksters in the Classroom* displays the current extent of the methodological approach to indoctrinating.²⁶ The present scene suggests the continuing validity of these three, as well as the more recent *osmosis* version of indoctrination. Those who would be free cannot afford, then, to overlook any of the four as a guide to indoctrinatory sources, and those who would avoid indoctrinating must seek to guard against all four forms and guises. One study wisely underscored this in the very locution chosen to present the several conceptions of indoctrination. It emphasized the introductory phrase "You can't be sure you're not indoctrinating if . . ." (if you are dealing with particular kinds of *content*, if you have certain kinds of teaching aims, if you have chosen instructional *methods* to accord with those aims, and if you have the right to reward or punish acceptance or rejection of what you are presenting.)²⁷ The warning of that particular phraseology offers good advice for all of us.

To the extent that intellectual freedom is a value to be

prized, it appears that our obligation as teachers is to maximize it for those in our charge. To do otherwise violates our sense of justice and fairness. It smacks of unfair advantage—of the manipulation of the defenseless at the hands of the teacher, the society, or the Establishment. The individual who has been indoctrinated has been had, and he or she has been diminished. That individual is the victim of his or her own beliefs. That individual is taking as truth what may not be, and his or her indoctrinated learnings are not amenable to correction. There is thus a narrowness and provincialism in his or her belief structures, which is likely to be permanent, and of which he or she is unaware.

It is fundamental to the teacher's task to maximize intellectual freedom for the student. This does not mean, however, as some have thought, that the solution is to abstain from teaching the young anything, in the interests of granting them intellectual freedom. This is the error of extreme permissiveness and, more recently, of the deschoolers who, in the interests of freedom, would rather see young people in the world than in the classroom. The world indoctrinates too. Every environment and activity carries its own hidden curriculum. To abandon the young to the world may be to condemn them to an education consisting far more exclusively of socialization or indoctrination. If there are indoctrinatory dangers in classrooms, classrooms also offer the best environments we know for preparing people to recognize and deal with the problems of indoctrination and for otherwise transcending the limitations imposed by time, place, and circumstance. Perhaps our best guide is to insist that formal education be committed to the systematic expansion of individual freedom of thought. What we have learned about indoctrination does not suggest that intellectual freedom is impossible and that schools are inimical to it. On the contrary, it lends added impetus to the absolute *necessity* of formal education for all who would be truly free.

Notes

1. See Jerry Farber's "The Student and Society: An Annotated Manifesto," in *The Student As Nigger* (North Hollywood: Contact Books, 1969), pp. 14-55; John Sinclair, as quoted by Dennis Pianna in "John Sinclair: Death in the Mother Country," *Metropolitan Review* 11 (November 21, 1971):13.
2. From the album, "The Wall," recorded by Pink Floyd.
3. *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, Ma.: G. and C. Merriam, 1934), as quoted by Richard H. Gatchel, *Evolution of Concepts of Indoctrination in American Education* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University, 1956), p. 27.

4. There seems to be one exception to this claim: Francis W. Parker's *Talks on Pedagogics*, published in 1894, was highly critical of indoctrination. However, according to Gatchel, *Evolution*, there appears to have been no comment about this part of Parker's book and no follow-up on the part of other authors.
5. Quoted from p. 15 of Cubberley's *Changing Conceptions of Education* in Thomas C. Hunt, "Public Schools and Moral Education: An American Dilemma," *Religious Education* 74 (July-August 1979):356.
6. Noah Webster in *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking* (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1800), as quoted by Michael V. Belok, "Schoolbooks, Pedagogy Books, and the Political Socialization of Young Americans," *Educational Studies* 12 (Spring 1981):39.
7. Noah Webster in *The American Spelling Book* (Wells River, Vt.: Ira White, 1843), as quoted by Belok, "Schoolbooks," p. 37.
8. Quoted by Belok "Schoolbooks," from Frederick Rudolph, ed., *Essays on Education in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 10.
9. Quoted by Belok, "Schoolbooks," from Harry Warfel, ed., *Letters of Noah Webster* (New York: Library Publishers, 1953), p. 480.
10. David Page in *Theory and Practice of Teaching* (Syracuse: Hall & Dickson, 1847), p. 20, as quoted by Belok, "Schoolbooks."
11. For a detailed analysis of these arguments and an identification of their authors, see Mary Anne Raywid, "The Discovery and Rejection of Indoctrination," *Educational Theory* 30 (Winter 1980):1-10.
12. Stuart Hampshire in "The Illusion of Sociobiology," *New York Review of Books*, October 12, 1978, p. 65.
13. Sidney Hook, "The Job of the Teacher in Days of Crisis," *The New York Times Magazine*, December 14, 1952, p. 62. As later elaborated in Sidney Hook, *Education for Modern Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), "nonrational methods of inducing belief involve . . . the technique of conditioning." *Irrational means* have the appearance of reason but involve "sophism, one-sided presentation, or cooked evidence" (see pp. 168-72).
14. See P.A. White, "Socialization and Education," in *Education and the Development of Reason*, ed. R.F. Dearden, P.H. Hirst, and R.S. Peters (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 113-31; Yehudi Cohen, "The Shaping of Men's Minds: Adaptations to the Imperatives of Culture," in *Anthropological Perspectives on Education*, ed. Murray Wax et al. (New York: Basic Books, 1971), pp. 19-49.
15. See Basil Bernstein, "Class and Pedagogies: Visible and Invisible," in *Power and Ideology in Education*, ed. J. Karabel and A.H. Halsey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 519-21.
16. *Human—and Anti-Human—Values in Children's Books* (New York: Council on Inter-Racial Books for Children and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, 1976), p. 1.
17. Bertrand Russell, "Education for Democracy," *NEA Addresses and Proceedings*, Vol. 77 (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1939), p. 528, quoted by Paul C. Violas in "The Indoctrination Debate and the Great Depression," in *Roots of Crisis*, ed. Clarence J. Karier, Paul Violas, and Joel Spring (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973), p. 156.
18. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 134-35.
19. See Dorothy Lee, "Codifications of Reality: Lineal and Nonlinear," *Freedom and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Spectrum Books, 1959), pp. 105-20.
20. Michael Parenti, "Politics of the Classroom," *Social Policy* 4 (July/August 1973):67-70.
21. See, e.g., Alfred McClung Lee and Elizabeth Briant Lee, eds., *The Fine Art of Propaganda; A Study of Father Coughlin's Speeches* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939).
22. For Freire's program, see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

23. See Alfred Alschuler et al., "Blame the System Or How to Love Everyone While Changing Their Roles," *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, March 1976, pp. 18-21.
24. Ian Lister, ed., "Draft Report of the Political Education Research Unit of University of York," mimeographed, September 1977.
25. See C.A. Bowers, *Cultural Literacy for Freedom* (Eugene, Or.: Elan, 1974), pp. 5, 87.
26. Frances FitzGerald, *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Little, Brown, 1979); Sheila Harty, *Hucksters in the Classroom: A Review of Industry Propaganda in Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Study of Responsive Law, 1979).
27. James E. McClellan, "Indoctrination and Believing," *Foundational Studies*, Winter 1978, pp. 23-33.

