

Abstract

In this thesis I argue that indoctrination is closed-minded belief caused by epistemic insulation, where epistemic insulation is a belief that motivates closed-mindedness for any reason. I first consider and reject previous accounts of indoctrination which define it by intention, method, outcome, and content. I next consider Rinalli's definition, which functions as the basis of my own definition, but claims that epistemic insulation motivates the pupil by appealing to their desire to be rational and moral. Finally, I present and defend my own account of indoctrination which differs from previous accounts by claiming that epistemic insulation can be motivated by reasons beyond a desire to be rational and moral.

Indoctrination, Insulation, and Closed-Minded Belief:

Easy as ABC

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I. Introduction

Consider the following case:

Jess teaches her students about the two main political parties in the United States. She goes over the party platforms and stances on various issues. Jess is a Democrat, a bleeding-heart liberal even, but she isn't trying to make her students Democrats. She wants her students to be knowledgeable about politics. As a Democrat, Jess naturally knows more about that side of the issues than the Republican side. She gives an accurate account of the Republican platform and stances on specific issues, and she gives a very strong account of the Democratic platform and stances on specific issues. When her students ask her tough questions, she is better able to explain how a Democrat would answer than a Republican. Her lesson is by the book, but her students leave class more inclined to call themselves Democrats.

The case should not be unfamiliar since this kind of bias often slips into a teacher's lessons. Jess tries to be neutral on the subject by giving space for both parties and she tries not to let her personal politics show to her students. Her intentions are completely pure, nevertheless, she influences her students' beliefs. Did Jess indoctrinate her students? If she did, then we should worry about how commonplace indoctrination must be given how typical Jess' lesson seems. If influencing someone's views is indoctrination, then we should be worried. But if Jess' case is not an instance of indoctrination, we should get to know why. What causes Jess' case to be classified in one way or another?

I will ultimately argue that Jess did not indoctrinate her students. Nevertheless, this case gets at how subtle the issue is. On the surface, Jess is merely teaching objective party stances, yet, despite her efforts to be neutral, her students come to believe one side more strongly over the other. To better bring out why Jess' instruction is not indoctrination, let's consider an alternate case:

Jake is teaching about the United States political parties. He lays out the platforms that both the Democratic party and the Republican party stand for. Additionally, he goes over each party's stance on various issues. He claims that on the issue of abortion, Republicans are pro-life, whereas Democrats are pro-killing babies. On the issue of gun control he makes a comment that Democrats illogically believe *guns* kill people. Jake continues to insert various comments that indicate Democrats are immoral. His students did not support any political party before, but now they believe in the Republican party. The students believe that Democrats are immoral and illogical and because they do not want to be immoral and illogical, they closed-mindedly believe in the Republican party, refusing to consider the Democratic alternatives.

I argue that Jake's instruction is a paradigm case of indoctrination because of how his students are closed-minded upon instruction. Compared to Jakes' case, we should be less inclined to call Jess' case indoctrination. Why is this? The two cases are remarkably similar and demonstrate how even when teaching on the same content, a lesson can be educative or indoctrinative.

Finally, let's look at a paradigm case of instruction that is not indoctrination:

Erin is teaching about the United States political parties. She lays out the platforms that both the Democratic party and the Republican party stand for.

Additionally, she goes over each party's stance on various issues. Erin wants her students to learn about the parties so that they will be knowledgeable about politics, even if they come to hold a different view than her own.

Erin's instruction is a paradigm case of education. She and Jess may have the same goals for their students, but Erin is better able to teach the material leaving room for her students to form their own opinions. Compared to Jess and Jake, Erin demonstrates that proper education does not influence the pupil but enables them to be autonomous thinkers.

What these cases really demonstrate is that there are paradigm cases that we can classify intuitively as indoctrination or not, but that there are also borderline cases, like Jess', that are much more difficult. Furthermore, they elucidate some of the ways that indoctrination and education are similar. For a spectator, not paying close attention to the instruction itself, the three cases all appear the same. Yet for the students, the outcome of each case is unique, and because they are forming their beliefs about important issues in politics, the results of the instruction are meaningful.

Indoctrination gets used a lot to describe what we might think is perverse teaching. But furthermore, it has become an accusation, something that we throw at our opposition to undermine their beliefs. Consider someone who was raised in a conservative home and

comes back from college calling themselves a liberal. The conservative family might claim that they were *indoctrinated by the liberals*.¹ Why? Do we think this is a case of indoctrination because someone's opinion was probably heavily influenced? Or do we just say this to discredit how they came to hold their beliefs? Despite the common use, it is unclear what indoctrination really is and how it occurs.

My goal here is to construct a definition of indoctrination according to what we intuitively think is indoctrination. I rely on my own intuition to do this, and I aim to do this without my political and religious biases influencing this intuition. Beyond our opinions about hot-topics and contested issues, we seem to understand when education is pure and when it is indoctrinatory. Using this, I will answer the questions: *What is indoctrination? How does it happen?*

A proper definition of indoctrination should (1) correctly identify the obvious cases as indoctrination or not. These are cases of instruction such as Jake's and Erin's lessons on political parties. Additionally, it should (2) give a clear result of borderline cases. Here, I mean the more unclear cases like Jess' lesson. Properly defining indoctrination serves two purposes. First, it will give us clarity on what counts as indoctrination. Ideally, with this clarity, our conservative families will stop accusing colleges of indoctrinating us, (except maybe when it is appropriate). Knowing what indoctrination is will enable us to use the term properly. Second, it will shed light on what separates education from indoctrination. By better understanding what indoctrination is and how it occurs, we can

¹ Watch any partisan news network and you will probably hear something like this. Alternatively, read "[Mount Holyoke grad deprogrammed from women-only woke culture](#)" by Dana Kennedy

better not indoctrinate people. Since education is such a critical part of the formation of a person, it is paramount that we properly educate and not indoctrinate. So knowing what indoctrination is should help us avoid cases like Jake's.

A note on my goal: I do not advocate for indoctrination. I think that there is something morally problematic about indoctrination, but in what follows I do not consider moral or practical arguments about indoctrination. I think that my work can shed light on what the moral or practical considerations may be, but understanding these considerations is not something that I take up in this project.

I have already laid out the puzzle that I aim to solve and what I think it should mean to define indoctrination. In the rest of this chapter, I will explain what kind of cases I am interested in by describing what I take to be the basic structure of both indoctrination and education. Then, I will consider previous accounts of indoctrination. These previous accounts do not capture what I think it means to indoctrinate, and I will explain why they fail. In the second chapter, I will consider the *Robust Structural Epistemic Account*, a definition of indoctrination that I find promising. I will offer an objection to this account that serves as the motivation for my own view. In the third, and final chapter, I offer my own view, the *Revised Epistemic Insulation Account*, and I will explain, using examples, how my account expands the definition of epistemic insulation in the Robust Structural Epistemic Account. I defend my account against an objection, which brings out the difference between something that causes closed-mindedness and something that

motivates closed-mindedness. Finally, I will conclude by reevaluating Jess' and Jake's cases in light of my account of indoctrination.

Four-Part Structure: $A \rightarrow B(C)$

The aim of this section is to clarify what kind of cases I am interested in considering. In cases of both education and indoctrination, there is a common structure that the process takes: *Someone instructs someone else that something*. I represent this structure as $A \rightarrow B(C)$, where A indoctrinates (\rightarrow) B that C . First, A is the instructor who does the indoctrinating or the educating, and in the prior cases that was Jess, Jake, and Erin. Next, " \rightarrow " is the variable representing the instruction, and is the process.² In the prior cases, the process was students listening to their respective teachers' lectures. Then, B is the pupil who becomes indoctrinated or educated. In the prior cases, there were many pupils because they were the students in the class. Finally, C is the content of the instruction, which is the belief that the pupil comes to hold. In the prior cases, the content was the United States political parties and what they stand for. However, this became more nuanced because for Jess, the pupils came to hold belief in the Democratic party; for Jake, the pupils came to believe in the Republican party and that being a Democrat is irrational and immoral; for Erin, the pupils came to develop their own stances on the parties.

As we can see, this structure is the same for both a case of indoctrination and for a case of education. Identifying this parallel sets up the task that we have ahead of us: if the

² Note that in this context, the arrow is not used in the traditional way such that it would represent a conditional. Here, the arrow should be read as "instructs" such that "A instructs B that C"

structure is the same, what makes something a case of indoctrination rather than a case of education? I use this structure to pick out the kinds of cases that I am interested in, that is, cases in which an instance of learning creates a belief, an instance of $A \rightarrow BC$.

But does this four-part structure always hold? We can imagine a case whereby the content plays the role of the instructor:

Meg has heard a lot about Christianity and wants to know what it's all about. She reads the Bible to get a better sense of what everyone is talking about. She reads the testimony in the Bible that Jesus is the son of God. She comes to believe this for herself and believes that Jesus is the savior of man. She does this completely independently, without input from a teacher.

In this case, we might describe the relationship as $C \rightarrow BA$, such that the Bible is the instructor. Or, perhaps we should think that Meg taught this to herself, in which case we would describe the relationship as $B \rightarrow A$, such that Meg is her own instructor. Either way we choose to describe it, this is a case of education without an instructor, and if we can have a case without an instructor shouldn't the four-part structure fall apart?

While it is the case that we lose the instructor in a traditional sense, (i.e., an individual doing the instructing) we do not lose the role that the instructor plays. By this I mean that no matter what we replace A with, there is still something acting in its place. Therefore, the structure that I introduced does not fail to capture Meg's case. Rather, the structure is flexible enough to account for variations in cases including ones in which the content or

the pupil plays its own role in addition to playing the instructor. So, the four-part structure stands.

Previous Accounts

Previous accounts of indoctrination organize definitions into *intention*, *method*, *outcome*, and *content accounts*.³ This is a common way to carve out the logical space because each of these accounts corresponds to a part of the four-part structure. The intention account corresponds to the instructor; the method account corresponds to the process; the outcome account corresponds to the pupil; the content account unsurprisingly corresponds to the content of the belief. I will present the discourse for each of these accounts of indoctrination and why I think that they fail to properly capture what indoctrination is and how it occurs.

Intention Account

An intention account of indoctrination is one that defines indoctrination based on the instructor's own intentions. Chazen (2022) explains that on the intention account "indoctrination is not about *what* you teach or *how* you teach but, ultimately, about *why* you are teaching it", placing the emphasis on the instructor's own motivations.⁴ I will offer two prominent intention definitions followed by a reply that intention definitions must be differentiated between sincere and insincere accounts. Then I will offer an objection and conclude that the intention account fails to define indoctrination.

³ Wilson (1972), Flew (1972), White (1972), Cooper (1973), Chazen (1978) Siegel (1988), Kleinig (1989), Puolimatka (1996), Merry (2005), Callan & Arena (2009), Bailey (2010), and Rinalli (2020).

⁴ Chazan, Barry. "What Is 'Indoctrination'?" In *Principles and Pedagogies in Jewish Education*, 38

Snook (1972) offers an intention account that: “*A person indoctrinates P (a proposition or set of propositions) if he teaches with the intention that the pupil or pupils believe P regardless of the evidence.*”⁵ On Snook’s account, what makes a case of indoctrination is that the instructor aims for the pupil to come to believe the instruction without regarding the evidence for that belief. Compare this to White (1972), who gives a similar definition, that teaching is indoctrination when “someone is trying to get [a pupil] to believe that a proposition ‘p’ is true, in such a way that nothing will shake that belief.”⁶ The variation between Snook’s account and White’s account is subtle, but on White’s account what makes a case of indoctrination is that the instructor intends for the pupil to believe the instruction so that nothing else can change that belief. I elucidate these two definitions by applying them to Jake’s case when I explain sincere and insincere indoctrination.

Despite the variation between the two intention accounts, Snook and White both argue that indoctrination is when *A instructs B that C, such that A intends for B to believe C in a way that W*. Snook claims that *W* is “regardless of evidence” and White claims that *W* is “such a way that nothing will shake that belief”.⁷ I group these two takes on *W* together because they are both about the way that the pupil holds the belief. Although each account differs in what it means to hold an indoctrinated belief, (what *W* is), they both get

⁵ I.A. Snook, “Indoctrination and Moral Responsibility.” In *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays*, (London: Routledge, 1972), 119-120 [Snook’s italics]

⁶ J.P. White, “Indoctrination and Intentions.” In *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays*, (London: Routledge, 1972), 93

⁷ Why not think that indoctrination is about intention alone? An account of indoctrination that functions solely on the intention of the instructor, and what I would call the weaker account is: *A instructs B that C, where A intends for B to believe C*. But we should not accept this definition because this definition does not capture what indoctrination means, it merely captures that generally speaking, instructors want the pupils to believe what they are teaching. And this is true for all cases of instruction, not just indoctrinating cases of instruction. The math teacher wants her students to believe that two is a prime number, and the French teacher wants her students to believe that this is how you conjugate certain verbs, but neither of these instructions are indoctrinatory. So the mere intention account does not capture what it means for instruction to be a case of indoctrination.

at the intention of the instructor as the salient feature in defining a case of indoctrination. I will discuss the way that the pupil comes to hold a belief in more detail when I consider the outcome account. For now, what matters for the intention account is that the instructor intends for their pupil to hold the belief in a specific way.

Sincere and Insincere Indoctrination

In response to the intention account, Cooper (1973) distinguishes between cases of sincere and insincere indoctrination.⁸ He explains that the sincere indoctrinator genuinely believes what he is teaching, whereas, the insincere indoctrinator knows that the belief is wrong, or intends for the pupil to believe for the wrong reasons.⁹ These two types of cases are both compatible with the previous intention accounts. I will now explain what each case may look like and why it is compatible with the intention account. To explain the sincere case, I use Snook's account of *W*, and to explain the insincere case, I use White's account of *W*. This is not to say that Snook's definition only applies to sincere indoctrination and White's definition only applies to insincere indoctrination. Rather, Cooper thinks, and I agree, that both Snook and White define the intention account with space for both sincere and insincere cases.

Let's consider sincere indoctrination in light of Jake's case: if Jake believes that Democrats kill babies and are illogical in their gun laws then his is an example of sincere indoctrination because he sincerely believes what he teaches his students. A sincere instructor is compatible with an intention account of indoctrination because even if Jake

⁸ David E Cooper, "Intentions and Indoctrination." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 5, (1973), 44

⁹ Cooper, 44-45

sincerely believes what he teaches, he may still intend for his student to hold that belief in a certain way: Suppose that Jake knows how compelling the liberal teacher down the hall is, but he wants them to adopt Republicanism such that they will not take her liberalism seriously. In this case, Jake is sincere, but he still teaches with the intention of his student's believing unshakably. Therefore, even when the instructor is sincere, the instruction can still be indoctrinated on the intention account.¹⁰

Jake's could be a case of insincere indoctrination if one of two things occurred. First, suppose that Jake is not really a Republican, or at least does not believe that Democrats kill babies and are illogical, in which case, he would be insincere in what he teaches. Alternatively, suppose that Jake is a Republican, but not because of issues like abortion and gun control, perhaps Jake is a Republican only for fiscal reasons. Nevertheless, Jake thinks that his students would come to support the Republican party on issues of abortion and gun control rather than on fiscal issues, so he teaches them to believe in the Republican party for the wrong reasons—this would also make Jake insincere. In either of these versions of Jake's case, he insincerely indoctrinates his students. An insincere instructor is also compatible with the intention account of indoctrination. If the insincere instructor does not believe what he is teaching, then he must not think that there is evidence for that belief and is therefore trying to get his pupil's to believe "regardless of evidence."¹¹ Similarly, if the insincere instructor wants the pupil to believe for reasons that are not his own, then he too is trying to get the pupil to believe "regardless of evidence" or at least regardless of what he finds to be compelling evidence. So the

¹⁰ Cooper, 45

¹¹ Cooper, 45

insincere instructor, like the sincere instructor, can intend for his pupils to believe the instruction in a way that makes that instruction indoctrinatory according to the intention account.

The intention account is compelling because it gets at what we tend to think is malicious about indoctrination. We usually think of indoctrination as something pernicious, and we attribute that characteristic to the instructor as the person who is doing the indoctrinating. We think indoctrination is a condemnable act that robs the pupil of their own free thought. So by defining indoctrination in terms of the instructor's intentions, we can capture that maliciousness in the definition. We might also be motivated to adopt this definition because it could separate indoctrination like Jake's case from accidental persuasion like Jess' case, assigning malintent to Jake but not Jess.

Now, I will object to the intention account of indoctrination by a case of unintentional indoctrination.¹² Consider a case like Jess or Erin, whereby the instructor does not have any such intentions about how the pupil should believe the instruction but suppose that those pupils come to believe in the ways that Snook and White describe, either without evidence or unshakably. It intuitively seems like the fact that the pupil holds their belief this way makes them indoctrinated. If we think that the pupil in the unintentional case is indoctrinated, which I do, then we should not consider intention to be a defining feature of a case of indoctrination. So the intention account fails to define what indoctrination is. Nevertheless, the intention account suggests that the way the pupil comes to hold the

¹² Merry (2005) and Callan & Arena (2009) similarly respond to the intention account with concerns about unintentional indoctrination.

belief is salient in defining indoctrination. I will consider this again when I evaluate the outcome account of indoctrination.

Method Account

The next account that I will consider is the method account of indoctrination. Recall that part of the structure of instruction is the process itself, this was represented using “→”. If we define indoctrination in terms of method, we claim that instruction becomes indoctrination somewhere in the process, that is, the way that the belief is being taught. I will present two method accounts of indoctrination and then present an objection to the method account.

Wilson (1972) claims that the use of a “commanding presence, an admixture of fear, and constant parrot-like repetitions” to induce a belief is to indoctrinate that belief.¹³ But to lead a discussion with the pupil, giving her the space to ask questions and to draw conclusions, resulting in that belief would not be indoctrination. The difference between these two modes of instruction is that in the former, the pupil’s fear coerces her to believe whereas in the latter, the pupil comes to believe within a rational learning process.

Comparing these two methods of instruction indicates that there is something indoctrinatory about the use of fear tactics in belief formations.

We should wonder then, what about fear creates beliefs? An extreme version of this occurs in police interrogations. Interrogators are trained to intimidate the individual into

¹³ John Wilson, “Indoctrination and Rationality.” In *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays*, (London: Routledge, 1972), 18

confessing, using something called the Reid Technique.¹⁴ These interrogations create “false confessions where the subject sincerely believes in their own guilt”¹⁵ This means that despite knowing that they are innocent, the individual can be convinced otherwise. The fear and anxiety induced in the interrogation by-passes the subject's own evidence that they are innocent and coerces the belief that they are guilty of a crime they did not commit. All of this demonstrates exactly what Wilson argues is indoctrination.

Wilson seems to think that avoiding fear tactics can avoid indoctrination because fear is what prevents the pupil from reasoning about their beliefs. However, Puolimatka (1996) offers a method account of indoctrination that indicates merely avoiding fear is not enough to avoid indoctrination because there is another way to by-pass reasoning in the pupil.¹⁶ Puolimatka, like Wilson, claims that indoctrinated beliefs are not fully reasoned, but claims that this can also be a result of *classroom talk*.¹⁷ “Classroom talk” refers to the dialogue between the instructor and the pupil in a traditional classroom setting, whereby the instructor lectures and the pupil listens, occasionally asking a question.¹⁸

But if classroom talk does not use fear to instill a belief, how is it a method of indoctrination? Puolimatka claims that “classroom talk lacks the reciprocity of everyday talk which gives the student the opportunity to confirm or disconfirm the formulations made by the teacher”.¹⁹ The reciprocity of every day talk engages the student’s own

¹⁴ Keller, Rebecca. “Online Radicalization and Voluntary Belief,” (forthcoming), 1

¹⁵ Keller, 1

¹⁶ T. Puolimatka, “The Concept of Indoctrination.” *Philosophia Reformata* 61, no. 2 (1996), 111

¹⁷ Puolimatka, 124

¹⁸ Puolimatka, 126

¹⁹ Puolimatka. 124

reasoning capacity by allowing them to confirm or disconfirm what they are being taught. Generally speaking, engaging more with a subject helps you to develop your own opinion about that subject. Suppose that you were in a class learning about the United States political parties and were asked to raise some objections to the Republican party: whether or not you agree with the Republican party, the exercise of raising those objections would require you to rationally engage with the material and likely develop your own beliefs on the subject. In fact, good teaching “encourages critical analysis”, but classroom talk does not exercise this rational engagement.²⁰

Rather, with classroom talk a student’s inability to confirm or disconfirm information means that the pupil cannot interact with the material in order to create that deeper, well-reasoned understanding. Even though the pupil may be able to recite the lecture, this is a shallow version of knowledge, that by-passes reason.

Whether by intimidation or classroom talk, what Wilson and Puolimatka tell us about indoctrination is that: *A instructs B that C, where the instruction by-passes B’s reasoning.*²¹ This is what we call the method account.²²

I will offer two responses to the method account, the first is from Kleinig (1989).²³ What Wilson and Puolimatka’s method account tells us about indoctrination is that

²⁰ Puolimatka, 127

²¹ Cooper (1973) offers what he claims to be a method account. Upon my own understanding of this his argument, it aligns more closely with an outcome account, thus I will evaluate his definition as an outcome account alongside other outcome accounts.

²² Rinalli (2020) refers to this as the “Rationality-Bypassing Account” (64), which I think is also a good term for this account of indoctrination.

indoctrinated beliefs are formed by bypassing reasoning in the pupil.²⁴ But Kleinig suggests that this is not a defining feature of indoctrination because the indoctrinated are frequently able to produce reasons for holding their beliefs.²⁵ Consider one of Jake's student's: whether or not Jake's lesson features classroom talk, we can imagine a student in that class producing a rational response to why they are a Republican. They would say that it is because they do not like killing babies, or because they think Republicans have a better stance on firearm issues. Ultimately, the method account fails because the indoctrinated are able to reason about their beliefs, so those beliefs are not necessarily instilled in a rationality-bypassing process.

The second response to the method account is that we can imagine instruction that bypasses rationality but is not a case of indoctrination:

Alison is in a neuroscience lecture in which the professor lectures on the material using classroom talk. Alison does not care to learn about neuroscience, but she is in the class so for the duration of the semester she memorizes the material in the professor's lecture and takes the tests. She scores well on the tests but ask her a critical question about neuroscience and she is at a loss.

Alison seems to hold these beliefs about the material such that she knows the answers to test questions, but she is not rationally engaging in the instruction process. Intuitively, this is not a case of indoctrination, and we should not want it to be because then we

²³ John Kleinig "Indoctrination." In *Philosophical Issues in Education*, (London: New York: Croom Helm ; St. Martin's Press, 1982), 62

²⁴ Wilson, 15; Puolimatka, 124

²⁵ Kleinig, 62

would likely need to consider most science courses indoctrinatory.²⁶ Alison demonstrates that rationality-bypassing does not make a case of indoctrination, so the method account further fails to define indoctrination.

Outcome Account

An outcome account of indoctrination is one that defines indoctrination by the way that the pupil holds the belief. There are two outcome accounts that I will evaluate. The first is what I call the *Relation to Reason Outcome Account*, and the second is what I call the *Closed-Minded Outcome Account*.

Relation to Reason Outcome Account

Atkinson (1972) claims that indoctrination occurs when the pupil's beliefs *fall short of knowledge*.²⁷ When something is taught, it creates knowledge and Atkinson claims that if teaching creates knowledge, then indoctrination is like drilling, such that it creates habits; therefore, indoctrination creates something that falls short of knowledge. Teaching is a rational process, something that is inherently about reason and creating knowledge. Atkinson's argument is that teaching is a rational process and is necessarily about the creation of knowledge, so conversely, indoctrination is about something less than rationality, creating something short of knowledge.²⁸

²⁶ In my experience, it is surprising how many students engage in science courses like Alison does—able to take tests but unable to critically engage.

²⁷ R.F. Atkinson, "Indoctrination and Moral Education." In *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays*, (London: Routledge, 1972), 44

²⁸ Atkinson, 44

Compare this to Snook (1972), who argues that indoctrinated beliefs are beliefs held “regardless of the evidence.”²⁹ This means that an indoctrinated belief is held without considering the evidence, or that the belief is maintained without consulting evidence. Green (1972) furthers this definition, though he calls it both non-evidential and unintelligent belief.³⁰ He claims that indoctrination is establishing beliefs so that they will be “held quite apart from the truth, their explanation, or their foundation in evidence.”³¹ Additionally, Cooper (1973) says that “indoctrination will be identified as such by the tendency of these activities involved to produce certain effects, e.g., the result in non-evidentially held beliefs.”³² Atkinson, Snook, Green, and Cooper argue for an outcome account that indoctrination is defined by the pupil’s belief in relation to reason.

Atkinson, Snook, Green, and Cooper all get at a definition of indoctrination whereby a belief is held with an incorrect relation to reason, such that the pupil holds a belief for incorrect or inadequate reason. On this account indoctrination is when: *A instructs B that C, such that B believes C without proper reasoning.* This is like the interrogated person believing that they are guilty even when they are not. They hold this belief, and we know that they are holding this belief without proper reasoning because the belief is false, and on the outcome account of indoctrination, we should think that they are indoctrinated.

²⁹ Snook, 119-120; Snook’s view is an intention account, but his own definition hinges on outcome, which is why I consider what he means by belief “regardless of the evidence” when considering the outcome account.

³⁰ Thomas F. Green “Indoctrination and Beliefs.” In *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays*, (London: Routledge, 1972), 27

³¹ Green, 20

³² Cooper, 53

This seems awfully like the method account, claiming that the pupil does not take up a belief rationally. The difference between the method account and the outcome account is that on the method account, what is indoctrinatory is that the instruction circumvents the pupil's reasoning. On the outcome account, the instruction may influence the way that the pupil holds the belief, but ultimately, it is the way that they hold the belief that makes them indoctrinated. So the difference between the method account and the outcome account is that the former is about the instructional process and the latter is about the result of that process.

Kleinig's response to the method account is also applicable to opposing Atkinson, Snook, Green, and Cooper. Kleinig observes that many indoctrinated beliefs are held with reason. This is to say that you can ask someone who has been indoctrinated about their views and they are able to articulate a reasonable response. I explained this previously with the example of Jake's students. If you were to ask them why they are Republicans, they would tell you that they believe in saving babies and protecting gun rights. They are fully able to reason about their beliefs despite being indoctrinated, so this outcome account does not properly classify cases of indoctrination.

Siegel (1988) offers a slightly different relation to reason outcome account. Siegel uses the rationality account as a starting point, claiming that, "Holding a belief indoctrinatedly is not just holding it in the absence of rational justification, but holding it non-evidentially, so that reasons, evidence, and so rational justification are irrelevant to its

being held.”³³ Yet, Siegel differs from Atkinson, Snook, Green and Cooper because of the way that he thinks indoctrination occurs when moral education is not redeemable, claiming that indoctrination is moral education gone wrong.³⁴

I will explain moral education and what it means for moral education to be redeemable: Think about how we come to hold certain moral values. Usually, our parents impart these moral values on us at a young age. This process of learning morality is moral education, and Siegel thinks that when we learn morals, we do it without proper reasoning, but this is not indoctrination because those non-evidential beliefs are redeemable. Consider the case of a child during her moral development:

Little Lucy gets in a fight with her younger brother, she takes his toy and shoves him. Their parents immediately step in and discipline her—however they might choose to do that. This is a teachable moment because it is an instance for the parents to instill a value in their child. They teach their daughter, share your toys and do not hurt your brother.

This case is a moment of moral education for Lucy because her parents give her instructions about what is right and wrong. But at her young age, Lucy is unable to independently reason about what is right and wrong, so she learns the rules without deeply internalizing them. Therefore, Lucy learns something that she is unable to reason about because she is too young. According to Atkinson, Snook, Green, and Cooper this is a case of indoctrination because Lucy holds beliefs about what she is told is right and

³³ Harvey Siegel, “The Indoctrination Objection.” In *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking, and Education*, (New York: Routledge in association with Methuen, 1988), 84

³⁴ Siegel, 84

wrong, but she does not realize the moral reasoning for these beliefs. Siegel argues that this is not indoctrination because that belief is redeemable, that is: “The believer’s belief in them without rational justification is regarded as temporary, and is to be replaced by belief which is rationally grounded.”³⁵ This means that in the moment when her parents teach Lucy that she should share her toys and she should not hurt her brother, she will not have the moral capacity to deeply grasp why this is the case. But presumably, one day she will develop that capacity for reflection and reason, independently understanding, and *redeeming* that moral instruction.

The redeemability model views moral education as akin to having a child memorize their multiplication tables so that they can do applied math problems. They might not have a deep understanding of the multiplication tables, but by memorization, they can at least get some practice in. One day they will come to deeply understand how multiplication works, and they will have already had the chance to put it into action. Moral education at a young age is like memorizing multiplication tables. It is desirable to instill at a young age even if it is not fully grasped. It will not violate their autonomy as math learners, or as developing moral agents, because eventually they will deeply understand what it means.

Here is where moral education and redeemability meet indoctrination: Siegel claims that indoctrinated beliefs are not redeemable.³⁶ This means that when someone is indoctrinated, they never come to redeem that teaching by deeply understanding why it is

³⁵ Siegel, 84

³⁶ Siegel, 85

the case. Does that mean that indoctrination occurs anytime an agent does not one day redeem their prior moral teachings? This definition seems to assume that there is a moral code we all will one day grow into, redeeming the teachings from our childhoods along the way. The assumption that we grow into a moral code alone seems like too big a pill to swallow, but besides that, let's look at what happens when this model goes wrong:

Little Lucy takes her brother's toy and shoves him. Their parent's step in and teach her that she should share her toys and she should not shove her brother. But little Lucy is a psychopath and will never come to understand these moral values.³⁷

The redeemability model takes this to be a case of indoctrination simply because Lucy fails to one day grasp that she should not hurt her brother. But intuitively, this does not strike us as a case of indoctrination. In this case, the instruction is not what goes wrong, but the responsibility that falls to Lucy to redeem the instruction. We do not think that this is a case of indoctrination because what goes wrong is Lucy, and our intuitions about indoctrination tell us that the pupil is the victim, not the reason for something to be indoctrinated. So the redeemability model fails to accurately define a case of indoctrination.

Closed-Minded Outcome Account

Rather than think that the indoctrinated hold beliefs without proper reason, Kleinig claims that indoctrinated beliefs are "held in a way that they are no longer open to full

³⁷ See Fine and Kennett (2004) for a discussion of how psychopathy causes people to learn but not deeply understand moral rules.

rational assessment”.³⁸ While some beliefs may be held without reason or without good reason, they are easily revised in the face of opposing evidence. But with an indoctrinated belief, reasoning cannot seem to permeate. Kleinig says:

The indoctrinated person falls back on implausible claims to self-evidence, continually engages in distortion, resorts to question-begging devices, professes to find reasonably clear objections unintelligible, or becomes chronically unable to feel their weight against his/her position. All of these might come to the surface only after a good deal of reasoning has been engaged in.³⁹

On Kleinig’s view, Jake’s students can tell you why they believe in the Republican party, but they are unable to evaluate this belief in light of new and opposing evidence. So if you ask them why they are opposed to abortion they might say “because killing babies is wrong.” However, if you suggest that a fetus is not a baby, so abortion does not kill babies, they would be unable to assess their own view in light of this new evidence. They might respond in any of the ways that Kleinig describes such that they are unable to be open to how this new evidence affects their beliefs. Their view is backed by reason, but not open to rational assessment.

What Kleinig describes is what Callan & Arena (2009), Borrow & Woods (2006), and Bailey (2010) call closed-mindedness.⁴⁰ I give a complete explanation of what closed-mindedness is in the next chapter, but in short, someone who is closed-minded is someone who “will not seriously open his mind to the possibility that [his] viewpoint is

³⁸ Kleinig, 62

³⁹ Kleinig, 62-63

⁴⁰ Eamonn Callan & Dylan Arena, “Indoctrination.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 111; Robin Borrow & Ronald G. Woods “Indoctrination.” In *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, 4th ed., (London: Routledge, 2006), 73; Richard Bailey, “Indoctrination.” In *The Sage Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, 1st ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 270.

mistaken.”⁴¹ In the next chapter, I will argue that closed-mindedness is the result of indoctrination. However, the closed-minded outcome account as it is endorsed by Kleinig, Callan & Arena, Borrow & Woods, and Bailey is incomplete because it does not tell us exactly how the indoctrinated come to be unable to rationally assess their view—it does not tell us how indoctrination occurs. So this closed-minded outcome account fails but will function as the starting point for the account I discuss in the next chapter.

Content Account

That final account that I will consider is the content account. The content account defines a case of indoctrination on the basis of what content is being taught. To give a content account of indoctrination we first have to wonder, *what kinds of beliefs can be indoctrinated?*

Teaching Doctrine

Consider a definition of indoctrination such that teaching doctrines is indoctrination. The teaching-doctrine account is compelling because the etymology of the word *indoctrination* means *teaching doctrines*. Furthermore, in the Middle Ages *indoctrination* only meant “the implanting of doctrines”.⁴² Peters (1966) gets at this with his observation that “whatever else ‘indoctrination’ may mean, it obviously has something to do with doctrines”.⁴³ So let’s first consider a definition whereby indoctrination is about teaching doctrines: *A instructs B that C, where C is doctrine.*

⁴¹ Borrow & Woods, 73

⁴² Richard H. Gatchel “The Evolution of the Concept.” In *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays*, (London: Routledge, 1972), 8

⁴³ R.S. Peters, *Ethics and Education*. (London: Routledge, 1966), 41

In order to evaluate the teaching-doctrine content account, we need to get clear on what doctrine is. An intuitive way to define doctrine is as an ideology. Fine and Sandstrom (1993) claim that ideology is, “a set of interconnected beliefs and their associated attitudes, shared and used by members of a group or population, that relate to problematic aspects of social and political topics.”⁴⁴ Another account of doctrines is from Flew (1972), that “whatever may count as a doctrine in this context is either false or not known to be true”.⁴⁵

The definitions of what counts as doctrines or at least what can be indoctrinated on the teaching-doctrine content account from Fine and Sandstrom and from Flew are not helpful to narrowing down what doctrines are. Rather than commit to a definition of doctrine, let’s evaluate the definition with a paradigm case. I take religion and politics to be a paradigm of doctrines.⁴⁶ Even if we disagree on the boundaries of what counts as doctrine, we should all agree that religion and politics are doctrinal. With this paradigm example, I will evaluate the teaching doctrine content account. I will first explain two versions of the teaching-doctrine account. Next, I will give a response from Crittenden (1972) against the second version of this account. Then I will give a response from Callan & Arena against the teaching-doctrine account as a whole.

There are two ways for the teaching doctrine definition to unfold. The first is what I call the *mere-doctrine* definition. The mere-doctrine definition holds that any instruction of

⁴⁴ Gary Alan Fine and Kent Sandstrom “Ideology in Action: A Pragmatic Approach to a Contested Concept.” *Sociological Theory* 11, no. 1 (1993), 24

⁴⁵ Anthony Flew, “Indoctrination and Doctrines.” In *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays*, (London: Routledge, 1972), 55

⁴⁶ White, “Indoctrination without Doctrines” (1972), 149, also takes this to be doctrine.

doctrine or ideology, is indoctrination. The second is what I call the *specific-doctrine* definition. The specific-doctrine definition holds that indoctrination is teaching certain doctrines or ideologies. Consider Jake, Jess, and Erin’s cases from earlier, I take these lessons to be about doctrine because political beliefs are a paradigm example of doctrine. Under the mere-doctrine account, all of these lessons are indoctrinatory because they involve teaching doctrine. Under the specific-doctrine account, the lessons are indoctrinatory depending upon what political doctrine is being taught. So one could say that instructing Republican doctrine, as Jake does, is not indoctrinatory, but if he were to instruct Democratic doctrine then it would be indoctrinatory.

I will now offer a response to the specific-doctrine account: According to the specific-doctrine account, certain doctrines are educated, and others are indoctrinated. How can we know which doctrines are safe then and which doctrines are indoctrinatory? In response to the specific-doctrine definition, Crittenden points out that, “it is not that there are some beliefs or methods which *intrinsically* belong to, or are excluded from, the activity of indoctrinating.”⁴⁷ This is to say that it is inaccurate to call indoctrination the teaching of any particular beliefs, religious, political, or moral because this definition makes indoctrination too culturally contingent.⁴⁸ It seems wrong to claim that *my* doctrine is educated but *your* doctrine is indoctrinated merely because it is mine and that is yours. This definition would require arbitration over which doctrines are inherently educational and which are inherently indoctrinatory—which not only seems unfair, but also impossible

⁴⁷ Brian S. Crittenden “Indoctrination as Mis-Education.” In *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays*, (London: Routledge, 1972), 112

⁴⁸ See Neiman (1999)

given how subjective doctrines are. So the specific-doctrine definition fails to capture what indoctrination means because there are not specific doctrines that are indoctrinatory.

Now I will offer a response to the teaching-doctrine account as a whole: Callan & Arena explain that doctrine is neither necessary nor sufficient for defining indoctrination.⁴⁹ To be a sufficient condition, the presence of any doctrine would make something a case of indoctrination. However, Erin's case proves otherwise because is not indoctrination, yet it involves doctrine. So doctrine is not a sufficient condition for indoctrination.

To be a necessary condition, doctrine must be present in any case of indoctrination.

Recall the case of Jake indoctrinating his students to be Republicans. This was a case of teaching doctrines but let's consider for a moment that Jake was actually teaching geography. What makes Jake's case indoctrinatory is not the content that he teaches, but the way that he gets his students to believe. So imagine that he implements the same instruction but teaches his students about geography, for example, claiming that flat-earthers are crazy. With a case of instruction like Jake's it is plausible that the students become indoctrinated even if the content is something non-doctrinal like geography. Geography is not doctrine, nor is it inherently indoctrinatory, but we can imagine an instance whereby Jake indoctrinates his students when teaching geography. If Jake can indoctrinate geography, then doctrine is not a necessary condition for indoctrination.

⁴⁹ Callan & Arena 108; also note that Callan & Arena avoid giving a definition of doctrine.

Other Content Accounts

We know that doctrine does not define indoctrination, but that alone does not answer our question, *what kinds of beliefs can be indoctrinated?* I will now consider if indoctrinatory content can be defined based on the truth of that content. I will present an account of indoctrination whereby the content of indoctrination is falsehoods, followed by an account whereby the content of indoctrination is truths. Then I will give a case that demonstrates that both falsehoods and truths can be indoctrinated, causing the content account to fail.

Van Woudenberg (2009) claims that indoctrination involves teaching falsehoods. He says that “no acquisition of a true belief can be a case of indoctrination.”⁵⁰ Upon first glance, this seems like a viable definition: *indoctrination is when A instructs B that C, where C is a known falsehood.*

This definition could also get at one common use of indoctrination: recall that indoctrination is used as an accusation that discredits what someone believes. Well, if we think that indoctrinated beliefs are false, then claiming someone is indoctrinated is a way of saying that what they believe is false. So when conservative family members accuse the liberal college student of being indoctrinated, it is likely because they think that those liberal beliefs are false.

⁵⁰ René van Woudenberg, “Ignorance and Force: Two Excusing Conditions for False Beliefs.” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (2009), 382

But Green argues that indoctrination can be about instructing true beliefs.⁵¹ He says that one can “indoctrinate people into the truth.”⁵² Let’s call this the *teaching truths account*, which is that indoctrination could mean: *A instructs B that C where C is factual or true.*

Let’s go back to the version of Jake’s case where he teaches his students geography. Suppose that he teaches them that Mt. Logan is the tallest mountain. This is false, and if we think that Jake can indoctrinate this belief then we should agree with the teaching falsehoods content account. Now suppose that Jake teaches his students that Mt. Everest is the tallest mountain. This is true, and if we think that Jake can indoctrinate this belief then we should agree with the teaching truths content account.

Both versions of Jake's case, teaching truths and teaching falsehoods seem like plausible cases of indoctrination. This should lead us to believe that any belief can be indoctrinated, whether true or false. If any belief can be indoctrinated, and we have also ruled out the teaching-doctrine accounts, then we should conclude that the content account, as a whole, fails. The content of the belief does not define a case of indoctrination.

In this chapter, I explained the task that I have given myself in determining what indoctrination is and how it occurs. I also considered previous accounts of indoctrination; these accounts were the intention account, the method account, the outcome account, and the content account. I raised concerns against each account to demonstrate that each

⁵¹ Green, 27

⁵² Green, 27

account fails to give a proper definition of indoctrination or explain how it occurs. In the following chapter, I will explain and evaluate the Robust Structural Epistemic Account, which I find to be the most promising previous account of indoctrination.

II. Robust Structural Epistemic Account

In this chapter I will consider Chris Rinalli's *Robust Structural Epistemic Account* of indoctrination. I will begin by explaining closed-mindedness as the necessary result of indoctrination, followed by how closed-mindedness is caused by epistemic insulation. Next, I will offer an objection that indoctrination is merely the outcome of closed-mindedness. I will reply to this objection and defend epistemic insulation as a necessary component of indoctrination. Finally, I will present a case of indoctrination that evades Rinalli's definition of epistemic insulation. This objection shows that Rinalli's conception of epistemic insulation is too narrow, and this objection serves as the motivation for my own view, which I explain in the following chapter.

First, I will present Rinalli's Robust Structural Epistemic Account of indoctrination.

Rinalli Gives the following definition:

Robust structural epistemic account: S's instruction T that p is indoctrinatory if and only if T aims at the recipients closed-mindedly believing that p and this closed-minded belief is due to the content of S's manifest epistemically insulating intentions, commands, or directives for the recipient or to the epistemically insulating content of the instruction itself.⁵³

Rinalli's view has two distinct parts. The first is that the necessary result of indoctrination is closed-minded belief and the second is that closed-minded belief is caused by epistemic insulation. Let's break this down a bit more, starting with closed-mindedness:

⁵³ Chris Rinalli "Closed-Minded Belief and Indoctrination." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2022), 73

Closed-Mindedness

Rinalli advocates that the result of indoctrination is closed-mindedness. I will explain what it means to be open-minded: The beliefs that you hold should be revisable; this means that anything you believe should be subject to change in light of the right evidence.⁵⁴ I believe that dinosaurs (in the prehistoric sense) are extinct, but this belief is subject to revision given new evidence. Therefore, if tomorrow a pterodactyl escaped a cave in some distant jungle and terrorized the closest city, I would revise my belief that dinosaurs are extinct in light of this new evidence.⁵⁵ In which case, I might revise my belief to be that dinosaurs are extinct except for pterodactyls. Or I might even abstain from believing anything firmly and believe that pterodactyls are not extinct so other dinosaurs might not be either. However, until this new evidence comes to light, and a pterodactyl terrorizes a distant city, I will maintain my belief that dinosaurs are extinct.

Holding my belief alongside a willingness to revise it in light of new evidence means that I am open-minded. Someone who is open-minded is willing to engage with relevant alternatives to their beliefs.⁵⁶ This does not mean that they change their beliefs in light of *any* new evidence, but in light of the relevant evidence. So if I hear testimony from a five-year-old that dinosaurs are not extinct, I would not revise my belief about dinosaurs, but if I hear the same testimony from a credible paleontologist, I will revise my belief. I

⁵⁴ See also Helton (2020)

⁵⁵ A special thanks to the 8-year-old who brought it to my attention that pterodactyls are not dinosaurs but are actually reptiles. Another concern I would like to address is that many of today's birds are considered dinosaurs. For the purposes of this paper, let's assume that (I) pterodactyls are dinosaurs and (II) dinosaurs are extinct. Neither of these assumptions should challenge what is philosophically relevant about indoctrination, but they do make my examples more effective.

⁵⁶ Heather Battley, "Closed-Mindedness and Dogmatism." *Episteme* 15, no. 3 (2018), 262

revise my belief because I find the paleontologist to be relevant and credible, but the five-year-old not to be. This is what it means to be open minded.

Suppose now that I hear testimony from a credible paleontologist that dinosaurs are not extinct, but I am unwilling to engage with this argument or revise my belief in light of this argument. Or perhaps I hear credible journalism about a pterodactyl terrorizing a distant city but am unwilling to consider this possibility or how it should affect my belief. I remain steadfast in my belief that dinosaurs are extinct and maybe I immediately write-off these claims or the people making them. In this case, I am closed-minded. Battley (2018) claims that closed-mindedness is this “unwillingness or inability to engage (seriously) with relevant intellectual options.”⁵⁷ What happens then is that my beliefs are not the result of evidence because I am refusing to consider the evidence. Moreover, someone who is closed-minded might engage with relevant alternatives by being able to discuss them or see what issue they pose for their own belief, but still will not revise their belief in light of these relevant alternatives.⁵⁸ Revising my belief, when it is called for, is what it means to engage seriously with relevant evidence. Suppose that I am closed-minded about dinosaurs being alive and well, I might listen to the paleontologists' testimony that dinosaurs are extinct, but I do not revise my beliefs in light of this relevant evidence. In this case, I may engage with the relevant evidence, but I do not engage seriously with it, because if I were engaging seriously with it, then I would to revise my

⁵⁷ Battley, 262

⁵⁸ Battley, 278

belief. So someone is closed-minded about something if they are unable or unwilling to consider relevant evidence or to revise their belief in light of relevant evidence.⁵⁹

To better understand this conception of closed-mindedness, we should also consider what makes evidence relevant. What gets deemed relevant or credible may differ from person to person, and from what is actually relevant and credible.⁶⁰ Let's consider what this might mean in light of the dinosaur example: There is a truth about if dinosaurs are extinct or not, and we should be aiming to believe what is true. Relevant and credible evidence is evidence that gets us closer to that truth.⁶¹ So regarding dinosaurs, the relevant and credible evidence is likely fossils, and expert knowledge about if dinosaurs are extinct or not. Therefore, a claim from an unknowing child should not be evidence that dinosaurs are not extinct, but a pterodactyl, in the feathers, should be.

What about someone who thinks they are open-minded because they are willing to consider *some* evidence? Suppose that I am willing to listen to that unknowing five-year-old and conclude that dinosaurs are alive, but then refuse to listen to the credible paleontologist. The claim from the credible paleontologist is more relevant to the truth than the claim from a five-year-old, so considering child's testimony as relevant evidence but not the paleontologist's testimony is not what it means to be open-minded. What this demonstrates is that one way that someone could be closed-minded is if they hold false

⁵⁹ Battaly, 262; 263

⁶⁰ What we think makes evidence credible is up to our epistemic standards. See also Elga (2008).

⁶¹ Battaly says that "relevant intellectual options will be, in some way, connected to epistemic goods like true beliefs, knowledge, and understanding" (266) in her consideration of what makes evidence relevant.

beliefs about what relevant or credible evidence may be.⁶² So to be closed-minded is to be unwilling or unable to seriously engage with relevant evidence or alternatives, and this is the outcome of indoctrination.

Epistemic Insulation

What does closed-mindedness have to do with indoctrination? Rinalli takes up the task of linking closed-mindedness and indoctrination and argues that closed-mindedness, caused by epistemic insulation, is indoctrination. According to Rinalli, epistemic insulation is a belief that motivates the pupil to be closed-minded by appealing to their desire to be rational or moral and is situated in either the content or the instructor. I will start by explaining why rationality and morality motivate closed-mindedness, and then I will explain how insulation can be situated in either the content or the instructor.

First, insulation is the pupil believing that that being closed-minded is rational or moral. If I am closed-minded about dinosaurs being extinct because I was indoctrinated, I might be closed-minded because I do not want to be irrational: Suppose I hold the belief that dinosaurs are extinct, and I also acquired the belief that if I consider otherwise, I am irrational. Out of a desire to be rational, I become closed-minded about dinosaurs being extinct. My belief that dinosaurs are extinct is insulated by my belief that considering otherwise is irrational. Alternatively, suppose that I acquired the belief that if I consider otherwise, I am immoral. Out of a desire to be moral, I become closed-minded about dinosaurs being extinct. In this case, my belief that dinosaurs are extinct is insulated by my belief that considering otherwise is immoral.

⁶² Thank you to Nina Emery for helping me with this argument on false beliefs about what is relevant and credible evidence.

Insulation works by appealing to the pupils' desires to be rational and moral. We all want to be rational, and we all want to be moral; we might disagree about what exactly that entails, but we still agree that these are virtues. So an insulating belief causes the pupil to think that being closed-minded about an issue is the rational or moral thing to do.

Consequently, the pupil is motivated to close their mind about the issue, and the result is closed-minded belief. This is how epistemic insulation motivates the pupil to be closed-minded.

Next, let's consider what it means for the insulation to be situated in the instructor or the content. We have just considered how an insulating belief causes someone to be closed-minded, but how does one come to hold that insulating belief? Rinalli claims that there are two ways that someone acquires an insulating belief.⁶³ The first is that the content of their belief itself is insulating, and the second is that the insulating belief is the result of the instructor's influence. I will explain each, starting with content:

Alan's grandfather is a religious man who reads unconventionally into the Bible. He shows Alan passages in the Bible that indicate dinosaurs are not extinct. He conducts poor translations between ancient languages and concludes that there is a secret, remote, government-owned facility that the dinosaurs are kept in. Alan's grandfather teaches Alan all of this and shows him Bible passages that indicate dinosaur-deniers are blind to the truth, and they have yet to be saved as Alan and his grandfather have. It is all right there in the Bible.

⁶³ Rinalli, 72

Let's assume that Alan comes to closed-mindedly believe everything that his grandfather teaches him. The insulation in this case is built into the content of the belief. Alan believes that the Bible is the word of God, and who is Alan to question the word of God? For someone who believes that the Bible is the word of God, questioning the Bible is irrational. Since Alan believes that the Bible says there is a secret, remote, government-owned dinosaur facility, he believes also that it is the word of God. Since questioning the word of God is irrational, he is motivated not to think otherwise, and Alan closed-mindedly believes that there is a secret, remote, government-owned dinosaur facility.

Alan's insulating belief is that questioning the word of God is irrational, and this belief motivates him to be closed-minded. He comes to hold this insulating belief because it is part of the content of his belief, this is why we say that it is situated in the content. Believing that it is irrational to question the word of God is built into believing that something is the word of God. So in this case, the content itself is what insulates Alan's belief. Because Alan believes that the Bible says there is a secret, remote, government-owned dinosaur facility, he believes that it is irrational to consider otherwise. The result is that Alan comes to close-mindedly believe in the secret, remote, government-owned dinosaur facility, because the content of that belief is inherently insulatory.

Now I will explain what it means for the insulation to be situated in the instructor. The prior example does not account for what Rinalli calls *content-safe cases* of indoctrination.⁶⁴ These are cases whereby the content itself is not insulatory yet are still cases of indoctrination. In content-safe cases, epistemic insulation occurs in the instructor

⁶⁴ Rinalli, 72

rather than in the content. I will give an alternate example that shows how insulation can occur in the instructor:

Alan's grandfather tells him about dinosaurs in the secret, remote, government-owned facility. He tells Alan that anyone who thinks dinosaurs are extinct is a government pawn—which to grandfather is the same as being a bad person. Not all dinosaur-believers think that dinosaur-deniers are pawns. In fact, most dinosaur-believers assume that dinosaur-deniers simply do not know any better—the government fed them lies which they believed, but they are not government pawns. So the belief that dinosaurs are not extinct is not inherently insulated. But Alan's grandfather insulates this belief by telling Alan, "Anyone who says otherwise is knowingly lying." I.e., They are government pawns because they know the truth, but they lie about what they know in order to keep it a secret. Alan does not want to be a liar or a bad person, so he holds his belief closed-mindedly.

Alan's insulating belief is that dinosaur-deniers are knowingly lying-government pawns, i.e., Dinosaur-deniers are bad people. There are two important features in this case that make it different from the prior case. The first feature is that this is an instance in which the insulation works by motivating the pupil to be moral; in the prior case, Alan was motivated to be rational by not questioning the word of God, but in this case, Alan is motivated to be moral by not being a government pawn. Alan believes that being a dinosaur-denier makes someone a bad person, and because he does not want to be a bad person, he holds his belief closed-mindedly and is not a dinosaur-denier.

The second important feature is that the insulation stems from the instructor rather than from the content, like we saw in the prior case. Alan's grandfather tells him that dinosaur-deniers are government pawns, but this detail is not inherently a part of what it means to be a dinosaur-believer because it is not situated in the content; rather it is a comment from grandfather *about* the belief. The comment about the belief has the same insulatory effect as the content itself in the prior case because it motivates Alan to be closed-minded. So what grandfather says *about* the content is insulating because it motivates Alan to believe closed-mindedly.

What makes the second case different from the first? Rather, what makes insulation in the instructor different from insulation in the content? In the first case, Alan believes closed-mindedly because of the content of the belief. In the second case, Alan believes closed-mindedly because of the instructor's comments *about* the content. When his grandfather says, "anyone who says otherwise is lying," he makes a comment about the content. Another way that we know this is in the instructor rather than the content, is that thinking dinosaur-deniers are government pawns is not inherently part of the belief of a dinosaur-believer since not all dinosaur-believers think that.⁶⁵

In sum, the Robust Structural Epistemic Account defines indoctrination as the creation of closed-minded belief caused by epistemic insulation. The insulation motivates closed-mindedness by appealing to the pupil's desire to be rational and moral. Furthermore, the

⁶⁵ A note on intention: according to Rinalli, it does not matter if his grandfather intends to insulate Alan's belief. Perhaps he even frames the insulating belief as a mere hunch that he has, rather than as a genuine opinion. If this were the case, Alan's grandfather presents an argument and unintentionally insulates Alan's belief. But the belief is insulated nevertheless, and the insulation stems from something that his grandfather inserts when otherwise explaining why he thinks that dinosaurs are not extinct. Therefore, the insulation still originates from the instructor.

insulation occurs by being inherently a part of the content of the belief, or by influence of the instructor.

Simple Closed-Minded Account

Now, I will offer and reply to the objection that indoctrination can be closed-mindedness without epistemic insulation. The *Simple Closed-Minded Account* of indoctrination is that indoctrination is merely the formation of closed-minded belief.⁶⁶ This account omits the role that insulation plays and relies only on the outcome of the closed-minded belief. Put a different way, the Simple Closed-Minded Account claims closed-mindedness is a sufficient condition for indoctrination. Let's return to our example of Alan: Under this account, Alan is indoctrinated insofar as he comes to closed-mindedly believe that dinosaurs are not extinct. The motivation for this account is that adding epistemic insulation to the definition of indoctrination unnecessarily complicates the issue. Closed-mindedness is the bottom line, it is what it means to be indoctrinated, and therefore closed-mindedness by itself is a sufficient definition of indoctrination.

I will offer two cases to respond to the Simple Closed-Minded Account. The first response is one that Rinalli gets at in defense of his own view.⁶⁷ Consider the following case:

Jenny is hit over the head in a freak accident and when she comes to, she is convinced that there is a secret, remote, government-owned dinosaur facility. Somehow, her concussion has led to her to believe this such that nothing will convince her otherwise.

⁶⁶ Rinalli, 74-75

⁶⁷ Rinalli, 74-75

Jenny is certainly closed-minded, she will not consider alternatives to her belief, and she is not responsive to evidence, so according to the simple closed-minded account, Jenny is indoctrinated. But intuitively this is not a case of indoctrination because Jenny does not become closed-minded in the right way.⁶⁸ Being hit over the head makes her closed-minded, but this result is not an instance of instruction, so it is not the kind of case we are interested in. This case lacks the four-part structure that learning takes because Jenny is not a pupil, and Jenny coming to hold that particular belief is arbitrary because she was not learning about it and is not a pupil.

Jenny's case does demonstrate that there can be closed-mindedness without indoctrination, but the case is muddied because it is not the kind of case that we are interested in, it is not a case of learning. Alternatively, let's consider a different case of closed-mindedness that is not a case of indoctrination to demonstrate that that closed-mindedness is not a sufficient condition.⁶⁹ Consider the following case:

Doctor Sattler was a leading paleontologist before she retired. She studied dinosaurs and their extinction for many years and holds the belief that dinosaurs are extinct. Now, after her retirement, Sattler is tired and does not consider new arguments about dinosaurs and their extinction. When she reads headlines about a pterodactyl that escaped a cave and terrorized a city, she does not take the time to

⁶⁸ Rinalli ends his response to the simple closed-minded account here, but I think that it is worthwhile to examine further why this is the wrong way of becoming closed-minded. Furthermore, I offer my own reply to the simple closed-minded account using the next example, which I think does a better job at illustrating that closed-mindedness alone does not make a case of learning a case of indoctrination.

⁶⁹ Callan & Arena (111) also make the argument that closed-mindedness is not a sufficient condition for indoctrination.

consider how this is the case and pre-emptively dismisses the evidence as false. She is closed-minded out of laziness, staying on top of the newest dinosaur extinction research is hard work that she does not care to engage in.

Unlike Jenny's, Sattler's belief is not arbitrary, rather, she came to believe that dinosaurs are extinct through an educative process (she is a doctor after all). Sattler satisfies the criteria of being a pupil because doing research about dinosaurs is a way of learning about dinosaurs. This learning resulted in the belief that dinosaurs are extinct, and that belief became closed-minded.⁷⁰ Sattler's case is one that the simple closed-minded account would call an instance of indoctrination because she is closed-minded. However, our intuitions about the case would tell us otherwise, and we do not think that Sattler is indoctrinated. Being lazy does not seem to motivate her closed-mindedness in a way that we intuitively call indoctrinatory.⁷¹ Intuitively, we think that Sattler once was open-minded when she was doing her research and came to believe that dinosaurs are extinct, and only later came to be closed-minded because she stopped actively researching the matter.

One reason we might think that Sattler is not indoctrinated is that we can imagine a scenario whereby Sattler gets back in the field and takes up researching dinosaur extinction again—at which point she would become open-minded again. The ease with which she could move from being closed-minded to open-minded again indicates to us

⁷⁰ Maybe you think that Sattler, upon her retirement, is no longer a pupil and this case is muddied like the Jenny case. Imagine instead that she never retired but became so busy with her own career (presenting her research and such) that she was disregarding the new research for that reason instead. In this alternate case, Sattler is still a pupil and is still closed-minded, but still without that intuition we have about being indoctrinated.

⁷¹ See Battaly (2018) for an account of how laziness can create closed-mindedness.

that she was not indoctrinated. Part of why the switch from being closed-minded to being open-minded is so easy for her is because there is no insulation protecting her closed-mindedness. So Sattler's case demonstrates not only that the simple closed-minded account incorrectly classifies a case as indoctrination, but also that a reason why this case is not indoctrination is because it lacks insulation.

Against Rinalli's Epistemic Insulation

The last objection that I will consider is to Rinalli's limited use of epistemic insulation. This objection is the motivation for my own view, which I will detail in the following chapter. I will offer an example that we should think is indoctrination but does not fall under Rinalli's purview:

Alan's grandfather teaches him about dinosaurs in the secret, remote, government-owned facility. Additionally, he conditions Alan so that whenever he considers arguments that dinosaurs are extinct, he feels terribly ill. Alan associates thinking dinosaurs are extinct with feeling ill, and he comes to think that feeling this way must be a sign that he is immoral. So the conditioning causes Alan to believe that thinking dinosaurs are extinct is morally wrong and Alan comes to close-mindedly believe that dinosaurs are not extinct. His closed-mindedness is caused by the conditioning he underwent and the belief that it caused, motivating him against seriously engaging with alternatives out of a fear of being immoral.

In this case, Alan holds the belief that dinosaurs are not extinct closed-mindedly. Alan's closed-mindedness is insulated by his belief that thinking dinosaurs are extinct is morally

wrong, and that insulating belief is caused by the conditioning that he underwent. But according to Rinalli, insulation is situated in the instructor or the content, so the conditioning case is not an example of insulation and therefore not an example of indoctrination.

Here is why we should think that this is indoctrination: Alan believes that thinking dinosaurs are extinct is morally wrong, so Alan does not think critically or engage with relevant alternatives because his conditioned belief motivates him to be closed-minded. In the next chapter, I will explain how we should redefine epistemic insulation to account for cases like this one.

Rinalli offers the Robust Structural Epistemic Account, claiming that indoctrination is closed-minded belief caused by epistemic insulation. I explained this account and highlighted what Rinalli's view takes to be the two important features of epistemic insulation: that it motivates the pupil to be closed-minded by appealing to the pupil's desire to be rational or moral and that it be situated in the instructor or the content. Next, I offered the simple closed-minded account as an objection, claiming that closed-mindedness is a sufficient condition for indoctrination. I replied to this objection with the example of Sattler, who holds a belief closed-mindedly, but not due to epistemic insulation, and I explained why we should think that Sattler is not indoctrinated. This objection illuminated the role of insulation in motivating closed-mindedness. Finally, I objected to Rinalli's definition of epistemic insulation. Given a case in which Alan is conditioned to hold an insulating belief, which motivates him to be closed-minded, we

should think that he is indoctrinated. However, Rinalli's definition does not consider this to be a form of insulation. In the following chapter, I will offer my own view of indoctrination, in which I offer a broader definition of epistemic insulation that better classifies cases like this one, that we intuitively think are indoctrination.

III. Revised Epistemic Insulation Account

In this chapter, I offer the *Revised Epistemic Insulation Account*, which is my own account of indoctrination. My account of indoctrination expands and revises Rinalli's definition of epistemic insulation as I laid out in the previous chapter. I will first reiterate the four-part structure that cases of instruction take. I will also reiterate that closed-mindedness is the necessary outcome of indoctrination. Next, I give background on epistemic defense mechanisms as they relate to Rinalli's account of epistemic insulation before detailing the *Revised Epistemic Insulation Account*. Then, I explain using examples how this new account of epistemic insulation functions to properly classify cases. Finally, I offer an objection by way of a case that seems to fall under the Revised Epistemic Insulation Account, but is not a case of indoctrination, then I defend my view against that objection.

$A \rightarrow B(C)$ and Closed-Mindedness

In the first chapter, I explained that instances of indoctrination and education hold the shared $A \rightarrow B(C)$ structure, where A is the instructor, " \rightarrow " is the instruction, B is the pupil, and C is the content of the belief. In the previous chapter, we saw that this structure does have a role in what we intuitively think are cases of indoctrination. Recall that in Jenny's case she does not undergo instruction that adheres to the four-part structure, however, Sattler's case did take on this four-part structure. I do not argue that the structure makes something a case of indoctrination, but it does pick out the relevant cases that my study of indoctrination is aims to classify. What makes the Sattler case a more compelling

instance of closed-mindedness without indoctrination than the Jenny case is that the Sattler case is the kind of learning that is relevant to my questions about indoctrination.

In the previous chapter, I explained Rinalli's view that closed-mindedness is a necessary outcome of indoctrination. Someone is closed-minded about something if they are unable or unwilling to consider relevant evidence or to revise their belief in light of new evidence.⁷² On my own account of indoctrination, like Rinalli, I take closed-mindedness to be the outcome of indoctrination.

Revised Epistemic Insulation Account

As you will recall, Rinalli claims that epistemic insulation is a proviso to a belief that seriously engaging with alternatives is irrational or immoral, and that proviso is situated in the instructor or the content. We saw this at play in the case of Alan and his grandfather. It was irrational for Alan to criticize the belief in dinosaurs when it was the word of God, and it was immoral for Alan to criticize the belief in dinosaurs when doing so would make him an untrustworthy government pawn. In both instances, Alan is motivated to be closed-minded about the secret, remote, government-owned dinosaur facility and this insulated, closed-mindedness is a defining feature of his being indoctrinated.

In the previous chapter, I offered an objection to Rinalli's definition of epistemic insulation by presenting the case of Alan's grandfather conditioning Alan to believe in the secret, remote, government-owned dinosaur facility. This case is intuitively a case of

⁷² Battaly, 262; 263

indoctrination but is misclassified under Rinalli's account because the conditioning does not fall under his purview of epistemic insulation. From this objection, I concluded that Rinalli's definition of epistemic insulation is too narrow to properly classify cases of indoctrination. Thus, in this chapter, I will first give the necessary background on epistemic insulation by explaining epistemic defense mechanisms. Then, I will offer a revised definition of epistemic insulation that accounts for cases Rinalli missed.

To redefine epistemic insulation, let's get clear on where the concept comes from. To give some background, epistemic insulation is a sort of epistemic defense mechanism.⁷³ Boudry and Braeckman (2010) explain that epistemic defense mechanisms are features of a belief that make it unfalsifiable.⁷⁴ When any kind of epistemic defense mechanism is used, it acts as a booby trap that works to protect the given belief from criticism. These are strategies like moving the endpoint of a debate, changing the rules of the argument, creating invisible escape clauses to name a few, and all of which act to protect someone's belief from criticism.⁷⁵ Boudry and Braeckman explain that an epistemic defense mechanism is a *structural feature* of a belief that protects it from refutation, meaning that the protection is built into the belief itself.⁷⁶ We see this in the example of Alan believing that it is irrational to question the word of God, and this belief is a structural feature of his belief in dinosaurs because believing that it is irrational to question the word of God is inherently embedded in the belief that something is the word of God. If something is the word of God, it is divine, it cannot be flawed, and so it is illogical to think that the word

⁷³ Rinalli, 69

⁷⁴ Maarten Boudry and Johan Braeckman "Immunizing Strategies and Epistemic Defense Mechanisms." *Philosophia* 39, no. 1 (2011), 146

⁷⁵ Boudry and Braeckman, 148-156

⁷⁶ Boudry and Braeckman, 146

may be flawed by questioning it. Boudry and Braeckman also explain an immunizing strategy, a specific kind of epistemic defense mechanism, that is an argument brought forward in support of the belief that is otherwise independent of that belief.⁷⁷ We see this in the example whereby Alan thinks that believing dinosaurs are extinct makes him an untrustworthy government pawn.⁷⁸ This insulating belief is an additional argument that his grandfather makes and is not an inherent structural feature of the belief.

Rinalli coins a specific term which he calls *epistemic insulation* to capture both the instances of structural beliefs that we see in defense mechanisms and the instances of provisional beliefs that we see in immunizing strategies.⁷⁹ Epistemic insulation, as we saw in the last chapter, has two key features: the motivation and where it is situated. The first is that it motivates the pupil to be closed-minded by causing them to think that open-mindedness is irrational or immoral. The second feature is that it is situated in either the content or the instructor. Epistemic insulation is effective because it motivates the pupil to be closed-minded, and thus makes the belief unfalsifiable. From Alan's cases we can see that epistemic insulation, as Rinalli defines it with its two key features, does make a case of indoctrination. However, Rinalli's use of epistemic insulation to define indoctrination does not account for *all* cases that we intuitively think are indoctrination. I presented this in my last objection to Rinalli in the previous chapter using the conditioning case.

⁷⁷ Boudry and Braeckman, 146; Boudry and Braeckman also argue that epistemic defense mechanisms do not differ from immunizing strategies. Rinalli, however, uses them separately, and to engage with Rinalli's argument, I will follow suit.

⁷⁸ Boudry and Braeckman, 146

⁷⁹ Rinalli, 70; Rinalli argues both that epistemic insulation is a proviso and a structural feature of a belief. He seems to think this because defense mechanisms and immunizing strategies overlap, according to Boudry and Braeckman (2018).

I propose that epistemic insulation is a belief, that motivates closed-mindedness and is situated anywhere in the four-part structure. I expand upon both key features of Rinalli's version of epistemic insulation. First, on my account, insulation is a belief that motivates the pupil to be closed-minded for any reason, and not merely by threatening their rationality or their morality. Second, on my account rather than the insulation being situated in either the content or the instructor, insulation may be situated in any part of the four-part structure. I demonstrate this revised definition at work with two cases. Upon my revised account of epistemic insulation, insulation can occur in any part of the four-part structure, that is, the instructor, the instruction, the pupil and the content. In the previous chapter, I detailed what it would look like for insulation to be situated in the instructor and the content. I will now explain how insulation can occur in the instruction and the pupil. Furthermore, in the previous chapter, I detailed how insulation motivates the pupil by threatening their rationality or morality. In the next example, which demonstrates that insulation can be situated in the instruction, the pupil is motivated by morality. In the subsequent example, the insulation is situated in the pupil, and I explain what other motivations for closed-mindedness may be.

Instruction

For insulation to be situated in the instruction means for the instruction itself, rather than the instructor or the content, to be what causes closed-mindedness. There is a lot of overlap between the instructor and the instruction having to do with drawing a distinction between the lesson and the teacher. For instance, when the same lesson is taught by two different instructors, one indoctrinates and the other does not, we should attribute

insulation to the instructor. But if the same instructor gives two different lessons, one indoctrinatory and the other not, then we should attribute insulation to the instruction. Nevertheless, Alan's conditioning case is at least one instance where the two come apart, and we see explicitly that insulation can be in the instruction. To reiterate that case:

Alan's grandfather teaches him about dinosaurs in the secret, remote, government-owned facility. Additionally, he conditions Alan so that whenever he considers arguments that dinosaurs are extinct, he feels terribly ill. Alan associates thinking dinosaurs are extinct with feeling ill, and he comes to think that feeling this way must be a sign that he is immoral. So the conditioning causes Alan to believe that thinking dinosaurs are extinct is morally wrong and Alan comes to close-mindedly believe that dinosaurs are not extinct. His closed-mindedness is caused by the conditioning he underwent and the belief that it caused, motivating him against seriously engaging with alternatives out of a fear of being immoral.

Intuitively, this is a case of indoctrination, and I argue that is because this is a case of epistemic insulation. Let's consider the two key features of epistemic insulation. First, is the motivation: Alan believes that thinking dinosaurs are extinct is immoral and this belief motivates Alan to be closed-minded about the secret, remote, government-owned dinosaur facility. The motivator, in this example, is in line with Rinalli's view of epistemic insulation, being motivated by either rationality or morality. Second, is where the insulation is situated: the insulation is situated in the instruction in this case. The conditioning that Alan undergoes is the instructional technique that his grandfather uses to teach him. Although most instructors would opt for a lecture or a hands-on learning

experience, Alan's grandfather uses conditioning to teach Alan. To say that epistemic insulation is situated somewhere is to say that is where the insulating belief comes from. In this case, Alan's insulating belief comes from the instruction and therefore, it is situated in the instruction.

We may be tempted to think that Alan is motivated to be closed-minded because he does not want to feel terribly ill, and that the insulating belief is brought on physiologically. However, the conditioning itself is not what insulates Alan's belief, rather, the conditioning causes his belief that he should be closed-minded. This distinction is important because if we think that the conditioning itself insulates Alan's closed-mindedness, then we should also think that Sattler's laziness insulates her closed-mindedness. But we do not think that being lazy makes Sattler indoctrinated, so we should also not think that feeling ill makes Alan indoctrinated. Rather, Alan is indoctrinated because he holds the belief that he should be closed-minded to arguments about dinosaur extinction for fear of being immoral. So in this example, the conditioning creates a belief which insulates Alan's closed-mindedness.

Pupil

Now I will explain what it means for epistemic insulation to be situated in the pupil. I will also explain motivations for closed-mindedness beyond the rational and moral that Rinalli claims. For insulation to be situated in the pupil is for the pupil to prevent themselves from engaging seriously with relevant alternatives. Consider a different case:

Mary wants to be a Red Sox fan because she wants to go to games with her friends. She never cared much about baseball, but growing up in New York, she

held an inclination towards the Yankees. Upon moving to Boston, Mary realizes that she is a social outcast because she is not a diehard Red Sox fan, so she becomes one. To help with this, she only looks at evidence that casts the team in a positive light and removes herself from a situation that might be critical of the Red Sox. Eventually, she comes to love the Red Sox and cheers with her friends. She becomes a diehard fan and to close-mindedly believe that the Red Sox are the best team.⁸⁰

We do not usually think about sports teams being something that becomes indoctrinated but take Mary's case as an instance of indoctrination.⁸¹ You will recall that in the first chapter we concluded that the four-part structure is flexible and can account for instances whereby the pupil is self-taught, that is what happens to Mary since she teaches herself to hold a belief. Additionally, we know that Mary is closed-minded because she only looks at pro-Red Sox evidence and actively avoids evidence that is critical about the team, so not only does she refuse to revise her belief in light of new evidence, but she also refuses to expose herself to new evidence. This is a way that she gets herself to hold this belief, or at the very least makes her belief unfalsifiable.

Now let's think about the two key features of insulation, starting with where the insulating belief is situated. The insulation is situated in Mary, the pupil. Recall that where the epistemic insulation is situated is where the insulating belief comes from. No

⁸⁰ Thank you to Nina Emery for helping me with this example.

⁸¹ If you do not take this to be a case of indoctrination, you can consider instead someone who wants to be closed-minded about some religious doctrine because they want to fit in with their religious groupies. The important features of this example are that someone has the desire to fit in and to do so they need to come to closed-mindedly hold some belief.

one else tells her that she should be a Red Sox fan, so Mary brought herself to hold this belief. As for the second key feature: Mary is motivated to be closed-minded out of a desire to fit in; her insulating belief is that she should fit in with other Red Sox fans by being a closed-minded diehard fan. This insulating belief is different from the ones that we have seen previously, whereby Alan is motivated to be rational or moral. What Mary's case demonstrates on this point is that closed-mindedness can be motivated by social pressures—even if those pressures are self-induced.⁸² So Mary's case expands Rinalli's conception of epistemic insulation because the insulation is situated in the pupil, and a desire to fit in motivates her closed-mindedness.

One way that my account differs from Rinalli's is that in the *Revised Epistemic Insulation Account* the motivation for being closed-minded is not limited to rationality or morality. Mary's case demonstrates at least one other way that the pupil could be motivated to be closed-minded, that is, via a desire to fit in, but let's consider another way. Suppose that Mary has been a Red Sox fan all her life, she was raised that way, and all her friends and family are also Red Sox fans. She might find that it is more convenient to be closed-minded about being a Red Sox fan than face the social difficulties that would come with revising her belief. In the prior case, Mary's motivation was to fit in, but in this alternate version of the Mary case, her motivation is to do what is convenient.⁸³ Therefore, convenience is another motivation that Rinalli does not account for.

⁸² I say *self-induced* because no one is telling Mary that she should be a Red Sox fan or that she should try to fit in. Rather, she comes to think these things on her own.

⁸³ Consider also a cult member who is motivated to be closed-minded about their cult's beliefs because that is more convenient than being open-minded. If questioning their beliefs causes them to lose the network that they have in their cult-community, then it is certainly more convenient for them to be closed-minded. In this version, their closed-mindedness is motivated by the convenience of maintaining their community.

But is this insulation or merely confirmation bias? Confirmation bias occurs when someone interprets new evidence in favor of their own views.⁸⁴ What makes the original Mary case distinct from a case of confirmation bias is that she does not merely interpret evidence in favor of this belief, but searches for a way to wholly convince herself to be a Red Sox fan. Insofar as Mary prevents herself from seriously engaging with alternatives, she insulates herself. Furthermore, confirmation bias is not about closed-mindedness like insulation is. Confirmation bias occurs when someone holds a belief about something and interprets new evidence in favor of that belief but is not necessarily closed-minded about that belief. Insulation, on the other hand, is a defense mechanism, and thus protects that closed-minded belief.

Defending the Revised Epistemic Insulation Account

I have demonstrated both that closed-mindedness can be motivated by reasons other than rationality and morality, and that insulation can occur in any part of the four-part structure. Now I will present a case that seems to fall under my definition of insulation but is ultimately not a case of indoctrination. Then I will defend my view of indoctrination against this counterexample.

Wilson and Tom happen to be stranded on an island. Wilson, just for fun, teaches Tom a made-up language called Vavovish, and claims that this is a universal language. Due to their isolation, Tom never considers that Vavovish is not a universal language.

⁸⁴ Casad, B.J., and J.E. Luebering. "Confirmation Bias | Definition, Examples, Psychology, & Facts | Britannica."

This case takes on the four-part structure that a case of indoctrination should have.

Additionally, it seems to capture my definition of insulation; the isolation of the island prevents Tom from thinking critically about the universality of Vavovish—the isolation insulates his belief. Tom is closed-minded because he never considers alternatives to Vavovish as a universal language.⁸⁵ But is Tom indoctrinated? Intuitively, we think not.

The reason that this is not an instance of indoctrination is that if Tom is closed-minded, his closed-minded belief is not insulated. Tom's closed-minded belief is that Vavovish is a universal language. However, this belief is not insulated because he does not hold an additional belief that *motivates* the closed-mindedness, and therefore is not indoctrinated.

I want to clarify the relationship between where the insulation is situated, the insulating belief, and the closed-mindedness. When we say that a belief is insulated, we are saying that (i) *something causes* (ii) *a belief that motivates* (iii) *closed-mindedness about another belief*. The insulated belief is the one that is (iii) held closed-mindedly and the (ii) insulating belief is the one that motivates that closed-mindedness. For Tom to be indoctrinated, we would need to say that (i) his isolation causes (ii) a belief that makes him (iii) closed-mindedly believe Vavovish is a universal language. The (ii) *belief that motivates* could be a concern of Tom's about being irrational, immoral, about his desire to fit in with Wilson, or even abide by Wilson's teaching out of convenience. These are some ways that I have illustrated an insulating belief functioning to motivate closed mindedness. But Tom does not hold (ii) an insulating belief that motivates his closed-minded belief, rather the isolation merely causes him to be closed-minded, and that

⁸⁵ Battaly points out that "Our environments can make us closed-minded" (276).

closed-mindedness is merely a consequence of the isolation, and not something makes Tom to believe closed-mindedly.

Tom's case is more like Sattler's than like Alan's and Mary's. Alan, for example, (i) undergoes conditioning which causes (ii) him to believe that thinking dinosaurs are extinct is morally wrong, which motivates him to be (iii) closed-minded about the secret, remote, government-owned dinosaur facility. What Alan's case helps to spell out is that (ii) the insulating belief is what links (i) the instance of learning (which is where the belief comes from) to (iii) the closed-mindedness. For Tom to be indoctrinated he would need to have (ii) an insulating belief, a belief that motivates him to closed-mindedly believe that Vavovish is a universal language. But Tom, like Sattler, does not hold an insulating belief, and that makes it easy for him to shake his closed-minded belief. Imagine now that a rescue team comes to the island for Wilson and Tom: The team does not speak Vavovish, so Tom is immediately confronted with evidence that Vavovish is not universal. Tom would immediately revise his belief because there is nothing motivating him to maintain that belief in light of opposing evidence.

This illustrates the difference between something that *causes* closed-mindedness and something that *motivates* closed-mindedness. When something causes closed-mindedness, that is merely the reason that the pupil is closed-minded. For Tom that is isolation and for Sattler that is laziness. But when something, namely a belief, motivates closed-mindedness, the pupil *chooses* the closed-mindedness. The desire to be rational, to be moral, to fit in, and for convenience are all reasons that the pupil wants to be and

chooses to be closed-minded. So when we say that the pupil is motivated, we say that these desires motivate the pupil to choose closed-minded belief.⁸⁶ What this objection and reply reinforces about epistemic insulation is that it is not merely any factor that creates closed-mindedness. Rather, what is epistemically insulating is the belief that motivates the closed-mindedness.⁸⁷

In this final chapter, I offered the Revised Epistemic Insulation Account, which maintains Rinalli's claim that indoctrination is an epistemically insulated closed-minded belief. I provided background on epistemic defense mechanisms and immunizing strategies in order to contextualize Rinalli's *epistemic insulation*. Next, I detailed my own account of epistemic insulation. On my account, the two key features of epistemic insulation are as follows: First, epistemic insulation motivates the pupil to be closed-minded for reasons beyond those Rinalli gives. Those reasons are not only the desire to be rational and moral, but also the desire to fit in or out of convenience. Second, epistemic insulation can be situated in any part of the four-part structure. I demonstrated how it can be situated in the instruction, using Alan's conditioning case and how it can be situated in the pupil, using the Mary case. Finally, I offered an objection to the Revised Epistemic Insulation Account using the case of Tom, who upon first glance seems to have an insulated closed-minded belief but is not indoctrinated. I defended my view against this objection by clarifying the relationship between the cause of the insulation, the insulating belief, and

⁸⁶ This is not to say that the pupil chooses to be indoctrinated, but that when someone is indoctrinated, they are choosing to be closed-minded.

⁸⁷ The fact that the pupil holds a belief that makes them choose to be closed-minded is why I want to call this *epistemic* insulation rather than merely insulation.

the closed-minded belief, and showed that the Revised Epistemic Insulation Account does not classify Tom as indoctrinated.

Conclusions

Recall in the first chapter the cases of Jess, Jake, and Erin. With a firm understanding of what makes a case of indoctrination, let's evaluate Jess' and Jake's cases in light of this definition. Starting with Jake's case, Jake indoctrinates his students because (i) his commentary about Democrats being immoral and irrational causes his students to (ii) believe that being a Democrat would make them immoral and irrational which motivates them to (iii) closed-mindedly believe in the Republican party.

Jess' case, on the other hand, is not a case of indoctrination. She influences her students to be Democrats, but she does not create closed-minded beliefs. Rather, the students are Democrats because they have yet to hear compelling arguments for why they should not be, and Jess' students would easily revise their beliefs in light of compelling arguments. This is like how I would revise my belief about dinosaurs being extinct if the right evidence surfaced, and how Tom would revise his belief about the universality of Vavovish if confronted by someone not speaking Vavovish. Revising their beliefs after hearing arguments against Democrats would be easy for them because Jess does not insulate their belief, so nothing motivates them to maintain their current stance for the Democratic party.

In the first chapter, I explained that my task in this project was not about what is morally problematic about indoctrination, but to give an account of indoctrination that can properly classify cases. Nevertheless, my account of indoctrination may help us distill what that moral concern is about. What is morally problematic about indoctrination is

that insulation arrests a pupil's autonomous thinking. To insulate a belief is to prevent the pupil from thinking critically about that belief. We think that the pupil has a right to their own beliefs, and when someone is indoctrinated, they are unable to exercise that right. So what is morally problematic about indoctrination is that it infringes on the right that someone has to the formation and evaluation of their own beliefs.

My account of indoctrination defines it as closed-mindedness caused by epistemic insulation. There are two key features of epistemic insulation: the first feature is that insulation motivates the pupil to be closed minded. I expand Rinalli's conception here by claiming that not only can the pupil be motivated by rationality and morality, but also by the desire to fit in and by convenience to name a few. The second feature is that insulation is situated in any part of the four-part structure. The four-part structure is represented by the variables $A \rightarrow B(C)$. A is the instructor, \rightarrow is the instruction, B is the pupil, and C is the content. Rinalli claims that insulation is situated in the instructor or the content, but I add that it can also be situated in the instruction or the pupil.

I offer the example of someone who is isolated, which seems to act as insulation but is not a case of indoctrination. However, this example does not disprove my account of epistemic insulation because this person is not motivated to be closed-minded. What this objection illuminates is the difference between a *cause* of closed-mindedness and a *motivation* for closed-mindedness. In a case of indoctrination, the pupil is motivated to be closed-minded because the insulation causes them to think that they should be closed-minded.

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