

Initiation, Indoctrination, and Education

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The term *initiation* has been associated with both the concept of education and the concept of indoctrination. It is argued against Kazepides that Peters is justified in describing education as initiation. While this would seem to make it difficult to distinguish education from indoctrination, it is argued that this is due to an inadequate analysis of the concept of indoctrination. It is then suggested that a focus on the process of initiation should help philosophers in providing a more adequate analysis of the term *indoctrination*.

Le terme *initiation* a été associé au concept d'éducation aussi bien qu'à celui d'endoctrination. On prend le point de vue opposé à celui de Kazepides en montrant que Peters a raison de décrire l'éducation comme étant une initiation. Quoique ce point de vue indique qu'il est difficile de distinguer entre l'éducation et l'endoctrination, on indique que ce problème vient de l'analyse insuffisante du concept d'endoctrination. On suggère alors que le processus d'initiation devrait aider les philosophes à donner une analyse plus adéquate du terme *endoctrination*.

The term *initiation* figures significantly in the writings of educational philosophy, and for good reason (e.g., Oakeshott, 1967, pp. 159f., 161, 170; Passmore, 1967, p. 20). Curiously, it has been associated with both the concept of education and the concept of indoctrination. Hudson (1973, pp. 177f.), for example, maintains that "initiation is a necessary condition of education." Kazepides (1973, p. 281; 1983, p. 316), however, argues to the contrary, maintaining that it is "inappropriate and potentially misleading" to use the metaphor of initiation to describe education, and that initiation is in fact more appropriately linked to the concept of indoctrination.

I believe that the notion of initiation is very significant for education, and that by focusing specifically on this notion we will come to better understand both education and indoctrination. A focus on the process of initiation helps put into better perspective a problem plaguing past analyses of *indoctrination*, the problem of the seeming inevitability of indoctrination. Only by facing this problem, particularly as it relates to the process of initiation, can we make some progress towards a consensus as to a correct analysis of the concept of indoctrination. I will conclude with a brief statement about religious education.

INITIATION AND EDUCATION

The term initiation is already very prominent in Peters' 1963 Inaugural Lecture, "Education as Initiation."² The first two chapters of *Ethics and Education* (1966) cover much the same ground. Peters examines the three criteria, normative, cognitive, and procedural, which he found to be implicit in the central usages of the term *education* and provides "a more positive" and "synthetic" account of the nature of education. Let us examine a little more closely why the term initiation is used to describe the process of education.

In these writings, education is characterized as involving the development of mind. But this development is not a product of individual experience as the empiricists held. Instead, it is "the product of the initiation of an individual into public traditions enshrined in the language, concepts, beliefs, and rules of a society" (Peters, 1966, p. 49). There is a social dimension to the development of mind, and this is why it is appropriate to compare education to a process of initiation. Peters (1965, p. 89) even suggests that all education, insofar as it involves initiation into public traditions, can be regarded as a form of *socialization*.

Peters (1966, p. 52) goes on to criticize both the *moulding* and *growth models* of education for lacking "a sense of what D. H. Lawrence called 'the holy ground' that stands between teacher and taught." Both of these models fail to do justice to the givenness of the content that is taught and the criteria on the basis of which this content is developed and criticized. These models ignore "the cardinal fact that education consists essentially in the initiation of others into a public world picked out by the language and concepts of a people and in encouraging others to join in exploring realms marked out by more differentiated forms of awareness" (Peters, 1966, p. 52). Again it is because education consists in "experienced persons turning the eye of others outward to what is essentially independent of persons," that it is appropriate to liken education to a process of initiation (Peters, 1966, p. 54).

What Peters as well as Hirst (1974) has in mind is the initiation of the individual into the seven or eight "modes of thought and awareness," or "forms of knowledge," each with its central concepts, distinctive logical structure, and unique criteria of truth. These forms of knowledge are viewed as "a public inheritance" that parents and teachers are inviting the child to share, and into which he is again "initiated" (Peters, 1966, pp. 50, 53), to get "the barbarian" outside the gates, inside "the citadel of civilization" (Peters, 1965, p. 107).

Peters (1966, p. 53) is equally critical of a more recent emphasis which sees education as more concerned with "critical thinking, individual

exploration and experimentation" than with the transmission of a body of knowledge. Not only is critical thought without content vacuous, but the procedures of criticism and evaluation vary from discipline to discipline. These procedures can again "only be mastered ... under the guidance of one who has already been initiated" (Peters, 1966, p. 54).

Peters (1965, p. 102) is very explicit in his defense of the appropriateness of the term *initiation* to describe the process of education. Initiation is general enough to cover a wide range of activities like training, instruction, and teaching, all of which can be part of education. The comparison of initiation and education is also consistent with his analysis of the various criteria governing the concept of education: for example, initiation, "even when connected with various ceremonies and rites suggests an avenue of access to a body of belief, perhaps to mysteries that are not revealed to the young" (Peters, 1966, p. 54). Thus the comparison of education to initiation is consistent with the second group of criteria of education involving knowledge and understanding. Initiation also presupposes that the initiate has freely chosen to be initiated and thus the requirements of "wittingness and voluntariness" are satisfied (Peters, 1966, p. 54). Initiation, however, does not necessarily satisfy the normative criterion of education, as one can be initiated into things "that are not worth while such as gambling or devil worship" (Peters, 1966, p. 55). The concept of education is therefore a little narrower than initiation. But the comparisons are significant nonetheless.

Kazepides (1983, pp. 315f.) has recently raised several objections to Peters' use of the initiation metaphor in order to characterize education. He argues that initiation is an activity that has a beginning and an end, whereas education, on Peters' own terms, is not an activity and can never be spoken of as having been completed. Here it needs to be pointed out that not all would agree with Peters that education is not an activity (e.g., Langford, 1973, pp. 115ff). It can further be shown that at times Peters himself describes education as an activity or a group of activities.³ Further, we can and do talk about certain aspects of education as having a beginning and an end. When students first begin studying philosophy, they are being initiated into that discipline. After initial exposure, the initiation is over, but obviously the study of philosophy can continue. Education in a certain discipline can have a beginning and, in a sense, an end. While it might be odd to say "Go and start your educating," it is not at all odd to say, "Go and start your education." Peters (1967, p. 2) specifically makes the point that we do talk of people being educated, thereby indicating success in educating or the completion of education in a certain sense. Of course in another sense, "To be educated is not to have arrived at a destination; it is to travel with a different view," but this

involves another dimension of the complex notion of education (Peters, 1965, p. 110). Here we must be careful not simply to dismiss as peripheral certain senses of a term that create difficulties for us, a tendency that occurs all too often in educational philosophy.

Kazepides argues further that initiation suggests a more inactive, submissive, conforming attitude, such as one would expect with indoctrination, while education, particularly self-education involves active, rational, and independent thinking. But this begs the question by simply refusing to acknowledge that there is a passive dimension to education. It is to Peters' credit that he tries to do justice to this component of education which is also recognized by other writers (Oakeshott, 1967; Passmore, 1967; Scheffler, 1967). Education does involve public traditions and a public inheritance. It is only after one has learned these under the guidance of a master that one can proceed to more active and independent thought. Even with self-education, which would involve at least the reading of the great thinkers of the past, there is still a submissive component where the curriculum is in a sense given. We would not call a person self-educated if he had not read Plato, given Peters' view of education. We also would not call a person self-educated if he did not *conform* to some extent to the accepted rules of critical thought and evaluation. Education, even self-education, includes an inactive, submissive, conforming attitude, as does initiation.

Now it is true that Peters emphasizes the importance of rational and independent thought as essential to education. Such thinking clearly involves the active participation of the learner. But there is surely an active component in typical initiation rites as well, as Kazepides himself is forced to concede.

The third objection Kazepides (1983, p. 315) raises is that "usually one initiates a person into the specific rules, objectives, doctrines, etc. of an institution ... and less often into the fundamentals of an activity such as gardening, teaching or chemistry." This objection would seem to involve a blatant case of begging the question. Peters is arguing that the teaching of chemistry *does* involve initiation into certain rules, objectives, and doctrines. Simply to deny this does not help to establish the contrary. If the force of the objection concerns the association of initiation with *institutions* rather than with activities, then again Kazepides' objection is undermined by the fact that we do have educational institutions.

Kazepides (1983, p. 315) argues finally that "the view of education as initiation introduces a number of unwarranted dichotomies," such as Peters' comparison of children to barbarians outside the gates of civilization. Peters is here obviously using metaphorical language, and there surely is *a sense* in which children are uncivilized aliens to adult life

and understanding. In response to Kazepides' claim that children are inside the walls from an early age, sharing the feelings and thoughts of other humans, it should be asked: How do they get to share these thoughts and feelings in the first place? Kazepides is simply refusing to face the problem of a child's initial introduction (initiation) into the human condition, a problem which Peters dares to face and acknowledge as an essential element of education.

I therefore conclude that Kazepides' objections to viewing education as initiation rest on some misrepresentation of Peters, resulting from a refusal to face up to some important aspects of mental development, especially in the education of children. Kazepides (1983, pp. 304, 314, 316) tells us very explicitly why he is so concerned about associating initiation with education. He is concerned that this will encourage the assimilation of socialization into education thus making it easier for those who wish to advocate some form of indoctrination. Whether this follows is another question which needs exploration in its own right, but we must not let our answer to this question prejudice our answer to another concerning the appropriateness of describing education in terms of initiation.

I therefore conclude that Peters is justified in using the initiation metaphor to characterize education. This metaphor is useful in drawing attention to the following important aspects of education: it addresses the issue of children's initial exposure to the language, beliefs, values, and rules they are born into; it calls attention to the "impersonal," perhaps better "intersubjective" (Peters, 1966, p. 54), content and procedures enshrined in the public traditions children (or uninitiated adults) inherit; it draws attention to the importance of the teacher (the adult) who helps the uninitiated master the content and procedures which the teacher has already mastered; and the term *initiation* is also broad enough to cover various transactions that may be included in education like training, teaching, instruction, and so on. Initiation is of course not all there is to education, but it is one essential component of education.

INDOCTRINATION

In order to compare the concepts of initiation and indoctrination, we next need some idea of the nature of indoctrination. Despite a growing literature, disagreement continues about a proper analysis of this important concept. Of all the criteria, however, the *methods* criterion is probably the one about which the majority agree that it is a necessary condition of the pejorative sense of indoctrination. I believe it can be shown that even those who object to the methods criterion and propose other criteria such

as intention nevertheless make implicit reference to methods in their own proposed analysis.⁴ I, therefore, wish to focus on the methods criterion as a way to characterize indoctrination and compare it with initiation. Whatever else initiation might mean, it clearly has a methods component to it; thus it is appropriate to compare it with the methods of indoctrination.

Very little attention has been focused on defining precisely what methods are deemed to be indoctrinatory. I therefore wish first to provide a fairly exhaustive list of teaching methods often referred to as indoctrinatory in contemporary writings, classified under certain broad categories.⁵ I will then attempt to identify certain general features central to the methods criterion of indoctrination.

Non-evidential Teaching

Green (1972, pp. 35, 37) describes indoctrination as teaching which creates a "non-evidential style of belief." Such teaching can be characterized in various ways. 1. It can involve teaching which simply fails to give reasons, evidence or arguments for the beliefs taught. 2. Closely related is a preoccupation with *what* is taught rather than *how* it is taught. Green (1972, p. 37) suggests that "when, in teaching, we are concerned simply to lead another person to a correct answer, but are not correspondingly concerned that they arrive at that answer on the basis of good reasons, then we are indoctrinating." 3. Concern about the preoccupation with learning correct answers is at times expressed in terms of an objection to mindless drill, recitation, and rote memorization which are also seen as indoctrinatory by some (Passmore, 1967, pp. 193f). 4. A final method of non-evidential teaching involves attempts to persuade the subject "by force of the indoctrinator's personality, by emotional appeal, or by use of a variety of rhetorical devices," rather than by reasons, evidence, and proof (Benson, 1977, p. 336).

Misuse of Evidence

Whereas the previous classification of indoctrination involves complete disregard for reasons and evidence for beliefs, the feature that I now wish to consider does not entirely disregard reasons and evidence, but involves a misuse of reasons and evidence. There are several ways in which this misuse is described. First, indoctrinatory methods are sometimes associated with deliberate falsification of evidence. Second, a feature more frequently associated with indoctrination involves the use of "rationalizations" in contrast to genuine reasons and arguments (Wilson, 1972, pp.

19, 21). Third “*making use of reasons for a predetermined conclusion*,” is another expression closely related to the above, which is sometimes used to identify indoctrinatory methods (Green, 1972, p. 38). Here reasons are not given or sought in an open-ended search for truth, but as a means to defend accepted beliefs, or as a weapon against opposed beliefs. Fourth, indoctrination is often associated with “a one-sided or biased presentation of a debatable issue,” or with the suppression of counter-evidence (Moore, 1972, p. 93). Fifth, the misuse of evidence is not limited to controversial issues. It can equally arise with established forms of knowledge. Thus Crittenden (1972, pp. 139f., 146, 148f.) describes indoctrination in terms of using any pedagogical method which is “inconsistent with the requirements of the general nature of inquiry” or which “violates the criteria of inquiry” of the forms of knowledge involved. Sixth and finally, misuse of evidence can also occur when there is a violation of the logical status of the beliefs being taught. Flew (1972a, pp. 75f., 78, 85f.), for example, expresses concern about teaching beliefs which are false, or at least not known to be true, *as if* they were true. More generally, indoctrinatory methods involve inculcating a higher degree of certainty and conviction than is warranted by the evidence.

Perversion of Teacher-Pupil Relationships

1. The misuse of authority is frequently identified as involving indoctrinatory teaching methods (Flew, 1972a, p. 86; Moore, 1972, pp. 93ff.). But it is difficult to define precisely what methods involve a misuse of authority because the teaching process by its very nature involves a type of authority situation. Thus, as Peters himself notes (1973, pp. 47f., 54f.), one must distinguish between a proper use and a misuse of authority. He describes the teacher-pupil relationship as one in which “the teacher has to learn to be in authority and to be an authority without being authoritarian.” It is only the latter which is associated with indoctrination.
2. If we shift our focus from the teacher to the student, indoctrinatory methods are also described as violating student autonomy (Peters, 1973, p. 155; cf. 1966, pp. 35, 42). But similar difficulties arise here. Autonomy, like authority, is very much a matter of degree. What degree of autonomy must be allowed in order to avoid indoctrination? This might be difficult to define, but there is nonetheless agreement that at some point the teacher can fail to respect the autonomy of the student, and this is indoctrination.
3. Peters (1966, pp. 261f.), Benson (1977, pp. 336f.), and others sometimes identify doctrinaire and dogmatic teaching as indoctrination. Benson describes the dogmatic presentation as involving “the promotion

of the misleading impression that p is true simply because the indoctrinator says it is or because p is so obvious and certain as to require no defense." Here we see that dogmatic teaching is closely related to the non-evidential teaching already discussed.

4. Indoctrination is also frequently associated with the refusal to let students think for themselves. Crittenden (1972, p. 139; cf. Peters, 1977, p. 82), for example, contrasts indoctrination with educative pedagogical methods which allow the learner "to examine the evidence voluntarily, to raise questions and objections and so on." Closely related to the failure to let pupils question and think for themselves is the failure to allow for discussion, which is also sometimes seen as an indoctrinatory method (Benson, 1977, p. 337).

5. There are some who see the use of reward and punishment in teaching as a method of indoctrination. Green (1972, p. 35; cf. Benson, 1977, p. 343) gives an illustration where over a period of time a student is rewarded for giving a correct answer and punished for a wrong answer to a certain question. In this way "he may learn to respond correctly and without hesitation," but his belief is held, not on the basis of evidence, but simply on the basis of his expectation of reward or punishment.

Intellectual Virtues

1. Indoctrination is also sometimes described in terms of a failure to cultivate a group of qualities which, since Aristotle, have often been referred to as the "intellectual virtues," such as "humility in the face of evidence, integrity, honesty, thoroughness, courage in defending what is true and criticizing what is false" (Crittenden, 1972, pp. 141, 146, 148f.).

2. Passmore (1967) sees the cultivation of these intellectual virtues as essential to teaching a child to be critical. Teaching methods which discourage the development of "a critical spirit" are frequently identified as indoctrinatory (Benson, 1977, p. 339; Moore, 1972, p. 98).

Summary

We should now be in a position to identify certain features that run through all or most of these examples. In introducing his attempt to identify certain "characteristic forms of indoctrinatory method," Benson (1977, p. 333) gives us a most helpful summary statement, which unfortunately he does not follow up in his own analysis.

Throughout the literature touching on the methods of indoctrination, two logically distinct themes are sounded again and again, albeit in diverse terms: the

indoctrinator manipulates the subject matter and/or the indoctrinator manipulates his subjects.

Teaching methods are called indoctrinatory because they involve manipulating the subject matter, either in terms of failing to provide reasons, evidence, or justification of beliefs taught, or in terms of misusing the evidence in some way. A second major emphasis running through the examples of methods of indoctrination involves manipulation of the subject, the student. There is concern for the freedom and autonomy of the individual being taught. Thus, some have attempted to describe indoctrinatory methods as somehow non-volitional. This also gives rise to concern about the misuse of authority by the teacher.

Both of the above themes are captured in the frequently occurring expression used to describe methods of indoctrination, namely the inculcating of beliefs by using "a non-rational method" (Benson, 1977, p. 334; Snook, 1972b, p. 22). Teaching methods can be non-rational or irrational through manipulation of the subject matter, either by failing to provide evidence or by somehow misusing evidence. Alternatively, teaching methods can be non-rational in that beliefs are acquired by the student, not on the basis of reason or argument, but by virtue of other influences involving some kind of manipulation of the student.

INITIATION AND INDOCTRINATION

We have examined the importance of initiation into public traditions in Peters' analysis of education. We then reviewed various teaching methods commonly understood as indoctrinatory: Indoctrination, it must be stressed, is generally understood to be incompatible with education, and it is viewed as a strongly pejorative term by those who, like Peters, are concerned about liberal education. We are now in a position to examine the relation between initiation and indoctrination. It will be argued that, given the commonly accepted meanings attributed to education and indoctrination, a problem arises in that initiation into public traditions would seem to involve indoctrination.

The major thrust of this section is clearly and carefully to expose a problem plaguing past analyses of the concept of indoctrination, a problem touched on again and again but seldom faced squarely. This problem has to do with the unavoidability of indoctrination. It comes to the fore particularly when we focus on what is involved in initiating children into the forms of knowledge so essential to education. We will examine how this problem arises by considering such aspects of education as the authoritative nature of the initiation process, the force of tradition,

the way in which children learn by imitation and identification, and finally what is involved in learning to be rational. It will be argued that in all of these areas the use of indoctrinative teaching methods is inevitable. I will also argue the lack of success of various attempts made to escape the unavoidability of indoctrination.

Here it might be objected that my entire argument is irrelevant in that discussions of indoctrination are or should be concerned with advanced rather than initial stages of education. I would argue, however, that it is precisely at the initial stages of education that it is most critical to distinguish between acceptable (educative) and non-acceptable (indoctrinative) methods of teaching. Snook (1972b, pp. 48f, 101f.) has correctly observed that, although a small child may teach his mother or a student his professor, we would not say that the child indoctrinated his mother or the student his professor. Indoctrination occurs in situations where there is some degree of authority control, and thus it is primarily with children and the early stages of education that we should be most concerned about indoctrination.

In discussing "autonomy," Dearden (1975, p. 6) pointedly remarks that philosophers "may have been too apt to overlook or ignore the fact that men have childhoods." It seems to me that a fundamental problem of all past analyses of indoctrination is that they tend to discuss indoctrination in terms of features that only apply to adult learning. Surely the problem of indoctrination primarily concerns children, as Snook correctly observes. But it is precisely here that we find that initiation involves indoctrination.

A fundamental consideration concerns the authoritative nature of the initiation process. It is the parent, the teacher, or society, not the child, that determines the initiation into which the child is initiated. The child is simply not given a choice. But, if, as we have seen, indoctrination is understood to involve the violation of individual autonomy or the manipulation of the subject, then the initiation process necessarily involves indoctrination.

Here it should be noted that Peters, in describing initiation, fails to do justice to the coercive dimension of most typical initiation rites and ceremonies. Mention has already been made of Peters' claim that initiation presupposes that the initiate has freely chosen to be initiated (1966, p. 54). But surely there are some real problems in describing paradigm cases of initiation as entirely voluntary. In typical "rites de passage" it is precisely the initiation process which transforms the immature adolescent into a responsible adult. The young adolescent did not choose to belong to his particular tribe. Nor does he choose to be initiated to the particular customs to be adopted after initiation. Much

more needs to be done in analyzing initiation rites and the concept of coercion, but I would suggest that it can be safely concluded that initiation is generally not entirely free of coercive elements.

White (1973, p. 22), in bringing to the fore the problem of the status of the child, suggests that "we are right to make him unfree now so as to give him as much autonomy as possible later on," and he recognizes that we are forcing a curriculum on the child. But, given a definition of indoctrination in terms of the use of coercion, it follows that indoctrination is unavoidable in initiating children into public traditions.

Of course Peters (1973, pp. 47f., 54f.), White (1973, pp. 22f.), and others, want to argue that this does not involve indoctrination because this teaching situation need not be authoritarian, and it will eventually lead to an autonomous state.⁶ But Peters' distinction between being in authority and being authoritarian is meaningless in the case of the child, and to point to future results of an authoritative situation is to sidestep the issue at stake. What is being argued is that the initial process of initiating a child into certain public traditions is non-rational, as described earlier in this paper. The child is not given a choice about whether to be initiated or into which tradition to be initiated. Of course, this is quite justified because the child is simply not in a position to choose. But what this entails is that indoctrination, defined in terms of non-rational methods, is unavoidable. Thus I concur with Moore (1972, p. 97) when he proposes a modification to the older liberal theory of education, and suggests that "we frankly admit that learning necessarily begins with an authoritative and indoctrinative situation."⁷

Tradition is also operative in initiation. The child is initiated into *public traditions*, Peters tells us. There are several things we need to note about these traditions. They are viewed as absolute in some sense by Peters, Hirst, and others. The barbarian is introduced to the "citadel of civilization," and it seems as though there is only one such citadel. Advocates of liberal education sometimes seem to forget that the public traditions they want to initiate the child into are only the public traditions of Western society.⁸ There are other traditions. Into which traditions will the child be initiated? The young child will and can only be initiated into *our* traditions. But surely this must be seen as indoctrination if by indoctrination we mean "a one-sided or biased presentation of a debatable issue."

There is also the danger that public traditions will be viewed as fixed. Although there is some recognition of possible evolution and change with regard to our public traditions (Hirst, 1974, pp. 92ff., 139f.), there is no recognition that we can only transmit those public traditions currently considered true. We risk viewing our present traditions as the achieve-

ment of some final truth. Also, young children, being children, cannot understand the possibility of evolution and change in the public traditions they are taught. Initially the traditions are received and understood as fixed and absolute and are accepted in an unquestioning manner. Barrow (1974, pp. 54f., 57) argues that children are incapable of grasping differences in the logical status of beliefs. Various authors have recognized that it is only *after* the child has been initiated into the public traditions that he can begin to evaluate them critically (Oakeshott, 1967, pp. 170ff.; Passmore, 1967, pp. 200ff.). But here we focus on what happens *before* the child reaches the questioning stage; there is an aspect of the learning process which involves simple trust and unquestioning belief. Indeed, as Peters notes (1977, p. 81), in referring to Piaget's research, it is doubtful whether most people ever emerge entirely from this stage of unquestioning belief in the public traditions they are taught. If so, then not merely with the child but even with the adult, there is a component of the teaching/learning process that can only be described as non-rational and indoctrinative in nature.

A closer examination of *how* children are initiated into the public traditions will reveal further elements of the non-rational. Peters (1977, p. 83; cf. 1966, p. 60) is well aware that initiation depends on mechanisms of imitation and identification; those who make the education process entirely child-centred overlook how "from time immemorial, most beliefs and forms of conduct have been learned by the human race, namely by picking them up from the example and instruction of more experienced people who rank as authorities or experts in a community." But the processes of learning by example, imitation, or identification cannot themselves be described as rational processes. Here we must be careful to distinguish between *what* it is that is being imitated or identified with, and the actual mechanism of imitation. I am not denying that the content being imitated might be intelligible and even rational. But the process of imitation itself is not one of reasoning, and it involves many of the features identified earlier as indoctrinatory. Imitation and identification clearly involve an authoritative, non-critical situation. These processes resemble closely the methods of drill, memorization, and learning to spout off the correct answers, all of which have been called indoctrinatory methods. It therefore follows that if indoctrination is defined in terms of non-rational teaching methods, then indoctrination is an inescapable ingredient in initiating individuals into the forms of knowledge.

A fundamental concern of Peters and others advocating initiation into the forms of knowledge is the concern to promote rationality. We have already provided a negative description of rationality in our review of teaching methods commonly thought non-rational. This description

concurs with various recent analyses of rationality. Snook (1973b) for example, describes rationality in terms of disciplined reflection, deliberation, and thinking, either within the context of specific disciplines or as a general approach to problem solving. Woods and Barrow (1975, p. 85) suggest that "the essence of rationality is the giving or holding of good or relevant reasons" with respect to one's beliefs or one's behaviour. It would further seem that the development of rationality involves cultivating a combination of skills, habits, attitudes, and even character (Snook, 1973b, p. 154).

There are several considerations, however, which would suggest that in the continuing process as well as at the initial stages of the development of rationality, non-rational methods have to be used. One consideration having to do with the nature of children has already been dealt with: Children learn to be rational by imitating examples of rationality. But, as has already been argued, learning by imitation of examples is essentially a non-rational process.

Further, we have seen that rationality is connected with the cultivation of "intellectual virtues." But as Snook (1973b, pp. 152f.) and others point out, the cultivation of these virtues entails acquiring habits and developing certain attitudes. Care and concern for evidence and for the criteria of evidence must be fostered. Peters even talks about the cultivation of "love" for the citadel of civilization. But it should be evident that the cultivation of love, care, concern, and other attitudes is not entirely a rational process. Insofar as the cultivation of intellectual virtues entails the acquiring of habits, it clearly entails the use of non-rational methods, as is argued by Passmore (1967, pp. 192f).

A final consideration regarding the teaching of public traditions brings to the fore another aspect of rationality: Peters, Hirst, and others argue that rationality is at least in part defined by the public traditions themselves. The criteria of rationality, critical thought, and judgment are inherent in the forms of knowledge. But, if this is so, it seems to me that a problem arises in teaching others to be rational. If the public traditions are the conditions of rationality, then the inculcating of these conditions cannot itself be rational because there are no criteria of rationality apart from the public traditions. It follows that initiation into rationality must itself be non-rational and hence indoctrinatory, if indoctrination is defined in terms of non-rational teaching methods.

Various writers have dealt with this and other aspects of the conditions of rationality and critical thought, and have recognized the problem of apparent indoctrination in the teaching of these conditions.⁹ Green (1972, pp. 41ff.), for example, addresses himself specifically to the question of cultivating certain "enabling beliefs," such as "the belief that

truth is powerful, attainable and to be treasured whenever identified," beliefs which are the very foundation of rationality. These beliefs, Green says, "ought to enlist our most passionate loyalty, for they are the ones which enable us to hold all our beliefs in an evidential way." Green admits that the development of rationality involves cultivating "passionate convictions" regarding the values of truth and reason. We must "seek closure of mind" regarding these enabling beliefs. But the cultivation of such convictions involves non-rational means according to Green's own definition of indoctrination. Green is well aware of this and concedes that in this context, indoctrination "has a perfectly good and important role to play in education." With admirable clarity, Green has drawn the only possible conclusion: Indoctrination is unavoidable in teaching children to be rational. Unfortunately, Green's candour and willingness to go where the argument leads are not shared by most philosophers dealing with this problem.

Passmore (1967, pp. 200ff.) and Oakeshott (1967, pp. 170ff.) also deal with the prerequisites involved in teaching pupils to be critical.¹⁰ They concede that there is an "instructional component" in this process. Certain facts must be learned which are "arbitrary and inert," and must be mostly "taken on trust." Language must be learned by drill. Rules which are arbitrary must be learned. The need for "building up a body of knowledge" involves the instilling of a "fixed body of beliefs." Passmore is mainly concerned to establish that we can move beyond the instructional component to the cultivation of critical thought and to show how this is to be done. But there remains, nevertheless, "a large instructional ingredient" inherent in the initiation process which bears striking resemblance to what he describes as indoctrination. Passmore finds it depressing that all subjects "tend towards an instructional state." Yet he realizes that instruction is a necessary prelude to critical thought. Here I am primarily concerned to stress that these authors do admit that in initiating students into rationality and critical thought there is an identifiable component that involves using non-rational methods that therefore must involve indoctrination. Of course they want to stress that we must move beyond the initiation stage, but there still remains an initiation stage which involves indoctrination.

There are recent discussions in educational literature which could be explored to help us see the relation between initiation and indoctrination from a new perspective. I can only mention them here. Sociologists have been particularly concerned in recent times to explore the relation between education and socialization.¹¹ We have already seen that Peters himself admits that education and the initiation into public traditions is a form of socialization (1965, p. 89). But research shows that the process of

socialization is essentially a non-rational process (Morgan, 1974, pp. 121f.; Peters, 1966, p. 60). If therefore indoctrination is defined in terms of non-rational teaching methods, then education and initiation into the forms of knowledge necessarily involve indoctrination.

Various writers reviewed by Barrow (1978, pp. 130ff.) have also drawn attention to the fact that there is a hidden curriculum in our schools. The beliefs and values implicit in the hidden curriculum are not taught by reasoned argument but are acquired without evidence or justification, and without the opportunity to evaluate them critically, except in retrospect. Students acquire these values and give assent to these beliefs without being aware that they are doing so. The student is deprived of "the opportunity to withhold assent," which according to Benson (1977, pp. 338, 342) is one form of indoctrinatory method. These and other aspects of the hidden curriculum clearly involve various non-rational methods already considered as examples of indoctrination. It therefore again follows that indoctrination is unavoidable in initiating students into the forms of knowledge in our schools.

CONCLUSIONS

We began by looking at one important aspect of a prevalent notion of education, initiation into public traditions or forms of knowledge. Such initiation is seen to be a good thing, an ideal, since education is governed by a normative criterion. We next examined teaching methods commonly associated with indoctrination. It is important to remember that both the concept of indoctrination and the indoctrinatory methods reviewed are generally understood to be pejorative or miseducative. The major thrust of this paper has been to argue that indoctrination, as commonly understood in the pejorative sense, is unavoidable in the process of initiating individuals into the forms of knowledge. It follows that there is an inherent contradiction within the notion of education advocated by Peters and accepted by most educational writers today.

Initiation entails indoctrination. Educational philosophers have not been entirely unaware of this problem. The apparent unavoidability of indoctrination is touched on again and again in the literature dealing with the concept of indoctrination. (See, for example, Crittenden, 1972, p. 148; Flew, 1972b, p. 108; Green, 1972, p. 45; Moore, 1972, pp. 96ff.) But this problem is in my opinion seldom faced squarely. Peters, for example, in some recent essays, admits there are certain "ambiguities" or "dilemmas" inherent in the notion of liberal education that still need to be resolved (1977, pp. 46ff., 68ff.). One concerns the seeming unavoidability of indoctrination, and Peters points to "the necessity for much more

thought" on the problem of distinguishing liberal from illiberal teaching procedures.

More often, however, Peters along with other writers, tends to deny or escape this problem in a variety of ways. I would suggest, however, that all of these responses are inadequate. For example, one kind of response to the unavoidability of indoctrination involves the appeal to additional criteria of indoctrination. Flew (1972b, p. 108) and Wilson (1964, pp. 26, 34) very explicitly introduce the content criterion of "indoctrination" to avoid the inevitability of indoctrinatory methods. Hare (1964, pp. 49f.) appeals rather to aim or intention. However, these criteria are themselves problematic as has been demonstrated by various writers (see for example Crittenden, 1972; Rosemont, 1972; Thiessen, 1980). Further, escaping the problem of the unavoidability of indoctrinatory methods by adding another criterion or two cannot help but seem somewhat arbitrary. I have argued elsewhere that science and religion share several similar non-rational features (Thiessen, 1982). The resulting use of non-rational methods in teaching science and religion should lead us to conclude that indoctrination is unavoidable in both areas. It is thus surely arbitrary to introduce a content criterion of indoctrination so as to exclude science from the dangers of indoctrination when it shares the very same non-rational features that characterize religion. A method such as non-evidential teaching is generally considered to be highly miseducative but, according to Hare, can be transformed into an acceptable teaching method simply by virtue of good intentions. Yet with religious instruction it is frequently argued that indoctrination is occurring even though the religious teacher might avow good intentions. Philosophers should surely be wary of such arbitrariness.

Another frequent response to the unavoidability of indoctrination is to introduce a non-pejorative kind of indoctrination (see, for example, Crittenden, 1972, pp. 139f.; Green, 1972, pp. 44f.; Moore, 1972, p. 97; cf. Snook, 1972b, pp. 3f., 24f.). Now it is certainly legitimate to use one word in two different senses, as long as it is understood that we deal with two different concepts. I would suggest however that it would be less confusing if a different word were used for *non-pejorative indoctrination*. But the fundamental problem with this response to the unavoidability of non-rational methods in initiating children into the forms of knowledge is that it is contradictory. The use of non-rational methods is generally seen as something to be avoided, as miseducative, and even as immoral. Thus, indoctrination, understood as a pejorative term, is often defined in terms of the use of non-rational methods. I have argued, however, that the use of non-rational methods is unavoidable. Many writers are forced to concede that the use of such methods is both necessary and good. But

surely these two positions involve a contradiction. We must accept one or the other. Either the use of non-rational methods is always wrong, in which case the methods criterion of indoctrination (pejorative sense), defined in terms of non-rational methods, is defensible. Or, the use of non-rational methods is not always wrong, in which case the methods criterion defined in those terms cannot serve as a *necessary condition* of indoctrination (pejorative sense). I have argued that non-rational methods are unavoidable, and therefore their use is not always wrong. We must therefore give up the methods criterion of indoctrination (pejorative sense) *as traditionally understood*.

This is not at all to suggest that we should give up the methods criterion of indoctrination entirely. It only means that we must give up the methods criterion as defined in the past in terms of non-rational teaching methods. I believe indoctrination is best defined in terms of a methods criterion but, as Peter himself has suggested, much more careful analysis is required in distinguishing liberal from illiberal ways of initiating individuals into the forms of knowledge.

I would suggest that in future analyses of the methods criterion of indoctrination more attention should focus on the teaching of children. I agree with Snook (1972b, pp. 48f., 101f.) that indoctrination is related to a more specific concept of teaching involving some degree of authority-control and that we might want to restrict indoctrination to what is done to children. But, past descriptions of the methods criterion often founder here. What is needed is a careful definition of the difference between acceptable and non-acceptable teaching methods with children.

I would further suggest that in order to become clearer as to the meaning of indoctrination we must focus more on the process of initiation than teaching generally. I agree with Kazepides that the concept of indoctrination is more like initiation than teaching. For example, some prepositional modifiers used with indoctrination mark it off as a quite different activity from teaching, but one similar to initiating. We teach *that*, *how*, or *to*, but we indoctrinate or initiate *in(to)* (Kazepides, 1973, pp. 273, 277, 281). The suggestion that indoctrination is more like initiation is also related to the previous one, in that the term initiation is most often applied to the young. Peters himself (1966, p. 54), in justifying the comparison of initiation and education, argues that initiation conveys the idea of providing "an avenue of access to a body of belief, perhaps to mysteries that are not revealed to the young."

There is considerable overlap between descriptions of the methods criterion of indoctrination and Peters' rather vague descriptions of education as initiation into the forms of knowledge. Yet the concepts initiation and indoctrination are not the same. We must distinguish, as

Peters himself notes, between acceptable and non-acceptable or indoctrinative modes of initiation. But I believe there is much that we can learn by understanding first how initiation and indoctrination resemble each other.

A final conclusion to be drawn concerns the frequently made charge of indoctrination in the area of initiating children into a specific religion. Concern is expressed, for example, about seeking to *inculcate* religious faith, about not giving children a choice in the religion taught, or about the use of non-rational methods in teaching religion (see, for example, Flew, 1972a, pp. 76f.; 1972b, pp. 106ff.; Snook, 1972b, p. 81; Woods and Barrow, 1975, pp. 65f.) I have argued, however, that these features are common to the initiation of individuals into any public traditions. The problem is one which also applies to the initiation into a scientific way of viewing the world. If, therefore, we do not wish to label it as indoctrination, then we should not accuse parents and teachers of indoctrinating just because children cannot choose what religious tradition they are initiated into. I would therefore suggest more caution in making the charge of religious indoctrination. Given the ways in which indoctrination is commonly understood, there would seem to be problems with the initiation of individuals into any public traditions. In fact, all charges of indoctrination should be withheld until these problems are resolved, until such time as we can clearly and consistently distinguish between acceptable and non-acceptable ways of initiating individuals into the public traditions considered essential to education.

NOTES

- ¹ An earlier draft of this paper was read at a meeting of the Northwest Philosophy of Education Society held in Vancouver, 6–7 November, 1981.
- ² An adapted version of "Education as Initiation" is found in Peters (1965). Robinson (1970) explores Peters' use of *initiation*, and he finds the link between education and initiation useful up to a point. However, he also draws attention to some weaknesses in such an analysis.
- ³ Peters' main point seems to be that education cannot be limited to one particular activity, but he admits that it does refer to a range of processes or activities. He also maintains that education can be analysed in terms of both tasks and achievements (Peters, 1966, pp. 24, 26, 40; cf. Peters, 1967, pp. 1, 9).
- ⁴ Snook (1972b) attempts to analyse indoctrination in terms of the intention criterion alone, but a careful analysis of intention will reveal that it includes reference to teaching methods. In a later essay Snook admits that reference to the teachers' activity may be all that is necessary in explaining an indoctrinated state and mind (1973a, p. 57, 59).
- ⁵ A more detailed analysis of indoctrinatory teaching methods is found in *Indoctrination, Education and Religion: A Philosophical Analysis* (Thiessen, 1980).
- ⁶ White (1973, pp. 35, 104) attempts to answer possible objections by distinguishing between compulsion and coercion, but this surely flies in the face of common usage.

- ⁷ Schwartz (1979), in dealing with the problem of children not being able to choose, objects to the Kantian ideal, implicit in the writings of Rawls and Piaget, that we must be radically free from all social influences. Schwartz uses arguments in Aristotle's writings showing that children only become rational if they have first been *influenced* in this direction by way of adult choice and example. Initially, however, they do not choose to be rational.
- ⁸ Brent (1978) has recently argued that the forms of knowledge can be justified transcendently as some kind of a priori structure of the mind itself, and that we are therefore justified in imposing these public traditions on the child. Brent's defense, however, is problematic in his appeal to "the Chomskyan notion of certain semantic structures that are presupposed by any human language," a notion which "is almost universally rejected by his followers." See a critical review of Brent's work by Hendley (1980).
- ⁹ In an excellent review of Kuhn's thought, Fennell and Liveritte (1979) examine Kuhn's argument that "normal science" operates within a set of presuppositions and techniques which are seldom if ever critically examined. This also carries over into the teaching of science. Allen (1978) reviews Polanyi's argument that there is a tacit dimension to knowing which, according to Polanyi, entails that all knowing and teaching have an acritical foundation. Pincoffs (1973) argues this point concerning moral education. For moral issues, debate and criticism presuppose "some agreement on what would count for or against a position" as well as a certain character. Pincoffs defends indoctrination in these areas, which provide the groundwork for the capacity to think for oneself.
- ¹⁰ Peters (1966, pp. 53f.) himself argues that it is "absurd to foster an abstract skill called *critical thinking* without handing on anything to be critical about." Elsewhere (1977, p. 64), he writes, "Logically speaking, too, criticism must take certain presuppositions for granted. Not everything can be questioned at once." Peters, however, fails to see that these comments entail that indoctrination is unavoidable on his own criteria.
- ¹¹ Pring (1976, Ch. 4) reviews these "new directions" in the sociology of education.

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Der Ausdruck 'Initiation' ist sowohl mit dem Begriff des Erziehungswesens als auch mit dem Begriff der Schulung verbunden worden. Es wird gegen Tasos Kazepides argumentiert, daß R. S. Peters berechtigt ist, Erziehungswesen als Initiation zu beschreiben. Obwohl dies es anscheinend erschweren würde, zwischen 'Erziehungswesen' und 'Schulung' zu unterscheiden, wird behauptet, daß dies die Folge einer unzulänglichen Analyse von dem Begriff 'Schulung' ist. Es wird dann vorgeschlagen, daß ein Konzentrieren auf den Prozeß der Initiation den Philosophen behilflich sein sollte, eine zulänglichere Analyse von 'Schulung' zu bieten.

La palabra "iniciación" ha sido asociada tanto con el concepto de educación como con el de indoctrinación. Se arguye en contra de Tasos Kazepides que R. S. Peters tiene razón al describir la educación como iniciación. Si bien esto parece hacer dificultoso distinguir entre "educación" e "indoctrinación", se arguye que esto se debe a un análisis inadecuado del concepto de indoctrinación. Se sugiere pues que un enfoque del proceso de iniciación ayudaría a los filósofos a ofrecer un análisis más adecuado de "indoctrinación".

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