

Spinoza on the teaching of doctrines: Towards a positive account of indoctrination

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to add to the debate on the normative status and legitimacy of indoctrination in education by drawing on the political philosophy of Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677). More specifically, I will argue that Spinoza's relational approach to knowledge formation and autonomy, in light of his understanding of the natural limitations of human cognition, provides us with valuable hints for staking out a more productive path ahead for the debate on indoctrination. This article combines an investigation into the early modern history of political ideas with a philosophical inquiry into a persistent conceptual problem residing at the heart of education. As such, the aim of the article is ultimately to offer an account of indoctrination less fraught with the dangers of epistemological and political idealism that often haunt rival conceptions.

Keywords

Indoctrination, philosophy of education, relational autonomy, Spinoza

It follows that if someone wants to teach a doctrine to a whole nation – not to mention the whole human race – and wants everyone to understand him in every respect, he is bound to prove his doctrine solely by experience, and for the most part to accommodate his arguments and the definitions of his teachings to the power of understanding of ordinary people, who form the greatest part of the human race. (TTP 5[37], G III/77/11-16)¹

Introduction

If I were to say that indoctrination is a necessary component of political life, would you take me seriously or would you assume that I was just being provocative? While the statement may sound like an empty provocation, I assure you it is not intended to be. In this

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article, I will argue that besides being a necessary component of political life, indoctrination can actually serve a positive function in education. Not because indoctrination is valuable in itself, but because human reason is frail enough to need a collectively geared emotional support system to help direct it at the common good. On its own, the human mind is not strong enough to withstand the dangerous influence of contagious passions like jealousy and hatred, and so I will argue that education must help safeguard the social stability of the community even if this requires some measure of indoctrination.

The purpose of this article is to add to the debate on the normative status and legitimacy of indoctrination in education by drawing on the political philosophy of Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677). More specifically, I will argue that Spinoza’s relational approach to knowledge formation and autonomy (see, for example, Armstrong et al., 2019; Kisner, 2011; Sangiacomo, 2019), in light of his understanding of the natural limitations of human cognition (E4p4c and E4p17s), provides us with valuable hints for staking out a more productive path ahead for the debate on indoctrination. This article combines an investigation into the early modern history of political ideas with a philosophical inquiry into a persistent conceptual problem residing at the heart of education. As such, the aim of the article is ultimately to offer an account of indoctrination less fraught with the dangers of epistemological and political idealism that often haunt rival conceptions.

I will proceed by first outlining the indoctrination debate in philosophy of education. This will be a brief and far from comprehensive overview of a debate with a long and varied history. I will focus on some recent contributions to the indoctrination debate, setting up a contemporary problem concerning indoctrination and autonomy against which to gauge the potential of turning to Spinoza’s positive understanding of indoctrination as a valuable yet flawed political tool. Next, I will sketch a textual context necessary for understanding Spinoza’s notion of indoctrination, focusing on situating the concept in his political philosophy. I will contrast my interpretation of Spinoza’s indoctrination with Tapio Puolimatka’s (2001) reading, which I argue underestimates the far-reaching effects of Spinoza’s naturalistic political psychology (see Steinberg, 2018a). Fleshing out my account of Spinoza’s conception of indoctrination, I will seek to understand it in relation to the concepts of accommodation, *ingenium*, and the power of collective narratives, before looking closer at how Spinoza sets up his theory of indoctrination in the *Theological-Political Treatise*. To conclude, I will summarize what I take to be Spinoza’s positive account of indoctrination and assess its merits as compared with rival positions on indoctrination offered in contemporary philosophy of education.

The indoctrination debate in education revisited

A useful way of beginning to survey the contemporary landscape of the indoctrination debate in education is to make a first preliminary distinction between a pejorative use of the term and a more descriptive or literal use (Callan and Arena, 2009).² Typically, indoctrination is interpreted in a strictly negative sense (not least in ordinary language), where the concept denotes someone’s insidious restriction of someone else’s mental ability and personal autonomy. Indoctrination, understood in this sense, is never a good thing.³ As David Copp (2016) remarks, ‘where it [i.e. the term indoctrination] is so understood, none would condone *indoctrination* in the schools – it would be strange to do so’ (p. 149,

emphasis in original). A more descriptive approach might, however, turn to an older usage and interpret indoctrination – more neutrally or literally – in terms of the general teaching of doctrine,⁴ which in a sense risks leading to a notion of indoctrination broad enough to potentially encompass most, if not all, cases of teaching.⁵ From this standpoint, it appears as if the pejorative use may be too narrow (in the sense that it hardly allows for any debate regarding the positive aspects of indoctrination at all) and the historically informed descriptive use is far too broad (in the sense that it does not seem to allow for any meaningful distinction between teaching and indoctrination).

The latter approach has, for obvious reasons, not been very prominently featured in the contemporary debate on indoctrination in education.⁶ While the pejorative use is, in its simplest form, mostly noticeable in everyday conversation, I would argue that the debate on indoctrination in education still veers toward a more negative understanding in general. Indeed, as a rule, indoctrination is seen as a potential threat to human autonomy and critical thinking, and it is primarily on these terms that the debate has been set up and carried out. The most pressing problem facing philosophers of education from this standpoint has often been taken to concern the working out of different viable strategies for avoiding indoctrination in education (i.e. strategies for saving education from the ever-present threat of indoctrination). Various positions have been staked out in this debate, but they all seem to share certain presuppositions vis-à-vis the assumed human capacity for autonomous thought and ability to follow the guidance of reason.⁷ Before looking closer at these shared presupposition, however, let us first briefly outline some of the most common positions in the contemporary indoctrination debate.

The debate on indoctrination in education typically starts out from one of two main positions. We might call these two main positions the internal features point of view and the outcome point of view. The internal features point of view assumes that indoctrination depends primarily on internal features of teaching such as the method, content, and/or intention of the teacher and/or the educational institution. The outcome point of view, in contrast, assumes that indoctrination depends primarily on the outcome or output of teaching and education. On one hand, then, we have an understanding of indoctrination that looks primarily at what goes on before and during the teaching situation in terms of what the intentions of teaching a particular material are, what the methods used for doing so are (and in what sense these can be deemed particularly manipulative), and what it is about the content that makes it especially controversial. On the other hand, we have an understanding that focuses on the effects on the students, looking at to what extent and how the students' development of personal autonomy has been stunted by their education.

When looking at the internal features of indoctrination, we are concerned with 'the inculcation of attitudes and beliefs that are contested [content], where there is intent to instill those beliefs [intention], and where the methods circumvent important arguments or evidence [method]' (Merry, 2018: 164). We may ascribe different degrees of importance to any one of these different dimensions (i.e. to content, intention, or method), but they tend to be interrelated and are generally taken to support one another in bringing about the closed-mindedness of the indoctrinated person. A common critique of the internal features point of view concerns to what extent these three dimensions (however focus is placed internally) actually guarantee the result of closed-mindedness. And if it does

not result in closed-mindedness, is it still a case of indoctrination? A general defense of this approach might however point out that

[e]ven when the content, methods or intent used may not succeed, religious schools may also be guilty of *facilitating* indoctrinatory harm to the extent that they reinforce the interests and beliefs of parents or school staff at the expense of the child's interest in being educated. (Merry, 2018: 164, emphasis in original)

When focusing on content, for example, we might say that '*what is taught* is objectionable because it is "partisan," "ideological," or "biased"' (Copp, 2016: 152, emphasis in original), regardless of whether it results in closed-mindedness or not. David Copp labels this approach 'the ideology view' and he contrasts it with what he calls 'the critical thinking view', where indoctrination amounts to inducing people to accept certain beliefs uncritically, regardless of how controversial these beliefs are taken to be. It is important to note, however, that the internal features point of view and the outcome point of view are not mutually exclusive.

On one hand, then, indoctrination is taken to hinge on what, why, and how something is being taught. We might ask questions such as 'Is the material taught controversial and unnecessarily biased in its presentation or is it open to critical scrutiny and continuous reevaluation?', 'Is there ill intent behind teaching a particular material in a particular way?', and 'Are the methods used transparent and open to critical scrutiny or not?' The different answers to these questions may be good indications that we are dealing with a form of indoctrination (depending on our preferred definition), but they cannot guarantee that the person being subjected to indoctrination is actually being successfully indoctrinated in the end. On the other hand, if we look from the outcome point of view, it becomes less important to ask whether the intent is actually to indoctrinate, whether the content is particularly controversial, or whether the methods used are sufficiently transparent. What is important is to ask whether someone has been rendered more or less closed-minded through education. Focusing on outcome, generally, means focusing on the resulting inhibitions of a person's development of autonomy as a minimum criterion for determining whether we are dealing with indoctrination or not. Method, in itself, is argued to be insufficient as a criterion insofar as 'uncontroversial instances of indoctrination can occur without nonrational methods, and nonrational methods can uncontroversially be used without indoctrinating [. . .]' (Callan and Arena, 2009: 107). Similarly, the teacher's intent can presumably backfire and spark student resistance rather than result in student subjugation, and focusing on the content of teaching assumes that it is impossible to indoctrinate someone if the doctrines taught are not sufficiently controversial (which seems counter-intuitive and *prima facie* false) (see Callan and Arena, 2009: 108–109).

Focusing on closed-mindedness as an outcome of indoctrination would therefore seem to be a more promising criterion, and this brings us closer to the connection made earlier between indoctrination and personal autonomy. For the purposes of this article, I will rely on an understanding of indoctrination that looks primarily to the outcome of indoctrination rather than to the various elements that (in different combinations and to different degrees) are believed to constitute its internal features. This is so simply because

while intent, content, and method are not unimportant as internal features, they also do not seem to guarantee the kind of closed-mindedness that can reasonably be assumed to be the necessary result of indoctrination. A good starting point for understanding indoctrination in terms of the output of closed-mindedness is to adhere to the following statement: 'To believe Proposition P close-mindedly is to be unable or unwilling to give due regard to reasons that are available for some belief or beliefs contrary to P because of excessive emotional attachment to the truth of P' (Callan and Arena, 2009: 111).⁸ An important corollary of this is that indoctrination is not dependent on the degree of controversy of the content taught. This, of course, raises the following interesting question with regard to the moral status of indoctrination:

No doubt indoctrination in support of truth is preferable to indoctrination in defense of falsehood. But does that preference mean that indoctrination is a morally neutral means to an end, to be commended when it serves laudable ends and condemned only when its ends deserve condemnation? (Callan and Arena, 2009: 116)

I will not attempt to answer this question at this point, but we should address it later as it will come to play an important role in relation to the discussion on the moral status of Spinoza's brand of indoctrination. Instead, let us turn to two similar, yet rival, positions in order to narrow in on the stakes involved in the contemporary debate on indoctrination in education.

In a recent paper on the social dimensions of indoctrination and its ramifications for teacher responsibility, Rebecca Taylor (2017) proposes a system-based account of indoctrination because it 'attends to the role of social context from the outset' (p. 39). Indoctrination is defined as '*a complex system of teaching in which actors with authority contribute to the production or reinforcement of closed-mindedness*' (2017: 40, emphasis in original). Taylor hinges this concept of indoctrination on two necessary conditions, namely 'the outcome of closed-mindedness and an asymmetry of authority' (2017), accounting both for the outcome of indoctrination (the closed-mindedness of students) and for its necessary social conditions (the surrounding teaching systems). Through this set-up, Taylor combines an understanding focused on the necessary outcome (closed-mindedness) with an understanding focused on the social preconditions that produce – and are therefore responsible for – indoctrination. Instead of looking narrowly at the role of the individual teacher, however, Taylor broadens the scope to include a wide network of people in a position of authority vis-à-vis the education of young people. This entails that while indoctrination may take place in class (in a concrete sense), its necessary conditions are (at least in part) situated beyond the confines of the classroom, in the wider community that condones or supports indoctrinatory practices. The responsibility and/or accountability for the outcome of closed-mindedness is therefore not assigned to any one individual actor (be it the teacher or the school) but is rather shared within the wider community and the complex systems of interaction that allows for indoctrination. As the teacher is in a position of authority vis-à-vis the students, however, he or she is at least in some part responsible according to Taylor's account.

In a response to Taylor's paper, John White (2017) acknowledges the limitations of focusing on the individual teacher as the sole culprit of indoctrination. He differs from

Taylor, however, in suggesting that individual teachers need not be indoctrinators (wittingly or unwittingly) at all since indoctrination is typically set in motion on a level far above that of individual teachers. White (2017) suggests that focusing singlehandedly on closed-mindedness as an outcome of indoctrination blurs the picture insofar as it detracts from looking at what he believes to be the *necessary intent* of ‘preventing reflection’ on taken-for-granted ideas (p. 765), by those who design and uphold the systems within which individual teachers work. The individual teacher, from White’s point of view, ‘is as much a victim of the wider system as the students themselves’ insofar as the teacher can be ‘a target of indoctrination himself if those who control the system take steps to prevent him from reflecting on the wider purposes of the system in which he is teaching’ (2017). Unlike Taylor, who looks at teachers as complicit actors within a larger social system that allows for indoctrination (but where the term indoctrination is reserved for successful cases of bringing about closed-mindedness), White wishes to place responsibility more squarely on the level of policymakers. He writes,

For me, pragmatic reasons suggest that indoctrination is first and foremost policy-driven. Given that, on my view, it involves taking steps to minimize reflection, those operating the levels of power in a whole system are well placed – better placed than individual teachers – to devise manifold and subtle ways of doing so, e.g. via confusion or exclusion. Teachers come into indoctrinatory systems only secondarily. Their activities are *part of the armoury that indoctrinators running the system deploy*. (White, 2017: 768, emphasis added)

On Taylor’s view, then, focusing on the outcome of closed-mindedness allows us to perceive the responsibility of the individual teacher as part of a wider system. While the individual teacher operates in a wider system, the authority of the teacher is still instrumental for either allowing or avoiding indoctrination. On White’s view, in contrast, the individual teacher is more or less a pawn deployed in a larger game set up by those who run the system. What Taylor and White have in common is an understanding of indoctrination as something avoidable (but where we may need to look at different levels of the system in order to successfully prevent it), as something detrimental or threatening to the autonomy of the individual agent (insofar as it contributes to closed-mindedness or prevents reflection), and as something that culminates in the question of responsibility (implying that someone, at some level, is the responsible instigator of indoctrination). Beyond their differences, then, Taylor and White seem to share a basic sense of human autonomy as rooted in the assumed epistemic self-sufficiency of the individual.

The ideal of epistemic self-sufficiency in educational theory has a long and far from clear-cut history. The notion that by strengthening the self-sufficiency of the mind through liberal studies one can help students better withstand the influence of passions and other practical obstacles can be traced back at least as far as to the assumed opposition between true knowledge and embodied experience supposed by both Plato and Aristotle. This conception of experience, as John Dewey notes, ‘always involves lack, need, desire; it was never self-sufficing. Rational knowing, on the other hand, was complete and comprehensive within itself’ (Dewey, 1997: 263). Based on this assumed opposition between experience (taken to be a largely social and embodied phenomenon) and knowledge (taken to be a self-sufficient product of the individual mind), educational theory has by and large maintained notions of autonomy and rationality that appear to be

antithetical to experience, sociability, and collectivity. The educational ideal, from this point of view, is – quite naturally so – to argue for the importance of safeguarding the development of the self-sufficient mind. One way of doing so would be to protect it from the illegitimate interference of outside forces. This helps set up the standard starting point for how and why indoctrination should be combatted, and it appears to rest on the assumption that any outside forces that restrain a student's sense of epistemic self-sufficiency are in fact to be considered potential cases of illegitimate influence in education. Consider, for example, the following account of indoctrination offered by Harvey Siegel:

I have been trapped in a set of beliefs I can neither escape nor even question; this is how my options, and my autonomy, have been limited. I have been shackled, and denied the right to determine, insofar as I am able, my own future. *In being indoctrinated, I have been placed in a kind of cognitive straightjacket, in that my cognitive movements have been severely restricted.* Worse, like the typical straightjacketed person, I have also been sedated – drugged – so that I don't even realize my restricted plight. Such a limited life cannot be what we desire for our children, any more than we desire it for ourselves. (Siegel, 1988: 88, emphasis added)

One might, however, complicate this image by countering that to live in a society with other people is, by definition, to be already placed in a kind of cognitive straightjacket (insofar as our ideas are always simultaneously restricted and enabled by other people's ideas), albeit one from which there is no possibility of escape. Better then to understand the conditions and characteristics of that particular straightjacket (so as to be able to adjust to it), one might think, than to deny its very existence. It is important to note that this does not mean that habits, appetites, and emotions invested in various beliefs, customs, and traditions should be given free rein in education, but that the inherent limitations of human rationality must be taken into account when we assess the dangers (and possible benefits) of indoctrination. Admittedly, there is a seductive sense of stability to the idea of epistemic self-sufficiency of a mind enabling a person to withstand the negative influences of outside forces. Just because an idea is intuitively appealing, however, does not mean that it is true. When placed in historical context, the bifurcation between the autonomy of the individual mind and the flux of the material world of experience does not appear nearly as stable or self-evident as one might suppose from a contemporary point of view. The problem that arises, as Dewey helpfully shows, is that a seemingly unbridgeable gap between the sanctity of epistemic self-sufficiency and the possibility of social action is introduced:

When the activities of mind set out from customary beliefs and strive to effect transformations of them which will in turn win general conviction, there is no opposition between the individual and the social. The intellectual variations of the individual in observation, imagination, judgment, and invention are simply the agencies of social progress, just as conformity to habit is the agency of social conservation. But *when knowledge is regarded as originating and developing within the individual, the ties which bind the mental life of one to that of his fellows are ignored and denied.* (Dewey, 1997: 297, emphasis added)

While the philosophical separation of the activity of the individual mind from the world of experience and of social and political affects was not directed at education

specifically, ‘the assumptions underlying them have found expression in the separation frequently made between study and government and between freedom of individuality and control by others’ (Dewey, 1997: 305). At the heart of these tensions, of course, is the problem of indoctrination, conceived in terms of the illegitimate attack by external forces upon the mind of the individual. In contrast with an understanding of autonomy that is firmly grounded in the assumed epistemic self-sufficiency of the mind, I will now turn to Spinoza’s conception of indoctrination which supposes a different understanding of autonomy; one that is always in part constituted by outside forces, and that therefore always has to account for these and make practical use of them rather than attempt – in vain – to block them out entirely.

Idealism and realism in education and politics: Spinoza’s warning in the *Political Treatise*

Spinoza’s theory of indoctrination (such as this may be gleaned from his thoughts on good governance in his political treatises) hinges on a few central premises, firmly grounded in his overarching metaphysics and his ethics. Spinoza proposes that the supreme ethical goal (*summum bonum*) for humans is the attainment of freedom and autonomy, which is tantamount to increasing our rational understanding of God or Nature (E4p28; E4p28d). We face a considerable challenge in this, however, as we are naturally limited as finite beings endowed with limited cognition. This of course means that we are all naturally limited in our understanding. We are nevertheless defined by reason insofar as our mind’s striving to persevere in existence (our *conatus*) is the same as our striving to understand things adequately (E3p9). Freedom and autonomy, then, hinges on us being able to understand things adequately as opposed to us being passively affected by them (Spinoza’s autonomy is therefore not tantamount to self-direction in the usual sense of following our will), meaning that ‘autonomy consists in having adequate ideas’ (Kisner, 2011: 59). However, because we are cognitively limited beings with a limited understanding, we are also naturally limited in our autonomy. The upshot of this for Spinoza is that autonomy is an inherently relational affair.

We need each other for two main reasons: to help protect one another from external threats and to help compensate for our natural limitations. In order to do this, people must ensure that others abide by the same rules so that they can promote their increased understanding without external threats and so that people can be made to trust one another enough to help advance collectively toward the long-term goal of ethical freedom and autonomy. The important thing, for Spinoza, is that people approximate the aim of understanding things adequately, not how they come to do this. To address the first challenge, Spinoza proposes the institution of common laws aimed at moderating dangerous passions and securing the peace and security of the state (TTP 5[18-25]). To address the second challenge, Spinoza elaborates a strategy for how the imagination (inadequate ideas) can help strengthen our collective striving for an increased understanding by taking advantage of our natural tendency to be affected by one another. Spinoza writes, ‘If we imagine a thing like us, toward which we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect’ (E3p27). This opens

up an affective avenue for influence via the imagination, where people can be moved to become more autonomous by striving to act in accordance with others who act rationally. Autonomy, then, is at bottom a social and political affair. The measure of autonomy is not the degree to which an individual can rise above their circumstances, but the degree to which social and political structures can help promote a life guided by reason. As Matthew Kisner (2011) has pointed out, 'For Spinoza, irrational preferences cannot be autonomous, even if they have been chosen without any obvious manipulation or coercion', and so it is perfectly conceivable that 'we can promote the autonomy of others by "making" them be rational' (pp. 61–62).

In the introduction to his unfinished *Political Treatise*, Spinoza issues a warning against the all-too-common tendency to overestimate reason as the primary motivator of human actions. Human affects – and particularly the passions – are often treated in terms of mere obstacles to be overcome by rational means in the political construction of a rational society. This, Spinoza warns, leads to a brand of political idealism that is actually counterproductive with regard to the joint striving for a more ethical and rationally constituted community:

Philosophers conceive the affects by which we're torn as vices, which men fall into by their own fault. That's why they usually laugh at them, weep over them, censure them, or (if they want to seem particularly holy) curse them. They believe they perform a godly act and reach the pinnacle of wisdom when they've learned how to bewail the way men really are. They conceive of men not as they are, but as they want them to be. That's why for the most part they've written Satire instead of Ethics, and why they've never conceived a Politics which could be put to any practical application, but only one which would be thought a Fantasy, possible only in Utopia, or in the golden age of the Poets, where there'd be absolutely no need for it. (TP 1[1], G III/273/4-17)

Against this idealistic fallacy committed by political thinkers, Spinoza proposes a method for grounding political theory in a more realistic conception of human nature, one where passions are conceived as an integral and necessary part of the human experience. This is certainly not to say that Spinoza scorns the life guided by reason, but that he is utterly realistic about the limited potential for individual humans to reach this goal without a secure and peaceful community acting as a foundation. As such, this appears to introduce a remarkable tension between Spinoza's conception of the *summum bonum* of human existence as the intellectual love of God (which in Spinozistic terms is equivalent to an adequate understanding of nature) (TTP 4[10] E5p20d; E4p28d) and the political aim of promoting the peace and security of the state (TP 5[2] TP 5[5] TTP 3[20]). This tension is only apparent however. Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that Spinoza understands the peace and security of the state to make for an indispensable foundation for the individual's ability to strive for intellectual autonomy and ethical freedom. In short, there would be no way of protecting the supreme right to the freedom of philosophizing had it not been for the power of the state to counteract dangerous passions such as hatred, envy, and pride. Because people are always passionate to some degree, the state needs to combat passions with passions so as to compensate for most people's inability to be guided by reason. The reason passions cannot be assumed to be automatically restrained or

conquered by reason is simply that affects can only be countered by more powerful affects (E4p7), and the power of an affect cannot be nullified by the truth of an idea (E4p14). On Spinoza's view, this natural deficit on the part of human rationality is the main reason for why we need the protective measures of the state to begin with:

Now if nature had so constituted men that they desired nothing except what true reason teaches them to desire, then of course a society could exist without laws; in that case it would be completely sufficient to teach men true moral lessons, so that they would do voluntarily, wholeheartedly, and in a manner worthy of a free man, what is really useful. [21] But human nature is not constituted like that at all. It's true that everyone seeks his own advantage – but people want things and judge them useful, not by the dictate of sound reason, but for the most part only from immoderate desire and because they are carried away by affects of the mind which take no account of the future and of other things. [22] That's why no society can continue in existence without authority and force, and hence, laws which moderate and restrain men's immoderate desires and unchecked impulses. (TTP 5[20-22], G III/73-74)

This is not simply an expression of a paternalistic disdain of the inability of the uneducated masses to restrain passions, however. Later in the TTP, Spinoza explains how this tendency applies to *all* people (to varying degrees), 'whether they rule or are ruled' (TTP 17[14] G III/203/16). People, Spinoza asserts, tend to be 'governed only by affects, not by reason' (TTP 17[14] G III/203/19), and the problem of politics is deeply psychological in that

[e]veryone thinks that he alone knows everything, and wants everything to be done according to his mentality. He thinks a thing fair or unfair, permissible or impermissible, just to the extent that he judges it brings him profit or loss. (TTP 17[15], G III/203/21-24)

This, then, sets the stage for Spinoza's conception of indoctrination as a political tool necessary for compensating for the general inability of people to refrain from acting on debilitating passions rather than reason. Indoctrination, from this point of view, is an affective instrument for countering dangerous passions that individuals are incapable of restraining when left to their own devices.

My account of Spinoza's notion of indoctrination differs from Puolimatka's (2001) treatment, which represents a rare discussion of Spinoza and indoctrination in the context of contemporary philosophy of education. Puolimatka asserts an understanding of Spinoza's theory of indoctrination where some people, being naturally dominated by passions, require indoctrination in order to gain an increased understanding, whereas others, who are led by reason, can naturally do without. He writes,

Insofar as students are willing to be rationally activated, it is possible to teach them without indoctrination. If, on the other hand, they are rationally passive and controlled by imagination, the educator is forced to resort to indoctrination. The crucial criticism that can be raised against Spinoza's theory is that people cannot be neatly categorised into these two groups without a paternalising attitude. (Puolimatka, 2001: 397)

On my view, the problem with Puolimatka's appraisal of Spinoza's conception of indoctrination is that it severely underestimates Spinoza's relational understanding of autonomy

(see, for example, Sangiacomo, 2019) as well as the productive role Spinoza assigns to the imagination and to passions in terms of how they condition the collective formation of knowledge (see, for example, Gatens and Lloyd, 1999). As I mean to show, the conception of two distinct categories of people – one rational and the other passionate or irrational – is inherently false and it invites the kind of idealistic understanding of human nature that Spinoza explicitly warns against. On the contrary, I have already indicated how Spinoza conceives of all people as *more or less passionate* and as governed largely by imaginative thinking (while naturally striving toward increased rationality). This includes all students to varying degrees and, importantly, it includes their teachers as well (insofar as it applies to all, ‘whether they rule or are ruled’ [TTP 17[14] G III/203/16]). In addition, and following from this, I will argue that even if we grant that people are rational to varying degrees, Spinoza’s political philosophy prescribes passionate means of governance *for all*, as the individual is unable to flourish without sufficient degrees of social and political stability.

In order to perceive the problem more clearly, we need to start with Spinoza’s views on human rationality as being severely limited by a fragmented cognitive capacity preventing people in general from understanding nature adequately. To be sure, this makes for a highly skeptical perspective on the human capacity to become rationally autonomous, and this skepticism is precisely what informs Spinoza’s warning in the introduction to the *Political Treatise* (quoted at the beginning of this section). Autonomy, for Spinoza, is inherently relational insofar as humans, *qua* finite beings, are inevitably dependent on other finite things and beings for their survival and flourishing. That is, we cannot survive without the aid of external things such as food and shelter and we cannot flourish without the aid of friends and allies. Because we are limited in our power to survive and to flourish individually, we must endeavor to understand and account for this natural limitation when we strive to become more empowered through collective measures. Accordingly, Spinoza explains, ‘it is necessary to come to know both our nature’s power and its lack of power, so that we can determine what reason can do in moderating the affects, and what it cannot do’ (E4p17s). My argument, then, is that since reason cannot conquer dangerous affects in education on its own, it must – based on a realistic assessment of human nature – enlist instruments that can make deliberate use of passions, not in order to counter reason, but in order to counter more powerful and dangerous passions. I propose that indoctrination is an instrument of precisely this sort.

Puolimatka (2001) departs from Spinoza’s three kinds of knowledge or cognition [*cognitio*] – *imaginatio*, *ratio*, and *scientia intuitiva* – when stipulating three distinct categories of students: (1) those who live at the first level and who are guided by their imagination; (2) those who live at the second level and who are guided by reason; and (3) those who live at the third and highest level and who are completely free by virtue of an intuitive understanding of the essence of things. The problem with this categorization is that it assumes that the three kinds of cognition that Spinoza stipulates in Part 2 of the *Ethics* would correspond with different kinds of people. While there is certainly a normative aspect to the three kinds of cognition insofar as a life guided more by reason and/or intuitive knowledge is certainly more virtuous than a life guided more by imagination, it is important to note that these kinds of cognition are not mutually exclusive for Spinoza. That is, we can very well be guided by our imagination in one situation and be guided by reason in another. We also have access to more than one kind of cognition at the same

time. Because we are affected by things through our bodies, our understanding of external things is always in part a reflection of how we are affected by them. Reason complements the imagination, but it doesn't replace it.

Spinoza gives the example of how we can understand the sun in parallel ways. While we may rely on reason to give us a scientifically reliable understanding of the sun's actual distance from us, we will also always be simultaneously influenced by how our bodies are affected by it. He writes,

For even if we later come to know that it is more than 600 diameters of the earth away from us, we nevertheless imagine it as near. For we imagine the sun so near not because we do not know its true distance, but because an affection of our body involves the essence of the sun insofar as our body is affected by the sun. (E2p35s)

While I am sympathetic with Puolimatka's (2001) general description of Spinoza's ethical theory as stipulating that human flourishing 'consists in the effort and determination to liberate oneself from the domination of imagination and to become ever more completely guided by reason' (p. 400), I do not think that this is a matter of moving completely from one level of cognition to another, and I do not believe that this gradual evolution is a matter of an individual project as much as it is a necessarily collective endeavor always constrained by the power of affects. That is, Spinoza's example of the sun can be translated into any other example we can think of insofar as our rational understanding of something will always be influenced by how we are moved affectively. To assume that we can conquer affects by reason is – as we saw above – not aligned with Spinoza's understanding (see E4p7 and E4p14).

The above categorization of different kinds of students is set up by Puolimatka as a starting point for his appraisal of Spinoza's notion of indoctrination. It relies on the neat compartmentalization of people, where some are irrational and others are rational, and where the irrational ones (students) are guided by the rational ones (teachers). Accordingly, the true educator, according to Puolimatka's (2001) reading of Spinoza, is one who can act as a catalyst that can 'activate an autonomous process in the one being educated' (p. 401). On Puolimatka's account, Spinoza's educational ideal is tightly connected with what he takes to be his practical exemplar: the model of *the free man* (E4p66s–E4p77). This ideal amounts to a completely self-determined individual who is fully rational and therefore also fully active. The problem with using the model of *the free man* as a practical exemplar in education, however, is that it is in fact an unattainable ideal (see Dahlbeck and De Lucia Dahlbeck, 2020). A different and to my mind more productive way of approaching the model of *the free man* is in terms of a fiction that can be useful for illustrating what a supremely rational person would be like if such a person existed (Kisner, 2011: 176). This way of understanding the model of *the free man* helps explain why it can serve as an illustrative thought experiment without necessarily providing a useful exemplar to emulate.⁹ This does not mean, of course, that becoming more rational is not an educational ideal for Spinoza, or that the relatively more rational should not help the relatively less rational improve their understanding. It simply means that there is no sharp distinction between those who are rational and those who are not. While it is certainly true that the supreme good, in Spinoza's view, is to be understood in terms of a fully rational understanding, it is also true that a fully rational human does not, and

cannot, exist (E4p4c and E4p6). Since humans are always vulnerable to external affects, their actions will always be impacted by the affective power of an idea rather than its degree of truth (E4p7 and E4p17c). This much we already know from the above quote from TTP 5[20-22]. In fact, in order to make people adhere to ‘what true reason teaches them’, everyone (to different degrees) needs to rely on the existence of external ‘authority and force, and hence, laws which moderate and restrain men’s immoderate desires and unchecked impulses’ (TTP 5[22] G III/74).

Puolimatka’s conclusion is that Spinoza’s pessimistic evaluation of irrationally inclined students prevents him from defending ‘open rational dialogue in an ordinary classroom setting’ in a way that ultimately ‘undermines his educational project’ (Puolimatka, 2001: 403). Against this, I would argue that by acknowledging the limited rationality of all people, Spinoza offers a much more realistic framework for the potential of this kind of dialogue in the first place. To be sure, Spinoza is pessimistic about the potential of human reason – insofar as he acknowledges its necessary limitations – but this pessimism is directed at human nature as a whole and not at individual human beings (who somehow fail to live up to the ideals postulated by philosophers). I would argue that the educational ideal of ‘open rational dialogue’ is informed by the ideal of epistemic self-sufficiency, which in turn is precisely the kind of prejudice that Spinoza criticizes in the introduction to the TP when he laments that philosophers tend to ‘conceive of men not as they are, but as they want them to be’ (TP 1[1], G III/273/11-12). Accordingly, he writes that ‘people who persuade themselves that a multitude [. . .] can be induced to live only according to the prescription of reason, those people are dreaming of the golden age of the Poets. They’re captive to a Myth’ (TP 1[1] G III/275/23-25).

What Spinoza offers the debate on indoctrination in education is an epistemological perspective on indoctrination that does not assume that the teacher is placed beyond the influence of indoctrination, but that suggests that indoctrination is necessary for all people who fall short of being completely rational beings. Acknowledging this shortcoming on behalf of human rationality means that we can look at indoctrination not in terms of a threat to be avoided, but in terms of a necessary component compensating for a deficit in knowledge. The important question, then, is how can indoctrination be made to function so as to bolster and promote a life guided by reason rather than a life determined by dangerous passions such as hatred, envy, and pride?

In a recent study on Spinoza’s ethical theory, Andrew Youpa (2020) deals with precisely this question. He concludes that passions in Spinoza can be roughly divided into two categories: indefeasibly and defeasibly bad emotions. Indefeasibly bad emotions are passions that threaten the stability of the social world by turning people against each other and by leading them down a spiral of negativity. Youpa (2020) writes,

Nothing about indefeasibly bad emotions, such as melancholy and hatred, can compensate for their badness and make them good, not bad, or less bad. [. . .] This is because there is never any compensatory advantage to be gained from melancholy or hatred. They are indefeasibly bad. (p. 96)

Defeasibly bad emotions, on the other hand, can be made to play a productive role with regard to ethical flourishing insofar as they can act as conduits leading people into the kind of social stability that is necessary for reason to act as a guiding light. These

emotions are not good in themselves, but they can be used so as to enable something better – given that all human coexistence is passionate to some degree – than their indefeasibly bad counterparts. Accordingly, '[h]umility, repentance, hope, and fear have a comparative advantage over pride, shamelessness, and fearlessness in that the former are more conducive, or less unproductive, to social bonds than the latter' (2020: 96). Andrea Sangiacomo (2019) describes the process whereby passions are used to stabilize a society and serve rational ends as a *virtuous circle* (as opposed to a vicious circle that will lead to instability and war) (pp. 33–39). The virtuous circle benefits from the natural sociability of human affects and takes advantage of the fact that a political constitution can be set up in a way that compensates for people's passionate tendencies. As Sangiacomo (2019) points out,

The rationality of the political constitution does not presuppose the rationality of the individuals living within it as already acquired, but rather is designed to foster their rationality and educate them to cooperate in the best and most effective way. (p. 191)

Ultimately, it doesn't matter whether some people are more rationally inclined than others, however, as the peace and security of the state is a necessary precondition for the freedom of philosophizing of all individuals. Indoctrination, from the point of view of Spinoza's political theory, is a necessary instrument for promoting peace and security, which in turn is a prerequisite for cultivating the autonomy of the individual. As none of us have what is required for surviving and flourishing on our own, we are all determined to live collectively and to find ways of flourishing collectively. Because most people are dominated by passions, this means that political life must be grounded in powerful collective narratives that can appeal to the imagination of the multitude and that can prevent people from succumbing to the many perils brought about by the passions of hatred, envy, and pride. A society dominated by hatred, envy, and pride is just as dangerous for the enlightened philosopher as it is for the uneducated masses, which is why peace and security are beneficial, and indeed necessary, for all. The question that arises, then, is how can peace and security be promoted in a society governed by dangerous passions? In order to address this important question, we need to look closer at the conceptual terrain of Spinoza's social epistemology.

Accommodation, *ingenium*, and the power of collective narratives

At this point I would like to, very briefly, contextualize Spinoza's theory of indoctrination by placing it in the framework of his political psychology and social epistemology. There are three tightly interconnected components that serve to set up a background for Spinoza's theory of indoctrination. The first is the principle of accommodation, the second is the importance of understanding people's *ingenium*, and the third component is the matter of finding narratives that fit well with the other two components. On closer inspection, the two latter are in fact integral parts of the former. In a recent study, Justin Steinberg (2018a) outlines what he labels Spinoza's principle of accommodation. Basically, the principle of accommodation is the practical political consequence of Spinoza's skeptical account of human nature. Because humans are naturally affective,

and because most people tend to be moved more by passive affects than by reason, any effective politics needs to accommodate its means to the way that people are affectively constituted (rather than be designed to fit an idealistic model of human nature). Accordingly, ‘commands and teachings should be accommodated to the *ingenia* of affected parties, such that these commands and teachings elicit optimal (epistemic and affective) responses’ (Steinberg, 2018a: 115). There are two basic aspects to this process of accommodation. First, it involves adjusting political messages so that they appeal to the affective constitution of a people. Second, it involves reforming people ‘so that their affective state is characterized more by hope than by fear’ (Steinberg, 2020: 167).

The first of these aspects hinge importantly on correctly diagnosing people’s *ingenium*, and the second aspect involves using powerful narratives to bring people together in a virtuous circle. Insofar as this process entails the manipulation of emotions in order to make people think and behave in certain ways (and not in other ways), it should be quite obvious that it can qualify as a form of indoctrination. That is, we are dealing with a form of teaching that can be said to result in closed-mindedness (insofar as people are being manipulated emotionally by external forces rather than being guided by their own reason), but where this kind of closed-mindedness is specifically designed to be the starting point of a virtuous rather than a vicious circle. Again, the underlying assumption is that a system of governance based on reason alone will be unable to conquer dangerous passions. Indoctrination, then, may not be ideal, but given the circumstances it is the only viable option for moving a people gradually toward a life guided by reason. From this we see that Spinoza’s conception of indoctrination allows for a kind of positive manipulation of people’s emotions. Closed-mindedness, in this context, is deemed an unfortunate but natural state of mind that can be taken advantage of by education in order to prepare the way for a collective life guided more by reason than by passions. It does not, however, allow for insidious forms of manipulation, where people are made to behave in ways that are detrimental for their well-being. To go back to the question posed by Callan and Arena (2009), concerning whether or not indoctrination is permissible if it is in support of the truth and if it is therefore to be considered a ‘morally neutral means to an end’ (p. 116), it is clear that on Spinoza’s view this certainly seems to be the case.

A person’s *ingenium*, on Spinoza’s account, corresponds with her affective constitution and it indicates her particular composition of passive and active affects. Insofar as passive affects result from external influences, a person’s *ingenium* is always in part socially constituted. In one sense, then, a person’s *ingenium* is unique to that person, but at the same time a person’s *ingenium* is also part of the *ingenium* of a greater social collective.¹⁰ Because emotions are in part socially constituted, the traditions, cultural habits, and memories that we share with people around us are an important part of who we are and of how we respond to things emotionally. This is also why Spinoza believes that collective narratives are powerful political tools. Narratives are powerful political tools specifically when they manage to draw on people’s joint experiences and appeal to their collective imagination (TTP 5[35–37]). When these preconditions are in place, narratives can be used to manipulate people’s emotions so that they are moved in a certain way as a collective. This ability can be (and is regularly) exploited in politics, but it can go in either direction. Narratives can be used to make people more afraid and suspicious of one another or narratives can be used to bring people together so that they may grow powerful and more autonomous.

Depending on how these collective narratives are put to use, then, we end up with cases of indoctrination that are either good or bad. My argument for Spinoza's distinction between 'good' and 'bad' indoctrination in part maps onto Moira Gatens' (2012) argument for Spinoza's distinction between 'good' and 'bad' fictions. In effect, good indoctrination makes use of good fictions, and these fictions are good insofar as they function to 'guide human striving to live an ethical life' (2012: 85). Conversely, bad indoctrination makes use of bad fictions, leading people away from what is truly good for them and, instead, instilling dangerous passions like hatred and fear in them. Michael Rosenthal explains how this relates to understanding the limits of what a fiction can achieve. He connects it with Spinoza's views on the use of exemplary stories, conceived as beneficial when used wisely, but harmful when abused. Rosenthal (1997) writes,

Spinoza warns the reader against imagining that exemplars and the values attendant on them are found in, or products of, nature itself. They are just human constructs made in order to compare things, to judge relative value, and to emulate in one's actions. As soon as those who use an exemplar violate its intrinsic epistemological and practical limitations – using it to explain nature itself, rather than simply as a guide to conduct – it tends to lose its ability to serve its original purpose. Moreover, certain people, realizing that the masses are ignorant and easily manipulated, are eager purposely to misuse these exemplars to gain power for themselves. (p. 224)

The same could be said for indoctrination. When indoctrination is used for the personal gain of those who educate (at the expense of those who are being taught), and when indoctrination is geared at a long-term goal that is not aligned with living under the guidance of reason, it is bad. When its limits are clearly acknowledged and respected, however, it can be productively used to guide people's conduct in a way that is beneficial for them even if they are unaware of this. Let us look at a couple of illuminating examples from the TTP, illustrating how Spinoza conceives of this indoctrinatory process.

Spinoza on the teaching of doctrines in the *Theological-Political Treatise*

Spinoza proposes two different ways of establishing peace and security among people torn by passions through the teaching of doctrines – one theological and the other political. In Chapter 14 of the TTP, Spinoza introduces the seven doctrines of universal faith, seeking to construct a way through which religion can foster obedience and peace without leading to conflict between different traditions and schools of interpretation of Scripture.¹¹ While religion and philosophy should be kept strictly apart, Spinoza looks to religion for providing effective means for educating people's imagination and for setting them on the path to a peaceful coexistence through the cultivation of obedience. This, in turn, is deemed necessary as a precondition for the freedom of philosophizing.

The fifth doctrine of universal faith is a good case in point. It reads, '*The worship of God and obedience to him consists only in Justice and Loving-kindness, or in love toward one's neighbor*' (TTP 14[27] G III/177/35-36, emphasis in original). While the first part of the doctrine evokes familiar religious imagery, the second part spells out its practical consequences in a way that accords with the guidance of reason. The doctrines of universal faith are specifically designed not to conflict with the dictates of reason, rendering

them the kind of doctrines that anyone should be able to subscribe to, while still being cloaked in the familiar language of religious dogma. As such, they can be read as religious dogmas prescribing just and merciful behavior as an expression of the obedience to God, but they can also be read as prescribing rational behavior serving the promotion of peace and unity in the republic. The way this is being communicated, however, is not in the philosophical language of reason, but in a language that is meant to appeal to the imagination of passionate people. For, as Spinoza points out,

The person who displays the best arguments is not necessarily the one who displays the best faith; instead it's the one who displays the best works of Justice and Loving-kindness. [34] How salutary this Doctrine is, how necessary in the republic, if people are to live peacefully and harmoniously, how many, and how great, are the causes of disturbance and wickedness it prevents – these things I leave everyone to judge for himself. (TTP 14[33-34], G III/179/7-13)

Ultimately, the doctrines of universal faith are construed as ways of preparing for a social life that is peaceful and stable enough to afford the freedom of philosophizing to anyone who wishes to aspire for that kind of understanding. Indeed, while faith and philosophy are clearly separated for Spinoza,¹² the dictates of universal faith are still the kind of imaginative social factors that make philosophical freedom possible in the first place:

Faith, therefore, grants everyone the greatest freedom to philosophize, so that without wickedness he can think whatever he wishes about anything. Faith condemns as heretics and schismatics only those who teach opinions which encourage obstinacy, hatred, quarrels and anger. On the other hand, it considers faithful only those who encourage Justice and Loving-kindness as far as the powers of their reason and their faculties permit. (TTP 14[39], G III/179-180/1-6)

In this way, religion can serve to facilitate a kind of collective life that is beneficial to those who wish to live according to the guidance of reason (and to everyone else). And, as Rosenthal (2001) points out, 'although each proposition by itself is false in light of natural reason, it can be translated, with the proper philosophical understanding, into a point that is theoretically true' (p. 67). However, it is important to point out that 'the translation of the dogma into meaningful language is irrelevant to its practical function', and that, therefore, '[t]he dogma can be salutary regardless of its metaphysical interpretation' (Rosenthal, 2001). This, then, is a good example of how Spinoza applies his theory of indoctrination in a theological context. The doctrines of universal faith serve an important sociopolitical function, and while 'they are only apparently true in a metaphysical sense, they are really true only practically', meaning that 'they state ideas, which though derived immediately from the imagination, are nonetheless justified through a broader conception of human life and flourishing, which can be understood through reason' (2001: 67–68). This dialectics – set up between securing social stability and promoting a life guided by reason – is fundamentally what motivates Spinoza's positive attitude toward indoctrination.

In Chapter 16 of the TTP Spinoza offers another illuminating example. This time the context is more obviously political and the doctrine that Spinoza discusses is that of the

social contract. Spinoza's version of the doctrine of the social contract entails that the social contract was formed when individuals transferred their natural right to the sovereign in exchange for protection. In the state of nature, the only right that is applicable is that which corresponds with someone's actual power to act. Anything that is within someone's power to do is therefore permissible. The social contract describes the mythic event whereby people gave up their natural right for the privilege of living together in communities protected by common law. Again, we are dealing with a doctrine that is not strictly speaking true in the sense that the social contract was never *actually* formed and in the sense that it is impossible to pinpoint the exact point in time when humans became self-regulated social animals. It is, however, a doctrine that is useful for people to imagine and to believe in insofar as it helps them see how their sacrifice of individual freedom is only apparent, and that what actually benefits them is to live protected by a state that deserves their obedience. This, Spinoza explains, hinges on the fact that freedom is concomitant with living guided by reason and bondage with living a life dictated by passions. What is important is therefore not whether people are allowed to do what they want, but whether what they want is aligned with reason or not. Hence,

An action done on a command – obedience – does, in some measure, take away freedom. But that isn't what makes the slave. It's the reason for the action. If the end of the action is not the advantage of the agent himself, but of the person who issues the command, then the agent is a slave, useless to himself. (TTP 16[33], G III/194/33-37)

If we connect this to the question of indoctrination, we see that Spinoza's position allows that what matters is not whether or not someone is acting and thinking at the behest of others, but that the doctrines they follow are in their best interest (regardless if they understand this or not). He compares the relation of subject and sovereign with the relation between parents and children: 'Similarly, even though children are bound to obey all the commands of their parents, they are still not slaves. For their parents' commands are primarily concerned with the advantage of the children' (TTP 16[35] G III/195/5-8). The difference between the child and the subject is that the subject serves him- or herself by doing 'what is advantageous for the collective body – and hence, also for himself – in accordance with the command of the supreme power' (TTP 16[35] G III/195/13-14). The doctrine of the social contract thereby becomes an imaginative way of persuading people that the most effective way of looking out for themselves is to look out for the common good of the community.

Conclusion: Towards a positive account of indoctrination

My conclusion is that because indoctrination will occur whether we admit to it or not, it is far more dangerous to assume that it is possible to educate without indoctrinating (and to assume that education can be grounded in a form of autonomous capacity that seems highly unlikely) than to acknowledge indoctrination as a necessary, albeit flawed, component of all education and to focus on steering indoctrination in the direction of maximizing freedom and ethical flourishing rather than unwittingly allowing it to bolster hatred, envy, and pride.

To reconnect with the contemporary debate on indoctrination in philosophy of education, we might try a different approach. Instead of assuming that closed-mindedness is an anomaly and a vice that can be abolished through good education (see Taylor, 2017), we

might instead assume that closed-mindedness is part and parcel of the human condition, and that we are better off acknowledging this than we are pretending otherwise. If closed-mindedness is our necessary starting point, we might ask how this natural (albeit unfortunate) deficit on the part of human cognition might be compensated for by a kind of indoctrinatory measure – in the guise of powerful collective narratives that resonate well with the affective composition (*ingenium*) of both teacher and students – that can prepare fertile breeding ground for a collective quest for increased intellectual freedom and relational autonomy.

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Notes

1. References to the *Theological-Political Treatise* (henceforth TTP) are to Chapter and section of Spinoza (2016a). References to the *Political Treatise* (henceforth TP) are to Chapter and section of Spinoza (2016b). References to the *Ethics* (Spinoza, 1985) are abbreviated according to the following standard method: *Ethics* (E), axiom (a), corollary (c), definition (d) before proposition, demonstration (d) after proposition, lemma (L), proposition (p), postulate (post), preface (pref), scholium (s), explanation (exp). Example: E2p7s = *Ethics*, part 2, proposition 7, scholium. References to the non-geometrically ordered passages from the *Ethics*, as well as references to the TP and the TTP are sometimes supplemented by references to Gebhardt's edition *Spinoza Opera* (Spinoza, 1925) according to the following form: G II/208/25-30 = Gebhardt, Vol. 2, page 208, lines 25–30.
2. Rather than two parallel tracks for interpreting the concept of indoctrination, Callan and Arena (2009: 104) argue for 'a linguistic shift' where the pejorative use has gradually overtaken the older and more descriptive use.
3. Callan and Arena (2009) label indoctrination, understood in the pejorative sense, a form of moral wrongdoing. They describe it as 'some intellectual distortion in the presentation of subject matter that elicits a corresponding distortion in the minds of students', where this distortion 'is not to be explained by intellectual laziness or indifference, but by an ill-considered or overzealous concern to inculcate particular beliefs' (p. 115).
4. I understand the term doctrine to refer broadly to any set of beliefs taught and accepted by a particular group (which corresponds with the definition given in the Cambridge Dictionary, see <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/doctrine>).

5. A common strategy for refuting a conception of indoctrination that appeals to its etymological origin (where indoctrination is taken to be more or less the equivalent of teaching) is to argue that it amounts to committing a naturalistic fallacy, where an 'ought' is illegitimately extrapolated from an 'is'. Robin Barrow argues accordingly in a recent paper (Barrow, 2020: 718), adding that an undue broadening of the interpretation of normative concepts such as indoctrination risks hampering analytical work to the extent that it blurs useful conceptual boundaries. He writes, 'Insofar as I use the word "education" interchangeably with "training," "socialization," "upbringing," "rearing," and "indoctrination," I deny myself the possibility of making some useful distinctions, and will necessarily be entertaining thoughts of a relatively crude and general kind' (Barrow, 2020: 719). I am indebted to Christian Norefalk for alerting me to the relevant passage in Barrow's paper.
6. While not exactly contemporary, a notable exception to the modern dismissal of indoctrination in educational theory would be George Counts' (1932) description of indoctrination in *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*. Renouncing education that resorts to the deliberate distortion of facts, Counts (1932) maintains that he would still be

prepared to defend the thesis that all education contains a large element of imposition, that in the very nature of the case this is inevitable, that the existence and evaluation of society depends upon it, that it is consequently eminently desirable, and that the frank acceptance of this fact by the educator is a major professional obligation. (p. 9)

Accordingly, Counts (1932) suggests that progressive educational thinkers should be less frightened 'of *imposition* and *indoctrination*' (p. 7, emphasis in original), and so he proposes the following conclusion: 'My thesis is that complete impartiality is utterly impossible, that the school must shape attitudes, develop tastes, and even impose ideas' (1932: 16).

7. For example, the contradiction between indoctrination and the assumed capacity for autonomous thought and rationality is reiterated in a recent article by Ruth Wareham where she describes indoctrination as a predominantly liberal concern insofar as it denotes 'the idea of inculcating beliefs and values in a way that is inimical to freedom, autonomy and rationality' (Wareham, 2019: 57n). As is implied in this brief quote, it is typically assumed that indoctrination is inimical to the educational ideal of personal autonomy, where autonomy is taken to refer to the epistemic self-sufficiency of the mind.
8. In what follows, I have opted to retain the concept of closed-mindedness as a criterion for indoctrination despite some of its potentially problematic connotations in relation to a Spinozistic understanding of indoctrination. It is important to point out that from the point of view of Spinoza's philosophy (to which we will soon turn in greater detail) this should not be taken to mean that indoctrination sets out to limit rational thinking as an educational aim, but that one aspect of educating people's emotions means establishing emotional bonds to rational ideas and ideals in a way that does not rely on rational arguments as much as it relies on the forging of emotional attachments. The overarching aim, however, is still conceived in terms of a life guided by reason insofar as emotional attachments can function by preparing the way for the promotion of reason rather than by its inhibition. One way of concretizing this is by looking at the use of fictions in education. Fictions are not strictly speaking true, but they may nevertheless be used to direct us toward what is good and rational for us even if we do not understand the reasons for this yet. Justin Steinberg (2018b) helps explain Spinoza's thinking here, noting that '[f]ictions [. . .] might stimulate us to act in ways that are more consistent with our aims than if we acted just on our beliefs' (p. 266). Susan James (2010) conceives of this in terms of making reason fall within the grasp of the imagination, which I take to involve a degree of emotional manipulation. Accordingly, she argues that for Spinoza 'the way of life endorsed by reason needs to be brought within imaginative reach if it is to mold our desires and actions' (p.

267). I am indebted to one of the anonymous reviewers for drawing my attention to the potential confusion resulting from the use of the concept of closed-mindedness in this context.

9. Steinberg (2014) discusses the limitations of Spinoza's *free man* as a practical exemplar by way of a helpful illustration:

For instance, even if an ideally rational person would have no need to study for a logic exam, it would be patently foolish for most young logic students to emulate the ideal or to take the description of an ideal agent as prescriptive for them. (p. 182)

10. For a fuller treatment of Spinoza's notion of *ingenium* in an educational context, see Dahlbeck (2021).
11. Rosenthal (2001) explains it thus:

It is just this defect in outer religion [the fact that conflicts arise from disputes over different interpretations of Scripture] that the universal dogmas are supposed to remedy. The point, then, of the dogmas is to state the essential lessons of Scripture, and in doing so also set the parameters of interpretation in order to ease the problem of dispute inherent in external religion. (p. 61)

Rosenthal's (2001) use of the term 'outer religion' refers to the political function of religion as a means for establishing peace and security within the state, as opposed the 'inner religion' which corresponds with the ethical purpose of guiding individuals toward 'peace and tranquility of mind' (p. 59).

12. Spinoza dedicates Chapter 15 of the TTP to explicating and motivating the sharp distinction he draws between faith and reason.

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