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LIBERAL EDUCATION AND THE NECESSITY OF HISTORY

by

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B.A.(Hons.), University of Wales, 1966

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Liberal Education and the Necessity of History

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the case for a liberal education, the most valuable way of schooling, will be greatly strengthened if history is fully included in the enterprise in three ways: first, as an approach to answering questions about the nature of mind and culture, second, as a subject in the curriculum, and third, as a source for the development of methodologies in educational studies.

Over the past century and a half the answer to Herbert Spencer's question, "What knowledge is of most worth?", has been answered increasingly in the manner which Spencer himself replied. Science has been seen as the paradigmatic way of knowing, and the application of the scientific method to every aspect of the study of the human world resulted. This dominance of positivistic views led to a situation, particularly in North America, where theories of mind and culture have been in danger of being reduced to a series of behaviouristic or sociological postulates. At present this hegemony is increasingly being challenged on the basis of its epistemological confusion, its lack of empirical accuracy and because of its potentially dehumanizing effects on social action. It is particularly important that this challenge come from those wishing to espouse and promote the ideals and practice of liberal education. This thesis is a contribution to that effort, through a reassertion of the role of history and historiography as a central part in educational studies and the educational curriculum.

The thesis is in three parts. First, it attempts to define the key concepts in this debate, in particular 'knowledge', 'education' and 'culture', and to assess the nature of the positivist threat to a liberal humanistic view of education. Second, it outlines aspects of the thought of two groups of theorists, who have an interest in these matters and who up till now have not been seen as having common aims. To be specific the views on knowledge and history of Paul Hirst and Michael Oakeshott are contrasted with each other, and with those of Ernst Cassirer and Wilhelm Dilthey. It is claimed that many aspects of their approaches are compatible, and that as a result of this synthesis a broader and deeper case can be made for the value of education. In particular, it will be maintained that the views of the German philosophers concerning the nature of knowledge and history are of potential interest in deepening and broadening the concept of a liberal education. Third, the potential implications of fully including history in the educational curriculum and in educational studies will be assessed.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In this thesis I maintain that schooling based on the ideal of a liberal education most appropriately fulfills those traditions in our culture and history which have regarded the intrinsic importance of individual human beings as the fundamental value which should govern the organisation and operation of society and the state. This state would be a liberal democratic one because such a state has provided, in this century at least, the most likely place where people would be valued in this way as well as being respected as autonomous moral agents. I further maintain that the inclusion of history and historical studies within and in alliance with the justification, planning and operation of such educative schooling necessarily enhances its capacity to fulfill itself and, furthermore, enables it to resist more successfully the pressures of other less valuable modes of schooling. However, if history is to take its place as a full partner in education, it must first, along with the concept of culture, be defined, and then included in the educational enterprise in a number of specific ways: first, as part of the philosophical task of answering questions about the relationship between mind, knowledge and culture, second, as a necessary element of the educational curriculum itself, and, third, as a potential source of methodologies to used in the empirical and critical study of education.

At the present time the most compelling arguments seeking to justify the superiority of education over other ways of schooling are those which often use the term 'liberal education' and these tend to be based upon a logical analysis of ethics and epistemology. Many of these arguments, those of Hirst, Peters, Barrow, Kazepides, Scheffler, Bailey, for example, maintain that the nature of

knowledge itself (in particular, propositional knowledge), the logic of normative terms and the prescriptive nature of ethics all contain strong reasons why a liberal society, in particular, should educate its young. While these arguments show the necessity for clearly analysed concepts and for the central part the intellect plays in education, the logical and analytical approaches are not , in my view, sufficient . Therefore, I would like to propose a philosophical position which while not denying the importance and validity of the cognitive approach tries to provide a broader grounding for the value of education, and which enables the more affective and volitional aspects of human life to be included as a central and necessary part of the educational enterprise. An example of such an attempt, which while it moves out of the normal territory of Anglo-American philosophy, nevertheless ,has much in common with it, is one which is based on the work of Fredrich A. Trendelenburg and was known in Nineteenth century German philosophy as *Idealrealismus*. He

> called for an 'authentic fusion' of realism and idealism into what he called "transcendental realism" or empirical idealism"; a realism which cannot issue in materialism because it takes seriously the constitutive role of consciousness and an idealism which cannot issue in subjectivism because it refers thought to a real 'given'.
> (Ermarth, 1978, p. 59)

In spirit and intention this position takes a middle ground that denies the necessity either for absolute objectivity or for extreme subjectivism, as well as for all the other false dichotomies that have plagued Western thought of late.

> Philosophy, in Trendelenburg's view, had to concern itself not only with the critique of method , but also with a view of the continuous development of reality , including the history of man's attempt to grasp that reality. *Wissenschaft* could not be totally divorced from *Weltanschauung;* thought and being-as-becoming, mind and

> nature,science and world-view were conceived as continuous, not mutually exclusive. (Ermarth, 1978, p. 60)

Ermarth (1978) further explains the importance of history within this philosophical position and stresses Trendelenburg's view that something was capable of being understood best by knowing how it came into being. This principle applied to philosophical thought as well as to natural and mental phenomena and was the basis for Trendelenburg's criticism of purely formal and static analyses of thought: While one can argue about the meaning of the term 'understanding', and while it is possible to have some understanding of a concept without knowing everything about its past, its meaning is not merely the result of present use. The belief that one can fully understand the meaning of 'education'; for example, without some knowledge of the history of the term as well as knowledge of significant previous attempts to actually educate is severely limited. One challenge posed by history, therefore, is to carefully differentiate those aspects of an idea which remain constant over time from those aspects which are subject to change. It is a question, perhaps, of listening for the variations as well as the themes.

Trendelenburg is also of interest because of his influence on his pupil Wilhelm Dilthey, whose work we will be considering later, but first I would like to consider some further claims underlying the notion of *Idealrealismus* or ideal-realism, as outlined by Ermarth (1979).

> *Idealrealismus* was a deliberate hybrid: a realism which could not be converted into materialism or naturalism because it accepted mind as real along with sensible objects; an idealism which could not become subjectivism because it held that the mind must always follow the binding evidence of what is given in experience. In this modification of traditional realism, thought is a representation of reality, which is not identical with its correlate but not out of all direct relation to it. The mind is neither

> wholly active nor wholly passive, nor can its functions be deployed to separate faculties. The mind both reproduces and imposes an order on things; a priorism is excluded because reason must always remain open to correction and expansion through experience. (Ermarth, 1979, p. 344)

Man, in these terms, is neither mere flesh nor mere spirit. He lives partly in the physical world, and in that sense is grounded in it, is part of it, but , at the same time, he is also more than matter. This qualitative difference, however, does not place man in a world of reified abstractions and disembodied ideas , for the mind does not contemplate life from afar but functions and is realized in the world, in the concrete living subject. The ideal-realist position holds that,

> reason, ideals, and values were not removed to a pristine sphere of pure consciousness but function rather as practical instrumentalities in the world. Above all, they held that thought and life, philosophy and experience, must interact and reinforce each other. (Ermarth, 1979, pp. 344-345)

Dilthey was part of this tradition and his stress on the concept of 'experience', not to be equated with subjectivism or phenomenalism, is rooted in the middle position of ideal-realism. His was neither a concept of experience reduced to the scientific method nor one which was merely the pallid register of sense impressions, but one which took account of the full richness and giveness of life. It provided access to what was real.

> As developed in his [Dilthey's] thinking, experience is both individual and cultural, both immediate and reflected. Our 'raw' experience is permeated by mental structures and transpires in socio-cultural coherences. It is constituted not within the private confines of pure consciousness but within the cultural medium of the objective mind. (Ermarth, 1979, p. 345)

Objective mind is defined as all those manifestations of cultural content that are preserved in some lasting manner, or as Dilthey himself put it:

> I understand by the concept of objective mind the diverse forms in which the community among individuals objectifies itself in the sensible world. In the objective mind the past is a constant persisting present for us. Its province stretches from the style of life, the forms of intercourse, to the coherence of goals which society has posited, to morality, law , state, religion, art, science, and philosophy. (Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* 7:208, quoted in Ermarth, 1979, p .277)

It is significant to note here the parallels between this view and ideas propounded by Karl Popper (1972). Popper maintained that the world consists of at least three ontologically distinct sub-worlds: "the first is the physical world or the world of physical states; the second is the mental world or the world of mental states; and the third is the world of intelligibles, or *of* ideas in the objective sense" (p.154). This 'third world' consists partly of the products of minds, which once produced exist independently of them. These structures are not necessarily concrete; in fact in the case of man, the abstract structures are at least as important as those which change the physical environment in which he lives. These achievements include language, ethics, law, religion, philosophy, the sciences, the arts and political and social institutions. Despite having been produced by the mind these structures develop an autonomy in relation to man and become largely objective. In Popper's words, "I suggest that it is possible to accept the reality or (as it may be called) the autonomy of the third world, and at the same time admit that the third world originates as a product of human activity" (p. 159)If encoded and preserved in material form they can exist for centuries after the knowing subject and the culture from which they emerged have vanished. (For example, the Linear B scripts of the Minoan civilization which have only recently been decoded). The fact that this knowledge is stored in libraries and other institutions designed for its preservation and not in people's minds makes any theory of education which stresses the perceptual

present, the future-orientated instrumentality of knowledge, and the primacy of children's thoughts unsullied by book learning very impoverished. In fact it is not possible, I would maintain, to have an identity which is entirely separate from culture and history. For teachers, the question then becomes what aspects of having an identity are most worthwhile, and what are the least ethically compromised ways of attempting to bring them about. Magee (1973) emphatically points out the importance of this aspect of Popper 's theory,and he maintains that

> the concept of a man made yet autonomous third world is one of the most promising growth points of Popper's philosophy. The mind-body problem is the subject of one of his unpublished books. (The view that it is through interaction with World 3 that we become selves is alone endless in its ramifications). (p. 62)

This view provides a reconciliation between human subjectivity and the objective world which is not merely based on a theory of the physical universe. The existence of this 'third world', and its value, is at the same time dependent upon human achievements, and yet its contents and character are also independent of us. Nozick (1981) calls this position 'realizationism', and provides a number of examples from mathematics, quantum mechanics, and psychoanalysis in support of his position. However, his point is,

> not that the same type of view must hold true in each of these areas,.or even that it *does* hold true in any of them; however the fact that a realizationist position has been seriously proposed in so many areas is a reason for believing , at least, that it is a coherent position, and so a possible structure for value theory. (pp. 556-557)

These views are part of what I earlier called the middle position, because they "help us to see why both sides in the age-old dispute about whether moral,

aesthetic and other standards are objective or subjective have put forward unanswerable arguments" (Magee, 1973, p. 62). It is not a question of standards of judgement being either completely dependent on the subjective or being completely objective like the Platonic Forms. The question becomes one of deciding the interwoven nature of subject and object . Man is immersed in a world, which is neither completely of his making, nor is he a stranger in it, for it is in part the world of his cultural heritage. Furthermore, it is because of this objective nature that human achievements have a history and are open to change. Change which is not the result of some overall plan or spirit that moves along according to some pre-determined or overarching plot, but change resulting from the contingent nature of humanity's relationship with World 3.

In the Western tradition a further vital part of Popper's World 3 theory, was the emergence of the idea of criticism in the pre-Socratic philosophers of ancient Greece, starting with Thales and his pupil Anaximenes (Popper, 1975, p.149). This spelt the end of the dogmatic tradition of passing on the pristine truth, and the beginning of a new rational tradition of subjecting speculations to critical discussion. The dogmatic and mythic view of truth meant, and still means so today in those societies dominated by political and religious orthodoxy, that to question the truth was to become a heretic. The truth in such societies is to be kept inviolate and handed on unsullied from generation to generation. To question the tradition of truth is to risk expulsion from it or even to risk death. A liberal education is only possible in a society where the traditions of critical reason and historical change are alive. The challenge which these views poses to us in our attempts to provide a full meaning for and explanation of the educational enterprise is one which we cannot ignore., This

must begin by attempting to understand the human world , where meaning is both possible 'for' the subject and 'of' the object and where they take place within a larger field of cultural meaning (Ermarth, 1979, p. 347). This world cannot be put together by simply collecting sense data into which meaning is injected by some executive consciousness. There is no presuppositionless knowledge of ourselves, no pure unmediated intuitions to which we can turn in order to gain a view of our world untainted by meaning. We cannot step out of language, nor out of history, and the recognition of this means that in our striving for truth our methodology must be subject to critical controls. At the present in the North American educational world nothing could be further from this state , and the greatest danger to a liberal education comes not from political or religious fanaticism but from the extremes of positivism and subjectivism, both of which reject the middle position.

The world of schooling in North America today is dominated by these two doctrines which, while seeming to be antithetical, have in fact learned to coexist and at times cooperate with each other. The more dominant of the two doctrines takes the form of various positivistic theories of knowledge which elevate the natural sciences, and in particular certain aspects of their methodologies, to positions where they have become the major explanatory force in the theory of learning, and, thereby, prescribe the fundamental procedures of pedagogy. These positions are primarily to be found in educational psychology and in the extensive use of statistical methods in educational research. They are often narrowly reductionist in their view of knowing, i.e. the only certain knowledge is scientific knowledge, and they also contain an epistemology which regards sense data unmediated by thought to

be the primary building blocks of mind. On the other hand, another doctrine exists in the form of an extreme subjectivism, which often appears under the guise of various forms of progressive or romantic formalism. These views, often Deweyan in their origin, are primarily found in the child-centred theories of schooling and see themselves as the 'humanistic' opposition to the positivists. These two positions are also manifest in the structural divisions often seen in the organisation of the educational academic world, which have developed a division of labour that is based on the radical dissociation of reason and emotion, on the dichotomy of hard research and humanistic reporting, and in unhelpful distinctions such as those made between subject-based as opposed to student-centered teaching.

This peculiar amalgam of doctrines is seen clearly in the present concern with what is known as 'process'. There is currently a great deal of use of this term, for example in phrases such as 'the writing process', 'the reading process' and 'processing information.' Why has the term 'process' become so popular? The answer, I believe, is partly that it is an attempt to psychologize the activities of learning or writing itself, rather than emphasizing the achievements. In other words it has to do with the stressing the means as opposed to the ends of teaching, and in many ways it does reflect a proper interest on the part of teachers with the hows of teaching and learning. But why this particular term, rather than 'activity' or 'procedure'? The answer to that question lies partly in the fact that the term process itself has close affinities with the ideas of motion and growth. The former connotation derives from physics, the latter from biology. However, motion does not require a purposeful human agent and it therefore lacks any measure of volition or will, while the organic metaphor is

equally devoid of human agency. A 'process' in its correct use is a predictable set of operations which, once set in motion can be observed to follow a path of law like regularity. The continued use of this term shows the powerful grip that scientism (the inappropriate application of scientific methodology) still has upon our educational world, and it is ironic that the term is most often used by educators who see themselves as humanistic, child centred, and anti-scientific. The reason for this apparent paradox is that when all knowledge is reduced to the natural sciences any attempt at analysis and generalisation which does not merely reflect the subjective view will look to the language of the natural sciences for its nomenclature. The subjectivist view also often denies the grounding of knowledge in the world of concepts and the importance of some degree of objectivity in language and culture. Words, according to this view, come to mean whatever the reader wishes them to mean, thus a poem, for example, may mean whatever symbolic links the reader wishes forge between it and the total network of human language. But if you abandon the notion that language, at least in some ways, refers to an objective world, separate from the subject, then you begin to float in a sea of indefinites, where anything goes, and solipsism looms on the horizon. To have meaning at all necessitates a certain degree of persistent identity in the objects of discourse. The danger here is that language, cut off from its rational and historical base, becomes merely a free-floating system of signs, which results in the end of meaning, or at least to a regression to scientific jargon.

It seems to me that in order to deal with this situation we must once again raise the question of ends, because in education the end must come first. In this sense education is teleological, a purposeful enterprise not a cause driven one.

Only by truly understanding the teleological nature of education can we fulfill its goal of full human development. In the absence of such understanding we will continue to be debilitated by process or skill talk, or be tempted to throw ourselves in romantic desperation into the arms of the child-centered curriculum. The question is where do we find these educational ends?

In the late Middle Ages, during the Renaissance and for some centuries after, humanistic education looked for its content and its certainty in the writings of the classical world. Today we no longer have the luxury of such a certain canon, and we are, therefore, much more open to doubt about the relative worth of various works. But that does not mean that we as educators must give in to the relativists and sceptics. It is, rather, the prime task of the university to continue the search for a standard, and if it does not, and merely informs its students that man is either the sum of psychological factors or a mysterious romantic beast without a history, then it may be guilty of a grave error.

Another major problem with much of the talk about education today is that it either denies, ignores or fails to make that most important distinction between the natural sciences and history. The failure exists at two levels, in not recognising, first, that while both are human creations, both have an existence independent of individual opinion, and, second, that the object of scientific study lies outside of human achievements while history's lies within it. We as educators must be aware of these distinctions and the central argument of this thesis is that until that is understood and fully applied to the practice of schooling the young, then education cannot take place. In other words, if the key distinction between scientific and human studies is not made and fully understood then it matters not one whit how sophisticated the methodology,

how powerful the computer, how warm the heart or even how finessed the conceptual analysis; education in its liberal sense is impossible. This is the fundamental distinction which must be made prior to all others. Once this is realised then science, history, mathematics and poetry each have a place and a role to play in the educational enterprise. Without this understanding confusion will reign, as it does to a large extent in our schools and universities today. This thesis will attempt to assist in the elucidation of this distinction by studying the concept of history and its concomitant relationship with ideas about various forms of liberal education. In this way it is hoped that the emancipation of teachers from the twin thralls of positivism and sentimentalism will be encouraged.

It is timely to note that this is not a new distinction. In the last century Wilhelm Dilthey amongst others made a distinction of this kind and the two views of the world , he articulated, were known as *Naturwissenschaften*, the natural sciences, and *Geisteswissenschaften,* the sciences of the spirit, or the human sciences. I hope that education, in its search for an alternative to the inappropriate rigour of the scientific method , will consider his work among others in this tradition as an alternative scource of inspiration and direction. The term *Verstehen* , for example, as used in the human sciences, denotes the mode of understanding necessary for the perception of human affairs and implies that humans are to be explained not as organisms motivated by physical causes, but as persons acting from reasons in accordance with fundamental values within the historical context of culture. Humanity is in this sense not determined but free, and one of our most important tasks in schools is not to explain humanity but to justify and understand ourselves, our thoughts

and our actions in terms of this freedom. The *Geisteswissenschaften* explore the concepts and relationships that are integral to this form of understanding, and provide very important reasons for maintaining that education is necessary for the correct perception of the human world. As Scruton (1982) points out, with reference to Dilthey's distinction between humanity and nature,"The human world is a world of significances and no human significance can be fully grasped by scientific abstractions" (p. 128). We can only fully understand human thought when it is seen in its historical, social and cultural context and the study of these must be at the heart of the educational enterprise , and the development of free, responsible, rational beings .

Prior to beginning the main part of the thesis a word perhaps once again about the role of philosophy in this enterprise. Milan Kundera (1986) in his essay "The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes" alludes to what Edward Husserl called the crisis of European humanity.The roots of this crisis according to Husserl lie in the origins of modern thought ,where, as a result of the work of Descartes and Galileo in particular, the world is reduced to a mere object of technical and mathematical investigation. This in turn has led to a situation where over the past one hundred years the rise of the sciences has propelled man into "the tunnels of specialized disciplines" (p. 3). As a result, philosophy which had been born in ancient Greece, "because the passion to know had seized mankind", has in its recent alliance with science put the concrete world of life, "*die Lebenswelt* ... beyond...(its)...horizon" (p. 3). Kundera maintains that man himself has become a thing, and that philosophy and science have forgotten about man's being, that it is the novel which has kept this "passion to know" alive in the modern era and "led it to scrutinize man's concrete life and

protect it against 'the forgetting of being'; to hold 'the world of life' under a permanent light." (p. 5). The question whether philosophy today can return to considering man once more in the fullness of being, or whether it must accept its role as a second order activity. This is particularly important when dealing with questions about the nature of an ethical life, of which philosophy of education is part , because no attempt to answer such questions can rely exclusively on linguistic or second-order inquiry. While, of course, attention must be paid to clarifying concepts and sorting out linguistic confusions, the very nature of the educational enterprise precludes the possibility that any study of it could be justified on these terms alone. A philosophy of education must be concerned with the kind of life we wish to lead as a result of having had an education, and with its effects upon both the individual and society. It must seek to analyse and justify the nature of the educational enterprise and also to envision an ideal of life towards which education moves. In order to escape Kundera's "*whirlpool of reduction*" (p. 17) philosophers of education not only need to look to the novel for guidance but also to history, that other great modern repository of the spirit of human complexity and continuity. True works of philosophy and history, as well the novel, are all enemies of what Kundera calls "the termites of reduction"(p. 17) , the curse of modern society, which "reduces man's life to social function; the history of a people to a small set of events " and social life itself to a political struggle (p. 17). In discussing this issue in the light of Wilhelm Dilthey's use of the term "philosophy of life", H. P. Rickman (1988) quotes a famous line from Goethe's Faust, "Grey is all theory, but green life's golden tree" (p. 132), where green is obviously not just a colour but the symbol for the burgeoning vitality of life. This 'philosophy of life'

Rickman (1988) believes, is part of an attempt to re-awaken one of philosophy's traditional tasks in the service of life. Philosophy

> crystallizes both awareness of ourselves as individuals and consciousness of the problems of our civilization. It tries to provide a grounding for our moral values and places ideals before us. It serves the quest for knowledge by clarifying its presuppositions. It tries to justify our political aspirations and to pinpoint the goals of education. (p. 132.)

Philosophy of education is part of the philosophical study of human life, or what Ernst Cassirer called "philosophical anthropology" and one of its most important tasks is to attempt a clear formulation of what a liberal education means in modern terms, which includes its historic nature. This thesis is a contribution to that task. In the second chapter, the terms 'education', 'culture' and 'history' will be elucidated; it will be followed by three chapters which attempt to explicate and analyse the views of Michael Oakeshott, Paul Hirst, Ernst Cassirer and Wilhelm Dilthey on the nature of education, language, culture and, most importantly, history. The final chapter will also propose some ways in which history and liberal education can fruitfully work in unison.

CHAPTER 2

History, Education and Culture.

Prior to investigating the specific aspects of the ideas of Hirst, Oakeshott, Cassirer and Dilthey it is necessary to look at three important concepts that these writers employ. These are the concepts of 'history', 'education' and 'culture'. My analysis of them will partly be in terms of their logic, partly their use and partly their history. Recognizing that each one of these features is connected we should see them as logically distinguishable facets of each concept and not as completely separable in fact. But first I wish to offer a few preliminary words on the notion of natural science.

There seem to be two dominant conceptions of natural science in educational thought at the present time. One of these Hesse (1972) calls the "traditional empiricist view of natural science" (p. 7), the other the "positivist or instrumentalist view of science." (p. 10). Hesse maintains that on the former view

> it is assumed that the sole basis of scientific knowledge is the *given* in experience, that descriptions of this given are available in a theory - independent and stable language, whether of sense data or of common-sense observation, that theories make no ontological claims about the real world except in so far as thet are reducible to observables, and that causality is reducible to mere external correlations of observables. (p. 7)

The latter view sees science, according to Hesse, "as constituted essentially by accumulating knowledge of phenomena or observables, rather than of the fundamental but hidden nature of things. This is the kind of knowledge that issues in technical application, the cumulative character of which cannot be in doubt." (p. 10). This kind of objective knowledge has, in Hesse's opinion, come

to be identified with instrumental control rather than with theoretical discovery, and is certainly the kind of knowledge which educationalists and others refer to when they make remarks such as: 'Research shows that such and such is the case".This view sees the major problem facing educationalists as one that has to do with an inadequate accumulation of this type of knowledge, and not with an investigation of the nature of knowledge claims. What Hesse (p. 9) refers to as the 'post-empirical 'view of natural science take a much less certain and, technicist view, but a study of the implications of those theories is outside the scope of this thesis.

History

The term 'history' is ambiguous. In particular, today, it sometimes refers to an interpretation of events and sometimes to the events themselves. For most of its life the term has generally been used in the first sense being derived from the Greek *historia* which means 'inquiry' in its primary sense (though from the beginning a secondary sense of 'knowledge obtained' is also recorded) The second meaning is now more common, and when people talk about the "history of Canada" they usually mean the actual events, or thoughts or human affairs that happened within this geographic and political entity called Canada, without any reference to a mode of inquiry or discovery. Similarly, statesmen or generals are often referred to as "makers of history" and journalists and media commentators talk about "history in the making" or "history being made today". History in this sense does not refer to an interpretation of events, but to the actual events themselves.This raises the interesting question of the nature of the unrecorded event, unless one regards any event occurring within the ken of

human consciousness as having in some sense a record. The historian in fact often must infer the existence of such hidden events from the artifacts and records which have survived. This essentialist sense is at times extended to everything that has ever happened in time, not merely to all aspects of human life. In this regard it may be significant that what is now commonly known as science was in the past referred to as natural history. This sense of the term includes everything that can be known but which is not capable of change. Now that modern science has claimed that nothing is absolutely static it is sometimes held that all things are, in this sense, historical. The use of the same term for both the object of study and the method used in studying that object has led to some confusion - in particular the belief that history, as a literary form, is an unmediated reflection of the great mass of events that have happened in the past, and that historians merely have to present the facts as they actually happened. This as we will see is not a possibility, due, in part, to the nature of historical records, but also to the fact that the historian is studying these records in the present, and not at the time in which they occurred. There is also the fact that historical narrative is inherently interpretive, in as much as any record is selective.

Collingwood's (1956) view of history is that "generically it belongs to what we call the sciences: that is, the forms of thought whereby we ask questions and try to answer them" (p. 9). He maintains that science consists in "fastening upon something we do not know, and trying to discover it" (p. 9). In other words, science is finding things out and in that sense history is one of the the sciences. The natural sciences attempt to find out about the natural world, the human sciences and history about the human world. However, in the

natural sciences matter is not confused with physics, rocks with geology, sulfur with chemistry nor frogs with zoology. To even the most confused realist it is evident that cedar trees are not botany, and that the objects of study are separate from the knowledge gained from their study. In the sphere of history this distinction is harder to uphold, not least because we are ourselves historical beings studying history. When we do history we are studying ourselves in a particular kind of way, and Collingwood (1956), for one is of the view that this is what history is 'for ', i.e, for the sake of human self knowledge.

> It is generally thought to be of importance to man that he should know himself: where knowing himself means knowing not his merely personal peculiarities, the things that distinguish him from other men, but his nature as man. (p. 10)

It is here that we have the most fundamental connection between history and liberal education. They are both part of the same enterprise; they both set out to reach the same goals by following the "ancient Greek exhortation, Know Thyself!" (Oakeshott, 1989, p. 28). I would maintain that to set out to educate people is to a great extent to set out to teach them history, for it is not knowledge, per se, that lies at the heart of education, but knowledge of what it is and means to be human. As Collingwood, (1956) puts it,

> Knowing yourself means knowing, first, what it is to be a man; secondly, knowing what it is to be the kind of man you are; and thirdly, knowing what it is to be the kind of man *you* are and nobody else is. Knowing yourself means knowing what you can do; and since nobody knows what he can do until he tries, the only clue to what man can do is what man has done. The value of history, then, is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is. (p. 10).

Any way of schooling that does not incorporate the study of history thus denies its pupils an essential component in understanding what it is to be fully human. Furthermore, any society that has a view of history that sees the answers to historical questions as in some sense pre-determined or merely a question of the application of natural laws denies the inherently free nature of being human; it will in all likelihood, therefore, have schools that are anti-educational.

An important aspect of the history of Western thought, over the past few centuries in particular, has been the struggle for history to become an autonomous field of study, which in many ways parallels the way in which the ideal of a liberal education has fought to resist those who see human beings as merely means and not something to be intrinsically valued. Therefore, in order to understand the necessity of history for education a brief and selective tracing of the history of history is called for.

All societies keep records of some sort to note the passing of time and the occurrence of key events. Some, however, have a different sense of the separation of past and present, that does not incorporate a strong element of succession (Paz, 1967, p. 87), which is a fundamental prerequisite to the development of an historical consciousness. This view of time in our culture began in the ancient world, where, as well as funerary inscriptions, religious and political chronicles were kept that were records of lists of important events that had occurred, e.g. miracles or lists of ruler. For example, in Rome down to the time of the Gracchi (131 B. C.) the pontifex maximus inscribed the year's events upon tablets of wood which were preserved in his official residence and thus came to be a sort of civic history.

However, the true "father of history" is generally recognised as being Herodotus. His fifth century history of the Greek and Persian wars is not merely a record of one city or the story of one hero. The work has a breadth of vision; it gives careful attention to detail as well as being an artistic whole It is significant also that Herodotus was also the first European writer of prose whose work survives in quantity. He begins his history with the following words:

> I am giving the results of my enquiries (historiai), so that the memory of what men have done shall not perish from the world nor their achievements whether Greek or foreigner go unsung; they form my theme, and the cause why they went to war. (Gomme, 1963, p. 512A)

These words have great significance. For Herodotus, it mattered not what city or culture a person came from and thus the concept of man implied here is a universal one. The study of man and his achievements "whether Greek or foreigner" breaks out of the parochial or the tribal view of what constituted being human. This view contains within it a universal view of being human. Furthermore, Herodotus states his history is an attempt to go beneath events, to find what was much later called the hidden aspect of history. When we talk about explanation in history it is not the same as the scientific sense, because it is partly the investigation and recreation of the thoughts that other men have had. This imaginative understanding of other minds, the capacity to interpret the actions of other humans lies at the centre of writing historical narrative. Both historians and natural scientists may do research, but for the historian that is only the precondition for writing history, while for the scientist it is almost everything. In other words, only humans can have a history for as William

Barrett (1987), in his recent study of the idea of soul in modern philosophy,stated:

> the fundamental history of mankind is the history of mind. The human race is unique among the animal species, that it has a history,...only because it has a peculiar organ, the mind, which is able to generate new thoughts and theories, new forms of being, new notes and religion, and new schemes for managing social and political life. Without these transformations of the life of the mind, there would be no history to relate, no story to tell -- only the bare chronicles of repetition. (pp. 53-54)

Thucydides, the greatest of the Greek historians, was the author of the History of the Peloponnesian Wars. His history was an attempt to combine the scientific spirit, that is of finding out what really happened, with an artistic sense which enabled him to cast the material into a true literary form (Marwick, 1989, p. 31). This concern with literary style as well as with truth remains an important aspect of the historian's art to this day, so that even though the works of Gibbon and Carlyle are now seen to contain many inaccuracies they are still read for the beauty of their prose. That does not mean that history is merely literature, for the historian is constrained by the actuality of what happened and must weigh all possible evidence and conflicting accounts before writing his narrative. However it does point out the importance of recognizing the role of the historian's imagination and creativity in the writing of history. The detachment of the best of Greek history from factional interests or tribal loyalty, its commitment to the artistic aspect of history coupled with its desire to set down the truth for future generations has been a model for modern historians, from Ranke to the present day.

If history is not merely literature neither must it lapse into becoming apologetics or political propaganda, and in this regard the Greek historian,

Polybius, commenting on the biased and factional nature of historical writing in the fourth century stated:

> Directly a man assumes the moral attitude of an historian he ought to forget all considerations, such as love of one's friends, hatred of one's enemies. He must sometimes praise enemies and blame friends. For, as a living creature is rendered useless if deprived of its eyes, so if you take truth from History, what is left but an improfitable tale. (Jacob and Shotwell, 1963, p. 594)

The Greek influence on the writing of history continued in the Roman world, but historical writing came more rhetorical and the example set by the Greeks was all but lost, except for the work of a few writers, Sallust and Tacitus for example. In the post classical world, Christian history from the first was also compromised, not by sophistry and bias, but by a philosophy which sought to show that the world had followed a divine plan in its preparation for the life of Christ. This belief in providence, meant that history would be a record of mankind's continued suffering until the divine plan was completed at the day of judgment. This idea received its classic statement in Augustine's City of God, "a work of Christian apologetics portraying the history of the world as the long unfolding of God's will" (Marwick,1989, p. 31).

The study of history emerges during the Renaissance greatly influenced by the rediscovery of Classical texts and the new view of man's place in the cosmos as, if not the centre of the universe then at least not a mere pawn in God's plan. Machiavelli for example, had interests not only in the science of politics but also in man's past (Krieger, 1989, p. 32). The Protestant Reformation brought an increased interest in Biblical texts, partly from a desire to elucidate God's true word and partly from a desire to separate the actual record of events in the New and Old Testaments from later accretions. This led

to increasingly sophisticated philological and interpretive techniques, which in many ways laid the foundations for many of the techniques later used both in academic history and in literary studies. As Cassirer (1950) and others have pointed out the idea of history as the study of universal man did not merely begin with the Romantics, but had already been given considerable attention during the Enlightenment, in the works of Voltaire, Montaigne and Diderot, for example. They, amongst others, while seeing reason as the central feature of man unique nature did not suffer the prejudice of Descartes, who regarded history an unimportant in the search for certainty. In fact, it was the eighteenth century Italian philosopher Vico who in an attempt to counterbalance the geometric theories of the Cartesians proposed another key principle of later historical thought. This was the view that man could only understand truly what he had made; God had created the universe, so man was not able to fully comprehend it; however, man had made history, so this was something that man could comprehend. Man, so to speak had been 'inside' history, therefore, man's actions are all are potentially understandable.

Modern history, however, begins in the early nineteenth century, not only as a result of the growing professional craft of history, but also as an alternative way of understanding and explaining the nature of man. Its roots lay in Germany, and the Prussian historian Leopold von Ranke is credited with being the founder of modern historiography. The historical school that emerged as a result of Ranke's work and the methods and substance of its explanations is still today the most humanistic historical tradition. Ranke saw himself as the conscious pupil of Thucydides and his work represented a desire for a universally explanatory history based on strict empirical methods. This

historical tradition is still the one which has most affinity to the goals and curriculum of a liberal education, as opposed to reductionist or deterministic theories of history. The result of a long history of attempts to free itself from dogmatic influences, this view of history was regarded by Ranke as the reawakening of the spirit of Greek history and the search for a truly human view of ourselves.

We will return to consider the influence of Ranke later. However, first I wish to deal with a number of competing historical theories most of which have emerged during the last century, and which I maintain are deterministic in their explanatory power and not amenable to the ideal of a liberal education. These theories could be categorized in the following way: they seek to reduce the complexity of human history to a simple explanatory set of laws. Ironically one of the results of the failure of such approaches has been a growth of scepticism and pessimism about the past, so that history is often now seen as a mass of unconnected facts following each other with no rhyme or reason. It is surely no coincidence that these deterministic and reductionist theories often bear striking resemblance to the enemies of a liberal education as propounded by Michael Oakeshott (1989) in his essay "Education: the Engagement and its Frustration". H.P. Rickman, in his introduction to Pattern and Meaning in History by Dilthey (1961) notes a number of these historical theories which variously attribute the meaning of history to one of the following: (1) the unfolding of the absolute spirit, (2) the movement of the juggernaut of economic necessity, (3) the ordered life cycles of civilizations, (4) the guiding hand of God, and (5) the inevitable march of progress. To these I would add a sixth, a form of reductionism which is alive and well today and which has its roots in the missapplication of the natural

sciences to the study of the human condition, and is in Dilthey's words the confusion between the *Geist* and *Natur*, between spirit and matter, between history and biology.

The most famous of the deterministic views is found in the metaphysical theory of history associated with Hegel. In Rickman's (1961) words:

> Hegel's philosophy represents the logical opposite to a theory which sees no order in history whatsoever; history, it claims is comprehensible because, in spite of the presence of blind passions and suffering in individuals and groups, the sequence of events represents an intrinsically rational process, the unfolding of the human spirit. (p. 25)

This metaphysical assumption of a pervading rational process, driven by a variation of the Christian God, in one sense denies history. Not only does it lead to a bending of the facts to the plan, it also makes careful painstaking research unnecessary. Both Dilthey and Croce made the point that this view leads to the the death of history and historians. However, as Rickman points out, beneath this metaphysical shell lies a heuristic principle which is applicable to history, and necessary for the historian, for the historian approaches the subject of study, however irrational and fragmented it may seem, with an assumption that it may lend itself to a rational explanation.

Similarly, in his critique of Marxist history, Rickman makes a distinction between the deterministic nature of the whole theory and the contingent and reasonable nature of the part. "Dialectical Materialism ... while departing from the assumption that the historical process was rational in itself, it assumed it to be rationally understandable because it represented an overall pattern governed by the predominance of certain powers" (p. 26). Certainly, historians may take into account economic factors when attempting to explain certain

historical events or decisions, but Marxist historiography over-extends the influence of the forces of production, to the point that they become the dominant reason for all human actions. In fact it makes their influence the most important one when explaining the development of human society. Once again an important heuristic, a significant explanatory approach, has been elevated to the status of the universal explanation.

Since the Second World War, theories of this ilk have come under attack from a number of points of view. In particular, the works of Karl Popper (1964) and Isaiah Berlin (1954) have played a vital role in showing the weaknesses of deterministic history. Popper's term for such absolutist belief in over-arching laws of historical development is 'historicism', which must not to be confused with the term when it is applied to the nineteenth century German school, founded by Ranke, mentioned above. Popper criticizes historicists not only because their claim to reveal the necessity in historical processes undermines the belief in human agency and ingenuity, but also because, he argues, it is a mask for uncritical attachment to a totalitarian ideology which uses the mentality of history as a justification for acts of tyranny and arbitrary violence. He further criticizes the historicists because, by maintaining that history is law-governed and not contingent, they were forced to explain recalcitrant events in terms of those laws, thereby rendering their account of them irrefutable, which empties their explanations of significance.

This charge can also be laid against the third theory, which maintains that the history of mankind consists of successive or overlapping life cycles. This analogy to organic nature implies that civilizations are like the flowers and animals: they grow, flourish and decay. Oswald Spengler (1926) and Arnold

Toynbee (1972) have been the most important proponents of this thesis in this century, and, while their histories are a healthy counterpoint to the narrowness of the monograph approach of much academic writing, they are vulnerable on two accounts. First, on the level of the accuracy of individual or specific facts, and secondly on the basis of the applicability of the analogy. The question may be asked what objective method of determining the age of a civilization exists of the same kind as used to determine the age of a biological being? With a human, behaviour can partly be explained by the age of the person, be he a child or an old man, but that age can be established in a way separate from the behaviours. How does one objectively measure the age of a civilisation? Once more, however, it must be said that Spengler's and Toynbee's approach contains valuable insights, especially in attempting to break the hold of nationalist or specialist history. Their popularity speaks to a desire on the part of modern man to have a long view, to see the vistas of history. In this regard it must be noted that one of the most popular of these world or universal histories has been written not by a historian but by a novelist. H. G. Wells'. The Outline of History, first published in 1919, was still in print in the revised form called A Short History of the World in 1977, many years after Wells' death in 1946.

The fourth theory of history is one which goes back to Augustine, and is based upon the Christian belief that God rules the world and that history is the unfolding of the divine plan. The mind of God is not rationally accessible, as in Hegel, but because God is inscrutable and moves in mysterious ways, it is faith that leads to revelation. This faith will reveal the inner meaning of events rather than an explanation or connection between events. Herbert Butterfield (1949), in his book Christianity and history attempted to show the relevance of divine

providence to historical research, and in his final book The Origins of History (1981), he defends the superiority of the "pious" view over the pagan,

> I have sometimes wondered whether Christianity does not give men a clearer vision of the facts and the factual setting than does the pagan beliefs of either the past or the present often have. In other words, only through Christianity can one acquire a healthy kind of worldly-mindedness. (Butterfield, 1981, p. 198)

His analysis of the "lapsed Christians" and the secularisation of the idea of a providential plan is perceptive and accounts in an important manner for the inclusion of the fifth concept of history as the account of the march of progress. The idea of progress, however, is generally a secular one, and, despite having its roots in the idea of a providence working in a supra-human manner, does not have to account for the Christian concept of sin and the whole difficulty of attributing human disaster to it and the judgement of God. Of late, faith in the ideal of progress,so popular earlier in this century, as seen in the Whig interpretation of history for example, or Manifest Destiny, has suffered real setbacks. J. H. Plumb (1964) amongst others has attempted to reassert the importance of its underlying claim that history is not merely a set of unconnected facts but has a direction, as it is without doubt capable of being shown that someone living in a Western industrial democracy in the late twentieth century is better off than the average fourteenth century peasant, even though better off may merely mean healthier, freer, and better educated.

The idea that one can discover regularities or patterns in history attracted those who were impressed by the success of the natural sciences in classifying, correlating and predicting. H.T. Buckle, in the middle of the last century, sought to make the certainty and generalizing capacity of science applicable to

history. In his view history was merely beginning the journey along the truly scientific path and,

> it follows that if any facts, or class of facts, have not yet been reduced to order, we, so far from pronouncing than to be irreducible, should rather be guided by our experience of the past, and should admit the probability that what we now claim to be inexplicable will at some future time be explained. (Cited in Stern, 1956, p. 125)

Buckle believed that, once historians adopted the methods of statistical science and had accepted their role as natural scientists, then the laws which govern society and human action would be revealed. The foremost exponent of this view of history in the nineteenth century was the French philosopher Auguste Comte. For Comte, as Flew explains, believed that "all genuine human knowledge is contained within the boundaries of science, that is the systematic study of phenomena and the explications of the laws embodied therein" (Flew, 1979, p. 283). The term 'positive' is used to describe this approach, and refers to "knowledge and understanding which confines itself to the actual empirical world and refuses to transcend it in search of hidden causes and final ends" (Scruton, 1982, p. 85). Comte's views were combined with a theory of social evolution that saw man progressing in an evolutionary manner. His influence was extensive and his views affected the writings of Jeremy Bentham, Herbert Spencer and J. S. Mill (Popper, 1957, p. 152). It was through Spencer in particular that positivism and theories of social evolution became influential in American educational thought (Cremin, 1961, p. 92-3). Collingwood (1956), amongst many others, has sought to refute this view of history, by showing that scientific facts are not the same as historical ones, and Popper (1957) has

shown the logical impossibility of certain prediction on the basis of historical facts. This means we must reject the possibility of a theoretical history when that means it would play a role in relation to historical social science that would correspond to the relationship between theoretical physics and the rest of natural science. In Popper's (1957) opinion there can be no scientific theory of historical development serving as a basis for historical prediction (p. vii).

Popper's argument is based on his analysis of the nature of the scientific method; in other words no science can absolutely predict, by its own methods, its own future results. The rejection of the reduction of history to science does not mean either that scientific discoveries cannot assist the historian, (e.g. carbon dating), or that historians do not seek to explain or to generalize from the facts which lie before them. It is just that when we say that a historian explains or generalizes it does not mean that he seeks to establish universal laws of which particular phenomena are instances. As MacIver (1953) points out,

> we contrast the 'generality' of historical statements with the individuality of the facts on which they are based, meaning that they are related to those facts as the general proposition. "I possess some philosophical books" is related to the individual facts (that I in fact have books on Plato, Aristotle and Hobbes).which make it true. (p. 192)

Berlin (1954) also makes the same point, and maintains that the desire to give history the same kind of objectivity as science depends upon a false analogy with the more exact nature of the natural sciences:

> In these last objectivity has a specific meaning. It means that methods and criteria of a less or more precisely defined kind are being used with scrupulous care; and that evidence, arguments, conclusions are formulated in the special terminology invented or employed for the specific purpose of each science and that there is no intrusion (or almost none) of irrelevant considerations, or concepts or questions. (p. 51)

The language of history is also ordinary language except when it deals with highly specialized topics. In history "we explain and elucidate as we explain and elucidate in ordinary life" (Berlin, 1954, p. 51). In fact, even if technical language is needed because the subject under study is esoteric the language of explanation is still that of ordinary speech.

> The central concepts of history -- the ways in which events or situation are 'explained' are shown to be connected or unconnected with each other..the use of such crucial terms as 'because' and 'therefore', 'inevitable' and 'possible' and 'probable', 'surprising' and 'unexpected', 'influential' and 'trivial', 'central' and 'accidental' and so forth, is much the same as that which it has in ordinary non-technical thought and speech. (Berlin, 1954, p. 51)

It is because the central concepts and techniques of history are not a special set of concepts or a special set of techniques that the desire for value free objectivity is not possible. Barzun (1954) argues convincingly that the use of mathematical models has limited use in the writing of history, and may in fact have the distorting effect of equating numbers with exactness and words with inexactitude (p. 25), and he agrees with Berlin who states that this "confusion of the aims and methods of the humane studies with those of the natural sciences ... is one of the greatest and most destructive fallacies of the last hundred years." (Berlin, 1954, p. 53).

The most important view of history which developed in the nineteenth century was one which emerged from the practical work of historians themselves, and attempted to formulate history as an autonomous discipline with its own method and epistemology. This movement is known by a number of names including 'historism', 'historicism' and the 'German school of history'.

It must be made clear that the term 'historicism' when used in this way does not have the same meaning as Karl Popper gives the term in his critique of Marx, Hegel and other determinists. Therefore, when referring to this particular school of history and its traditions, the term 'historism' will be used. The movement developed in Germany during the middle part of the nineteenth century and its founder and most important figure was Leopold Von Ranke. In effect Ranke and his disciples laid the foundations for modern academic historical studies and many of their methods are accepted as commonplace today. These include a commitment to a rigorous scholarship which bases historical accounts on solid evidence from primary sources as well as a rejection of theories of natural law and religion. Instead of accepting these as explanatory possibilities historism claimed that such basic concepts as those of law, religion, morality, man, and many others were themselves subject to historical change.

> The system of nature and history based on non historical criteria such as the divine plan or the moral law were not the only targets of historicist criticism. They also rejected very sharply, in the name of an open-minded empiricism, the superimposition on the historical course of events of any kind of theoretical or metaphysical construction. (Rickman, 1988, p. 21)

Since that time the debate has continued as to the nature of history, but the foundations for its autonomy were laid by Ranke and the historist school However, a number of other phenomena of a broader nature have also emerged during the recent past which have impinged of the relationship between history and society in general. The first is the widely held attitude called 'historical consciousness '; this is what Oakeshott calls the practical view of the past. This developed particularly in the revolutionary and nationalist

movements of the past century as both sought to legitimize their political agendas by the use and manipulation of history. This abuse of history reached its apogee during the twentieth century as totalitarian regimes sought to control the minds of their subjects.

The second phenomenon has its roots in the increased secularization of thought. With the decline in theological explanation for man's origins, an historical one has been seen as a replacement. However, within the Protestant world at least, the importance of Biblical exigesis led to a burgeoning of historical, linguistic and textual studies that laid the foundation for many of the techniques later seen as essential to valid academic historical study. This transformation of history to an academic discipline, despite the fact that some like Buckle argued that it should become a natural science, was one of the most important ways in which the autonomy of history was secured. However, as the focus of studies became narrower and as each individual area of study developed its own methodology, history came to be dominated by specialists for whom success depended not upon a broad vision of Western man but upon the tireless study of sources and the publication of narrow monographs.

The sixth and most successful challenge to the autonomy of history has come from the social sciences, and the variations on the theme of 'new' history reflect the attempts by some historians to accommodate themselves to psychology and statistics. But as Barzun has pointed out in his book Clio and the Doctors (1974), the methods and levels of generality of the social sciences are inimical to the individualistic nature of history's concerns, its writing and its understandings.

A counter force to the desire to see history, or the historical study of man, as a science emanated from the Romantic movement. Romanticism, both in Britain and Continental Europe, saw in the past a golden age where the forces of industrialism, reason and secularism had not yet alienated man from his fellow humans and the cosmos. The novels of Sir Walter Scott are a fine example, and their influence was not restricted to the English speaking world. Ranke, for example, states that it was Scott's novels which originally attracted him to the study of history. In fact, I would maintain that while history is not merely a combination of science and art, or thought and feelings, its importance educationally partly lies in the fact that it approaches the study of man from a standpoint where neither of these two disciplines need be denied. From Romanticism also came the idea that man can know himself not through introspection or empirical study alone, but through the study of history as well. However, it is not a question of adopting a single doctrine, despite the claim of some such as Marxist historians, and despite the fact that today, while there is a broad agreement as to nature of the techniques of the craft, the art of history, the business of creating persuasive and truthful wholes from the myriad of timebound individual events and facts, is still dependent on the individual historian's creative imagination.

However of late, the importance of history has been significantly down played. Hayden White (1978) in his essay "The Burden of History" charts its fall during the twentieth century, from a first order science to a third order one. It is part of the purpose of this thesis to attempt to stem this tide. At a time when notions concerning the death of history are seriously regarded by the powerful and the plebians as a positive sign of the victory for democratic-capitalism, and

the historical view of historians seems to be aligned with out -worn and bankrupt ideologies, this seems a perhaps impossible task. However, it is my contention that history is neither dead nor has it become merely an addendum to social science. History is an important form of knowledge, a serious approach to human studies and, furthermore, a necessary part of any curriculum of schooling that wishes to produce educated persons. It is still a vital, essential aspect of our intellectual and spiritual lives, and no serious attempt to explain or understand the nature of man, no attempt to build and maintain a civilized, decent and free society can occur without continued vigorous historical study and debate. Its contribution to present debates about mind, knowledge and culture is fundamental and many of the present difficulties in these areas, both in a theoretical and practical way, are I would maintain exacerbated by the narrowness of a debate which continues to analyse man in an ahistorical manner. This ahistoricism is also an aspect of the present strong hold that certain psychological and sociological theories have on much educational thought. This grip will not be loosened merely through improved conceptual sophistication or logical analysis, but requires a truly comprehensive vision, incorporating a view of man as a cultural and historical being whose true identify is found in the unfolding of thought, feeling, and will in a temporal setting. Anti-historical and anti-human doctrines cannot be dealt with merely by showing their internal inconsistencies; that is necessary but not enough. What must be shown is that any view of man which merely regards him as a bundle of sensations or as an atomistic individual being 'free' in a world filled with personal choice is not only inadequate, but also counter to a really empirical view of history.

Not that I am denying the importance of science, linguistics, analytical philosophy or art for that matter. What I am saying is that any serious attempt to justify, construct and implement an educational ideal, must have a view of the past, as well as a vision of man that seeks his true nature, and that this is a fundamental prerequisite for such an enterprise. The study of history is a vital part of this, as well as being an essential and autonomous part any curriculum itself.

It is Collingwood (1956) who examines a further aspect of the connection between history and liberal education. This is contained in the concept of human freedom, which is a necessary component in all the variations on the theme of education propounded as worthwhile in this thesis. Animals cannot be educated, but they can be trained. They obviously do have some rudimentary consciousness, but it is one hedged in by the determinants of genetics. In other words they are not free, and unless you are free you cannot be educated. In fact, the whole ethical justification for education, as well as a considerable aspect of the manner in which education must take place is grounded on this principle. Collingwood maintains that the recognition that humans are free is an essential component in the idea of history, and conversely it is the study of history which makes man free. The emergence of history as an autonomous form of thought over the past two hundred years has made the achievement of human freedom a greater possibility. In this sense history has to do with progress and those societies which deny the validity and autonomy of history, deny the freedom inherent in being human. It is also this free aspect of human nature that is a precondition for rationality, so important in the educational

theories of Hirst and Peters, while Oakeshott makes it a fundamental tenet of his view of a liberal education.

Collingwood (1956) maintains that our knowledge that human activity is free has been attained only through our discovery of history. History has escaped from the dominance of natural science and this entails that "the activity by which man builds his own constantly changing historical world is a free activity" (p. 315). This does not mean that man is thereby free to do what he pleases, that is that he is free from constraints, for he is not free to deny the fact that he has appetites, or that he is part of the physical world. Neither is he free from the human world which surrounds him: in fact Collingwood states "there will be no room left for his own activity, unless he can so design this that it will fit into the interstices of the rest" (p. 316). Man is compelled by reason to act and think in certain ways, but this compulsion is a human creation and free from the domination of nature. Collingwood goes on, "the freedom that is found in history consists in the fact that this compulsion is imposed upon the activity of human reason not by anything else, but by itself" (p. 317), because all history is the history of thought, "and when an historian says that a man is in a certain situation this is the same as saying that he thinks he is in this situation" (p. 317). Thus, to Collingwood, man is free from the domination of natural science and this discovery that the men whose action he studies are in this sense free, enables the historian to discover his own freedom. There is an intimate connection between the discovery "(a) that historical thought is free from the dominance of natural science and is an autonomous science", and "(b) that rational activity is free from the domination of nature and builds its own world of affairs " (Collingwood, 1956, p. 318).

Collingwood, also maintains, that these discoveries were the result of the same historical movement which began in the seventeenth century and is continuing today, that has human freedom as its ideal. This desire to envisage human action as free says Collingwood "was bound up with a desire to achieve autonomy for history as the study of human action" (p. 319). In this sense the development of the idea of a liberal education is part of that same movement which conceived of being human as not living in a state determined or constrained by the tutelage of natural science or theological metaphysics, but one in which man is free.

Education.

The range of the use of the concept of education is very broad, but it is probably convenient to divide users into two camps: descriptive and normative. Of course even within these two camps there is again a wide range of uses; but one important criterion for distinguishing the two views is the normative nature of education. Descriptive users tend to be non-normative, merely using it to refer to a broad social or cultural phenomenon, which is often the same as socialization, while normative users see specific values embodied in the concept of education which distinguish it from concepts such as training and indoctrination and general enculturation.

First, therefore, let us look at a number of examples of the descriptive or broad use. The first example shows clearly some of the problems of this kind of use. When one casts one's net very wide one may pull in a whole range of marine life that is not salmon. The important question is intention, does the

fisherman not care about the species or does he merely have an eclectic palate?

In the preface and introduction to Education Change and Society: A Sociology of Canadian Education by Carlton, Colley and Mackinnon (1971), the term 'education' is used to describe a whole raft of phenomena. First, to denote the existence of a practical programme: "The study of education must always take account of some important cultural and historical differences in institutions"(ix). Secondly, the act of teaching: "Education is now not only a matter of technique, it is a mystique [author's emphasis] possessed by initiates." (p. 2). Thirdly, in the introductory chapter the term is used to label a concept within sociology: "Education, if used in the broadest sense refers to any learning experience, and would become synonymous with socialization." (p. 11). However, despite their attempts to use the word in a purely descriptive way the authors finally admit that, "Education it seems, is a hopelessly value-laden term." (p. 11).

For these authors then 'education' can mean a great number of things. It is not differentiated from socialization or from the act of teaching, although on page 11 they maintain that 'education' is restricted to those situations "involving intentionally structured leaning". 'Education' for them can mean advertising, a classroom history lesson, Sunday school teaching, humanist education, and Federal Government anti-smoking campaigns. Any finer definition is rejected, "it may be futile to pursue any finer delineation of education as a sub-category of socialization". Finally, a consensus definition is given of 'education' as "any large-scale and persistent organized effort of a group to communicate its customs, and values." (p. 11). So presumably 'education' is the way any group,

be they Hell's Angels, Trappist monks, or Ancient Greeks, passes on its 'culture', i.e, how they make initiates in their own image. The authors further consolidate this view: "The educational process is a person-making process: each of us is what society has formed out of our undifferentiated and malleable capacities." (p. 12).

This broad use of the term 'education' fails to differentiate it from terms like 'socializing', 'enculturation', 'inculcation' and 'initiation'. For example George D. Spindler in an article entitled,"The Transmission of Culture" (1974), talks about "The educational functions that are carried out by initiation rites in many cultures" (p. 279), and claims that "the major functions of education are recruitment and maintenance of established cultures" (p. 279). The problem with the use of the term 'education' in this way is its vagueness and its instability.

Robert J. Nash, in an article called "The Convergence of Anthropology and education" (1974), reviews the ideas of nine anthropologists "who have expressed a concern about education", including Boas, Benedict, Mead, Kluckholm, and Montagu. Their uses of the term education vary widely, but all see education as part of culture, e.g., "the very foundation of a healthy democracy" (p. 19); as a transformative force for improving a lot of humankind (p. 19); as part of a dynamic concept of child rearing (p. 19), as part of the broad process of enculturation (p. 19).

The author summarizes these common uses in the following way:

> Generally, all have dealt with the following problem areas in education: personality development, learning theory, the transmission of values, the transmission of the cultural heritage, communications among students, parents, teachers, and administrators, social structure and function, role

> behaviour, ethnocentrism, universal and relative values, pattern, configuration and race. (Nash, 1974, p. 9)

So it is evident that thinkers looking at education from a social science standpoint have a view of it which is very broad indeed. They see it as something that exists in primitive societies and industrial societies equally, and that can cover a wide variety of human activities and experiences from the cradle to the grave, and from the cognitive to the affective. However, if there is a commonality it is that this rather vague concept which exists within and yet separate from socializing and enculturation is an important yet not well defined phenomenon.

Those who view education as a normative concept are obviously concerned to analyze it in terms of defensible values. This kind of view, what Hamm (1990) calls the general enlightenment view, is put forward most often by philosophers of education of a liberal persuasion such as Peters, Hirst, Kazepides and Barrow. Peters (1961) maintains explicitly that, education implies that something worthwhile is being done, and that it is from the norms in question that the aims of education are deduced. He poses the question of what constitutes an educated man? How does one distinguish such a person from one who is merely trained, informed, or indoctrinated? Now this point is crucial, because in many of the examples of the use of 'education' given earlier these distinctions were not made. The criteria that Peters(1966) maintains are implicit in central cases of 'education' are as follows:

> i.that 'education' implies the transmission of what is worth-while to those who become committed to it;
> ii.that 'education' must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective, which are not inert;

> iii.that 'education' at least rules out some procedures of transmission on the grounds that they lack wittingness and voluntariness, on the part of the learner. (p.22)

The application of these criteria would rule out many of the references made by the sociologists and anthropologists. These criteria also imply a situation in which the individual consciously and voluntarily develops his knowledge and understanding of the world. To be involved with this, Peters (1966) maintains, is a transformative process, "for it is by education that mere living is transformed into a quality of life". But this implies no single end, as is often found in training; in Peter's words, "to be educated is not to have arrived at a destination; it is to travel with a different view" (p. 8). This does not mean, however, that the individual can choose 'bingo and billiards' and still be educated, for not all desirable things have educational value.

Peters further develops the concept of education in a collaborative work with Paul Hirst called The Logic of Education (1970). Education is the acquisition of what they call "modes of experience or forms of knowledge" (p. 64), which they maintain are philosophy, literature and the fine arts, physical science, mathematics, morals and interpersonal understanding. Hirst maintains that these forms have their own distinct concepts, their own logical structure and their own distinctive methods for testing the truth of their claims. Thus, there are logical limits on what we term 'education' inherent in the concept. So therefore, when we say that someone is an 'educated' man, or that a society 'educates' its young in schools, we are referring to a breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding which is provided by these forms. This has obvious implications for the relationship between education and culture. It is now no longer a general term for the process of fitting people into a society, but has a specific

normative meaning. It is a phenomenon which in itself will impinge upon the nature of the culture which embodies it, and thereby change the concept 'culture' as well. That is, if it is a central and not peripheral part of a culture.

The two other philosophers mentioned do not essentially contradict the central ideas of Hirst and Peters. Robin Barrow (1981) is critical of the divisions of the forms of knowledge, and seeks to define the educated man in less rigid terms, maintaining that to call someone an educated man means that that person must "have some awareness of our place in the totality ... an awareness of the cultural and historical traditions to which we belong". He is one "who appreciates and is alert to people as individuals and to the power of individuality", one who will be able "to distinguish logically distinct kinds of questions" and have the "ability to think, in terms of precise and specific concepts rather than blurred or general ones."(Barrow,1981, p. 43). But, despite Barrow's misgivings about some of the details of Hirst and Peters' thesis there is nothing in his work that would contradict the essence of it. Barrow also carefully distinguishes education from socialization, indoctrination, health, vocational preparation and the development of emotional maturity. He denies that education is 'useful' if by useful what is meant is things like "increasing the labour force", boosting "the Gross National Product", or making sure that "there are enough dentists for the coming decade" (p. 48). Education, in his view, is not supposed to be useful in this way any more than art is, and it is "something that we provide because we believe it is valuable to be educated, just as it is valuable to be beautiful." (p. 48). However, Barrow does recognize that education can be regarded as useful, but in a much more fundamental sense than alluded to above, "education being what it is, to open democratic societies

with goals of truth and national decision-making, educated people are obviously very useful and uneducated people are a considerable nuisance." (p. 48). Whether or not educated people are merely "useful" to a democracy, or whether they are vital to its success, opens up a question germaine to the relationship between our present day culture and education. For surely a democratic society needs an educated citizenry because of the complexity of the decisions to be made and without it a democracy becomes merely a "mobocracy" (Adler, 1981, p. 2). It may also be significant to note that the concepts of education and culture, fused in the Greek notion of *paideia* emerged in the ancient Hellenic world at the same time as did the concept of democratic government.

Tasos Kazepides (1982) brings us nearer to this connection between the concepts of 'education' and 'culture'. He roots his definition firmly in the Hellenic tradition: "our concept of education has a very long and distinguished history; its origins go all the way back to our intellectual forebears, the Presocratic philosophers" (Kazepides, 1982, p. 156). Kazepides maintains that education emerges as a natural part of a culture which discovered "the human mind as a unique and powerful organizing and creating force in the universe, and maintains that no Gods but man is the measure of all things" (p. 156).

He further maintains that "our concept of education emerged out of these momentous intellectual achievements and changes in outlook, and refers to their unique formative powers for the development of the human mind". (p. 156). Education takes place only within this tradition, according to Kazepides, for "before these discoveries or outside such discoveries there cannot be any talk about education". The value is that it not only introduces the

young into "the established content and methodology of the various forms of knowledge and understanding" but to the supreme importance of "truth". Furthermore, this "pursuit of truth" is inseparable from the principles of respect for evidence and sound argument, freedom of thought, consistency, and clarity.(p. 156). Kazepides also rejects all other uses of the term education as not worthy of discussion, as he reiterates Peters and Hirst's central claim that "'education' is inseparable from knowledge and understanding". Thus Kazepides grounds the concept of education as central to the world view of Western Civilization, at least in its Hellenic stream.

How do the descriptive and normative views of education compare? Certainly the philosophers of education would see the sociologist as being at best over-enthusiastic and at the worst careless, and the first group would probably categorize the second as being rigid and ethnocentric. It would certainly seem that the users of the descriptive definition of education tend to take a relativistic view of culture, and sub-cultures.

A real problem, one clarified by Scheffler (1967), is that unless comprehensive descriptive definitions are outlined, or stipulative intentions stated or programmatic motives made clear, then there is the danger of what he calls overlapping between types of definition. One sees this in particular in the Carlton, Colley and Mackinnon paper where the first use is programmatic, the second stipulative and subsequent ones descriptive terms. Certainly one defence of the rigour which Peters, Hirst et al. bring to their discourse is the fact that the reader is clear about what they mean; because their use is relatively specific. One does not have to agree with them, but at least one knows what one is disagreeing with. Their concern is different from that of social scientists.

These philosophers, rightly in my opinion, find the descriptive definitions of education useless for answering the practical question "How shall I educate my child?", partly because of their generality and partly because they may enshrine unacceptable values.

Culture.

The problems faced in arriving at a definition of the term 'culture 'are similar to the ones we faced when defining 'education'. However, one problem which is easily tackled is the distinction between the use of the term 'culture' to refer to a scientific or agricultural practice and its use to refer to a manifestation of human society. It goes without saying that only the latter meaning is of interest to us in this paper.

Before continuing it may well be advantageous to distinguish the term 'culture' from the terms 'society' and 'civilization'. In common usage we do distinguish them, especially when used in relation to the word 'man'. Is 'a cultured man' the same as a 'socialized man' or a 'civilized man'? First, when we use the phrase 'to be cultured' or 'to be civilized' in this way we imply some standards or other, and this raises the need to judge these standards. However, 'to be socialized' is merely to be part of a society. It does not imply awareness of this state in the same way as the other states do. For surely it is not possible for a person to be cultured or civilized and not know it. Whereas people can be socialized, or partly socialized, in the absence of self consciousness, as in the case of a young child for example. For our purposes we can regard 'civilization' and 'culture' as synonymous, despite the fact that some historians, Toynbee (1972) in particular, do make the distinction. One

also may look at the etymology of 'civil' and see its origins in ancient city state from which *paideia* sprung. Marrou (1956) maintains that the distinctive character of Hellenic civilization, is the civilization of *paideia* "coming between the civilization of the ancient city ... the polis ... and the civilization of the city of God ... the Theopolis." (p. 143).

The concept of 'education' has like the concept 'culture' a wide variety of uses including both the normative and non-normative types found in the literature of sociology and anthropology. For example, George D. Spindler in his article "The Transmission of Culture" (1974) talks about culture in terms of both the educational functions that are carried out by initiation rites in many cultures and the major functions of the physical artifacts of a group of people; he suggests that it is "a conceptual abstraction that helps us analyze individual human behaviour as that behaviour is shared among groups" (p. 279). This modern notion of the term, meaning objective data about the way of life prevailing in any particular society, stems from a book written in 1871 by Edward B. Tylor called Primitive culture. In the first sentence he propounds a definition which even today is the starting point for the more extensive treatments by anthropologists. "Culture or Civilization" he says "is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (quoted in Brameld, 1957, pp. 6-7). However, note that while this early modern definition contains a normative element which is missing in its later more scientific uses, it reflects the Classical idea of culture as the conscious ideal of human perfection. As mentioned above, in ancient Greece the concepts of education and of culture were inseparably fused in the word *paideia* , which also contained the

concept of *arete* or excellence, as pointed out by Jaeger (1982, p. 417). *Paideia* implies the results of an educational effort to realize even more perfectly the human ideal or the mind of a man who has become truly a man. As H. I. Marrou (1956) notes "it is a striking fact that when, later, Varro and Cicero had to translate *paideia* into Latin they used the word *humanitas* " (p. 142).

This normative sense of culture refering to the cultivation of the graces of learning and gentility has survived to this day in the meaning of 'culture' which is implied when we talk about "a cultured person", without using it pejoratively of course. On the other hand the definition of culture as used in sociology and anthropological, sees education as being all the ways in which children are fitted into the culture which surrounds them. This does not necessarily imply any specific value; it is merely functional; it is what societies do to their young to socialize them regardless of value. The Classical view, however, sees education as an absolutely integral part of culture which encourages and inculcates in the individual the highest ideals of our traditions. In fact, Marrou (1956) points out that the French and English usage of 'culture' has "a pronounced personalist tinge" (p. 142), which is the exact opposite of any collective idea of civilization. He traces this back to the Greek ideal of a personal life which began in the Greek city states and was spread abroad both by the Alexandrian conquests and the Latin empires. It became an the essential ideal of classical education, which despite the barbarian invasions and Christianity, survived in a form that made Western man the heir to the old classicism (Marrou, 1956, p. 465). Therefore, in attempting to define culture, we see that it is in its normative form quite strongly connected with the concept of

education. The question for those wishing to propose the adoption of a liberal education today is whether these concepts of *paideia* and *arete*, the intellectualized ideals of a Greek city state which fuse culture and education, can provide some model to be followed.

Education and Culture.

We have seen that the ancient Greek concepts of education and culture were linked very closely in the term paideia, "Culture was for the Greeks the original creation and original formation of human character" (Jaeger, 1982, p. 274). The ideal of this character was the highest achievement possible to man, which in the fifth century meant a genuine intellectual and spiritual culture. Jaeger contends that the discovery of the educational technique, was one of the greatest discoveries which the mind of man has ever made. Mind, needed development not only so that humans could lead the good life; or attain some state of metaphysical perfection, but because it could apprehend the hidden law of its own structure.

This idea is of course still vital today. Earlier in this chapter we saw that Kazepides connects education historically in this way to the intellectual discoveries of the Presocratic philosophers; and also contends, in agreement with Hirst and Peters that the central uses of 'education' are inseparable from 'knowledge' and 'understanding'. Hirst (1974b) tries to free *paideia* from its ancient cultural and metaphysical connections when applied to the present day. He distinguishes between its historical roots and its logical form, and sees education as a valuable activity because of its relation to knowledge and

understanding. It can be explained and justified in epistemological terms without any need for metaphysics or history (pp. 30-32).

However, there is something of a sense of loss, when we drop the ideals of man incorporated in *paideia*, or at least try to dismiss them. Surely it is a worthy question to ask 'What is the good life?", and to discuss the idea of the perfectibility in man. The anthropologists and sociologists are more intent on description and classification rather than on evaluation. Their findings may be significant, but the way in which they use the terms 'education' and 'culture' make the use of their findings for educators of limited value. The other thinkers, Marrou, Jaeger and Paul Hirst for example, based their use of these terms on historical precedent and logical analysis respectively. Whether they are any more useful than the anthropologists to policy makers is open to question. Certainly, they are in one sense; that is the clarity, care and rational nature of their conclusions make their definitions very valuable 'tools' to think with. You know it is a chisel in your hand, and not simply a tool of some sort. But more important are the implications that the ideas expressed by these thinkers have for the present relation between education and culture for a democratic society. One of the implications is that any attempt at defining a liberal education will require that concepts such as 'culture' and 'history' not only be rigorously analyzed, but also be rooted in the highest ideal of man. This ideal cannot be found from science, but it can be discovered in history, while philosophy can assist in its clear and critical exposition.

CHAPTER 3

Michael Oakeshott:

Liberal Education : its Enemies and Allies

The British philosopher Michael Oakeshott is one who has written extensively about both history and education, and perhaps because of this his views do not suffer from the narrowness found in some philosophy. The stress he places on the role of culture, history and human freedom in any view of a liberal education is one of great interest. He in no way plays down the vital part that intellectual matters play in any concept of a liberating education, it is just that he is much more willing to include concepts such as will, feeling and freedom as necessary parts of his definition. Because of this and also because of his extensive critique of contemporary anti-educational forces in our society his analysis is one which is more fully human than for example Hirst's.

A fundamental concept for Oakeshott (1989) is what he calls "a free man". A human is free in the sense of not being wholly determined as other inhabitants of the world of nature are. This freedom lies at the heart of our self awareness and is not something which we can be rid of without ceasing to be human. We are aware of being human and have the capacity to make utterances expressing an understanding of this fact. Oakeshott maintains that whether any particular individual utterance of this type is true or false is of no matter, because in principle they postulate "a man who is something besides what these, or any other statements, allege him to be. They postulate what I shall call a free man" (p. 18). In other words, what this means is that man has mind.

To Oakeshott man is not merely a physical being and nor is mind that ghost in the meat machine left over when the geneticists and bio-chemists have finished their investigations; it is what does the investigating. It is made up of:

> perceptions, recognitions, thoughts of all kinds; of emotions, sentiments, affections, deliberations and purposes, and of actions which are responses to what is understood to be going on. It is the author not only of the intelligible world in which a human being lives but also of the self-conscious relationship to that world, a self-consciousness which may rise to the condition of self understanding. (p. 19)

For Oakeshott the 'freedom' of a human being is not merely restricted to his capacity to make statements expressing his understanding of himself, it also resides in his realisation that the world is for him what he understands it to be, as he is what he understands himself to be,"a human being is 'free', not because he has 'free will', but because *he* is in himself what he is *for* himself." (p. 19). Man cannot deny this fact of the human condition, in fact the very act of contemplating its denial, any attempt to escape from the possibility of not being capable of error or wrong doing shows its impossibility, because it is the only the mind that can regret having to think. There is no going back to Eden, and despite the fact that we are thrown into the world at birth there is a price that has to be paid for this freedom, and, according to Oakeshott, that price is learning. He maintains that we cannot shirk this responsibility, even if we wanted to, because learning is a necessary component of being human. As he puts it,

> What distinguishes a human being, indeed what constitutes a human being, is not merely his having to think, but his thoughts, his beliefs, doubts, understandings,his awareness of his own ignorance, his wants, preferences, choices, sentiments, emotions, purposes, and his expression of them in utterances or actions which have meanings;.and a necessary condition of all or any of this is that he must have *learned* it.

> The price of the intelligent activity which constitutes being human is learning. (p. 20)

This learning is something which we can only do for ourselves; we each have our own self enacted history, "and the expression 'human nature' stands only for our common and inescapable engagement: to become by learning" (p. 21). The world must be learned and much of what must be learned has to do with the satisfaction of human wants and social order in the form of particular skills, instrumental practices and human relationships. The particular kind of learning, however, that we as educators wish to explore is not of this kind but one that has to do with learning to understand ourselves. Oakeshott sees this as an adventure in human self-understanding and the actual enquiries, utterances and actions in which human beings have expressed their understanding of the human condition "has come to called a 'liberal' education- 'liberal' because it is liberated from the distracted business of satisfying contingent wants" (p. 28).

Oakeshott sees this adventure as one that the individual person will find very difficult to pursue in isolation. It is not good enough just going off to the bookstore and buying a do-it-yourself book on introspection and then navel gazing. By the same token those teachers who wish their pupils to develop self knowledge by getting them to brainstorm all that they know about themselves are equally misguided, because "human self understanding is, then, inseparable from learning to participate in what is called 'culture'."(p. 28). Not that culture pre-determines human life, neither is it a set of doctrines or teachings which must be learned and followed; it is that which is learned in everything we may learn. Also, despite its contingent and historic nature, a culture does represent a continuity of thoughts, many of which are not only

going off in different directions but are critical of each other. This is particularly so in the history of Western culture which to Oakeshott "accommodates not only the lyre of Apollo but the pipes of Pan, the call of the wild; not only the poet but also the physicist; not only the majestic metropolis of Augustinian theology but also the 'green-wood' of Franciscan Christianity" (p. 29).

We learn about this great adventure by engaging in what Oakeshott calls a 'conversational encounter'. This idea of a conversation, the flow back and forth between an individual and culture figures prominently in his concept of a liberal education. Oakeshott calls Hirst's 'forms of knowledge', more appropriately in my opinion, 'languages of understanding'. These 'languages' contain sub-categories, such as "the language of the natural sciences, ... the language of history, the language of philosophy or the language of poetic imagination" (p. 37). These component inquiries, however, while having substantive differences do have, according to Oakeshott a common formal character,

> Languages in a more commonplace sense are organizations of grammatical and syntactical considerations or rules to be taken account of and subscribed to in making utterances. These considerations do not determine the utterances made or even exactly how they shall be subscribed to; that is left to the speaker who not only has something of his own to say but may also have a style of his own. (p. 37)

Thus to be able to speak in these particular modes of understanding requires an inventive engagement on the part of the individual, but the speaker must also learn the particular conditions each language imposes on his utterances. It is not necessarily originality which is important here, but learning to make

utterances that display genuine understanding of the language spoken, because in Oakeshott's words,

> each of these languages constitutes the terms of a distinct conditional understanding of the world and a similarly distinct idiom of self-understanding. Their virtue is to be different from one another and his difference is intrinsic. Each is secure in its autonomy so long as it knows and remains faithful to itself. (p. 38)

Furthermore, because these languages have a long history they cannot be learned merely through attending either to their formal qualities or to contemporary utterances (p.38). Neither do they represent some underlying unconditional world view that can be obtained through integrating them; they can only be joined, in Oakeshott's view, in a conversation. This concept of languages of understanding holds within it not merely some sense of the diverse nature of knowledge, but also some indication of the manner in which a person may acquires them; i.e. through a conversation with the world, both natural and cultural. This concept is also a potentially useful pedagogic one for those teachers who wish to encourage liberal learning, which recognizes that there are "some specific invitations to encounter particular adventures in human self-understanding" (p. 29). The specific invitations this thesis is interested in constitute a liberal education. For Oakeshott liberal learning is above all else,

> an education in imagination, an initiation into the art of this conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices; to distinguish their different modes of utterance, to acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to this conversational relationship and thus to make our *debut dans la vie humaine*. (p. 39)

As pointed out in the previous chapter this invitation has not only a particular logic to it but also a long and distinguished career. It has not always been regarded as the most important invitation, in fact it may once again be being ignored as a more instrumental view of learning becomes socially and politically dominant. However, it has emerged time and again in various guises as the prime engagement of the human mind, even in the face of poverty and adversity. It is ironic that today it should once again be so under attack in societies which unlike most that do and have existed are capable of providing for all their citizens the opportunity to enter fully into this conversation.

In his essay "Education: the Engagement and its Frustration", published in his 1989 collection of essays called The Voice of Liberal Learning, Oakeshott outlines some of those forces at present at work which are endangering liberal education. While schools may have, in the present day many other roles, too many here to enumerate, their primary one, for Oakeshott, is that they are places where children are presented with the invitation to liberal learning; that is, the invitation to disentangle oneself, for a time, from the urgencies of the here and now, and to listen to that conversation in which human beings have since the Greeks, attempted to understand themselves.

> Education is not learning to do *this* or *that* more proficiently; it is acquiring in some measure an understanding of a human condition in which the 'fact of life' is continuously illuminated by a 'quality of life'. It is a learning how to be at once an autonomous and civilized subscriber to a human life. (Oakeshott, 1989, p. 71)

Education, for Oakeshott is an intrinsically worthwhile activity, because

"it does not equip the newcomer to do anything specific, it gives him no particular skill; it promises no material advantage over other men, and it points to no finally perfect human character" (p. 70). It provides through a conversation both with the present languages of understanding and the historical record of other attempts to understand the world a level of self-knowledge which cannot be obtained through a more instrumental approach.

This view of learning, of a certain transaction between the generations, is at present under attack and Oakeshott (1989) critiques two of these whose "common enterprise is to substitute for education some other and almost totally different idea of apprenticeship to adult life, and for 'School' some other and almost totally different practice of initiation" (p. 71). The first of these anti-educational doctrines is what has been called 'child centred' schooling. This is aptly summarized in the phrase 'We teach children, not subjects'. As Israel Scheffler (1960) has pointed out this is an educational slogan, and he states that "slogans provide rallying symbols of the key ideas and attitudes of movements, ideas, and attitudes that may be more fully and literally expressed elsewhere" (Scheffler, 1960, p. 36). Slogans are unsystematic and are not important expositions of educational theories, and yet as Scheffler (1960) points out, over a period of time they tend to come to be taken literally, and have a great effect on actual practices. He also warns how, in the case of this particular slogan, it began as a way of stressing the importance of the child in the teaching triad and has ended up as being taken as a literal definition for education. The difficulty with this type of slogan emerges when one considers the meaning of the verb 'to teach' as used in the following sentence, "I am teaching my son, but I am not teaching him anything.". This is does not make sense and shows the

person does not understand what the verb 'to teach' means. However, as Oakeshott (1989) points out, the slogan has become an operational doctrine, one which is potentially crippling for the school as an educational institution, "in short, 'school' is to be corrupted by having imposed upon it the characteristics of an indifferent kindergarten: 'Secondary schools' it is announced, 'will follow the lead already taken by primary school' " (p. 73). The historic inheritances of human understandings and imaginings are banished, because the child if subjected to these will be "condemned to a prison-like existence in cell-like classrooms" (p. 73), and will have his individuality destroyed and his interests ignored. This doctrine that worships the child and banishes subjects is in Oakeshott's opinion not caused merely by a naive belief that children if left alone will independently discover this inheritance, but also by two other factors. Both of these are, ironically, as much part of Western tradition as that of liberal education, and come from on the one hand the romantic tradition and on the other from positivism.

The romantic view is one which is propounded by those who regard the inheritance of human understandings as an insufferable burden. This desire for blessed innocence, according to Oakeshott, is an illusion which could never itself be a reason for abolishing education, because

> what is being celebrated here ...(is) a sentiment which is one of the most moving and most delicate components of our inheritance of human understanding: that tender nostalgia at the heart of all European poetry that image of impossible release, which we encounter only in being educated. (p. 74)

The positivist view, which has down the years combined with pragmatic and instrumental ideas of knowledge, maintains that that traditional content

should be abolished because the only significant inheritance we have (namely, that which is called 'scientific knowledge') is both so recent and in process of such rapid transformation that to cram children with this formal body of knowledge, which will quickly become outdated,is clearly a lost endeavour. This view is often accompanied by talk about the volatile nature of contemporary knowledge and uses slogans Is such as 'the rapid nature of change', 'schooling for the twenty first century', and 'today's information society'. Oakeshott summarizes these views in the following way,

> yesterday's frontier of knowledge is tomorrow's rubbish-dump of ideas, when we are in the middle of a technological revolution whose skills and standards of conduct are evanescent, there is no room for learning which is not 'creative enquiry' or for 'education' which is not an engagement to solve a technological problem. (p. 74)

Oakeshott maintains that this view of education as an apprenticeship for adult life that stresses the activity of discovery of concrete things, as opposed to words, began with Francis Bacon, and points out that it contains a view that knowledge derives solely from the experience and observation of things. Information replaces all other focuses of knowing, and even the understanding of the human mind is reduced to knowledge of 'psychological processes'. Things, it is maintained, exist prior to words, and words distort man's capacity to grasp information locked in these things. This sensualist/empirical view is one that has had a great deal of influence on progressive educational ideas, especially in the United States, and the slogan "Things, not words" epitomizes it. Language is viewed as either a code which people create and use in order to make their own world, or as an instrument which conveys what can be usefully gleaned from experience, so as to become more efficient. Its role as a

living repository of traditional understanding is regarded with extreme suspicion and knowledge is identified with that which is most immediately useful in the world. The most powerful exponent of this view in the twentieth century was John Dewey and, while his views were to some extent distorted by his followers, the effect of his exposition of such pragmatic views of knowledge and man is still deeply felt in most North American thinking about schooling. It should be noted that two of the most influential theorists in mainstream North American curriculum thought today - Benjamin Bloom and Ralph Tyler- both at one time worked with and were heavily influenced by Dewey.

These doctrines, Oakeshott maintains, stand not

> for a transaction between generations of human beings in which the newcomer was initiated into an inheritance of human understandings, sentiments, imaginings and so forth, but for a release from all this in which he acquired 'objective' knowledge of the workings of a 'natural' world of uncontaminated 'things' and 'laws'. (p. 76)

Thus the first threat, or frustration as Oakeshott it, to educational engagement can be seen as a combination of romantic and positivistic views of man, which despite their containing numerous contradictions, nevertheless imbue a great deal of so-called educational thought. One has only to read the recently published document from the British Columbia Ministry of Education called Year 2000 (1989) to see that. The combined stress on child-centred, skill-based, generic learning, and its emphasis on discovery and cooperative learning shows that this twin tradition is alive and well.The document, and in particular the Ministry of Education mission statement, which states that the purpose of the school system is to "assist learners to acquire the knowledge, skills, and

attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy" (p. 7), also introduces the last member of Oakeshott anti-educational movements. This is what he calls the move to replace education with socializing. No longer is it the child's needs or experience that guide the curriculum, but the needs of society, in this case a view of what industrial society today represents. Schooling in these terms is seen as a good investment and children as a potentially valuable resource akin to copper or corn. What is desired as an outcome, by this approach, are people designed and trained to fit into industrial life. People thus become means and not ends in themselves. This view according to Oakeshott may, however, not deny that there exist,

> a considerable inheritance of human understandings, sentiments, beliefs, etc. in terms of which a newcomer might be released from the grip of his immediate world and come to understand and identify himself as a civilized human being aware of standards of excellence in thought and conduct little or not at all reflected in the current enterprises and activities of that world. (p. 78)

It would maintain that the encouragement of this identity is for most people socially dangerous, because it distracts them from the ordinary business of life This view could be categorized as one that sees the deeper, richer aspects of human understanding as unnecessary if a person is merely to be a worker or peasant. Its influence can be seen wherever schooling systems are meant merely to train and socialize most people with the skills and beliefs necessary for a life of work. In British Columbia this can be seen in subjects such as Communication 11 and 12, where certain students are chosen to be trained in those language skills necessary for local and present social life, and are denied

a chance to engage in a serious conversation with literature. It is today given form in the various strands that have appeared in the secondary component of the Year 2000 curriculum proposals.

Oakeshott outlines the European heritage of this substitution of socialization for education and connects it with the class structure of European life. However, it must be pointed out that it has an equally important history in the United States. This is epitomized in the report of the NEA Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (1918), which in many ways laid the foundation for modern secondary schooling in the U.S. This document, Cremin (1961) maintains, "pronounced health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home, membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure and ethical character as the seven 'main objectives' of American secondary education" (p. 93). Today this substitution of socialization for education is continuing to proceed. Again with reference to the Year 2000 document, despite a brief sop to the idea of the intellectual curriculum its intent as far as the secondary curriculum is concerned, appears to be primarily instrumental. Schools exist, in great part, so that the province will continue to receive a supply of well adjusted, highly trained individuals who will be able to contribute primarily to a sustainable economic base.

Oakeshott's opposition to the forces frustrating education involves maintaining the vital importance of the intrinsic good for individuals of an education per se. as opposed to any reduction to sentimental, social, or scientific ends. The sentimentalists see the child as having some potential that merely needs certain environmental factors organized so as to allow it to 'grow'. Their debt to certain aspects of Romanticism is evident, and their belief that

tradition and culture are a prison from which children must be forced if they are to develop to their full potential harks back to the romantic idea of the noble savage. Our past is either evil, irrelevant, or elitist and if a new Eden is to be created on earth man must begin again from scratch. History is particularly to be expunged from what the child needs to learn. The traditions - literary, philosophical and religious - which are embedded in our language must be hidden from the child, lest they become corrupted. One modern variant of this view is a certain kind of relativism where Western thought is seen as merely one tradition in a world full of competing cultures, and to teach within or about the West is to be guilty of a form of 'cultural imperialism'. The problem is that the business of selecting from the competing traditions or cultures, and of determining what aspects of them should then be included in the educational curriculum, can only seriously be raised by using criteria already part of a Western world view.

The positivistic reduction of all knowledge to scientific thought is also prevalent in contemporary educational thought. This is particularly damaging when not only is the knowledge to be studied reduced to that capable of being verified by the scientific method, but when the whole concept of mind and learning is based upon reductionist behaviouristic psychological theories of mind as well. Thus content-less, value free processes are seen as being the meat of the school curriculum. Students are to be taught how to think, detached from what they are thinking about. This can seen in the stress on programs such as teaching for thinking and the stress on thinking skills and problem solving. The fact that this view is not only a caricature of what science is all

about but that it also potentially excludes great areas of human thought, like morality and aesthetics, is ignored.

The contribution to the contemporary scene of these views is one which has so dominated the talk about school that it is not possible to enter into a discussion about education today without having to deal with a morass of slogans, metaphors and problematic claims, terms such as 'child-centred', 'experience', 'discovery learning', 'growth' are but a few of these uncritically accepted dogmas which masquerade as educational thought.

The instrumentalist view which sees schools as preparing children for narrow commercial or social ends is also one which today has greater currency, (Bailey in Entwistle, 1990, p. 52). Large areas of the curriculum, even ones which are not directly designed to teach children marketable or communication skills such as art or literature classes, are nevertheless justified on the grounds that they give children a start towards career goals. The sciences, mathematics and modern languages are also examples of subject areas which have taken on an even greater instrumental tone. It is also interesting to question the motives behind the recent growth in French language immersion schools. Are they supported, in particular by the middle class, because students will become immersed in the literary traditions of French culture? Do parents want their children to be fluent in French so that they can read and understand Moliere or Flaubert, or so that they will be eligible to enter the federal civil service?

Oakeshott's critique of these enemies of liberal education is worthwhile considering, because it shows that they potentially deny a fundamental right that is part of being a member of contemporary Western society. That is the

opportunity to learn a self while at school, one that is formed in part as a result of a conversation with the West's varied critical, cultural and historic traditions. Oakeshott is also important because of the stress he places on the idea of education being an adventure in self understanding and the essential role this has to play in being free. The concept of a culture of learning and the idea of a conversation with the past are also ones which make history a necessary part of a liberal education.

CHAPTER 4

Paul Hirst: Forms of Knowledge and History

One of the most influential attempts to define and to justify the nature of a liberal education exists in the work of the British philosopher Paul Hirst. The rigorously analytical nature of his arguments and his keen critical appraisal of previous attempts to ground the concept of education on the basis of knowledge have meant that his work has an influence which is still current today. His most important arguments in this regard were collected in a series of essays entitled Knowledge and the Curriculum (1974).

In his essay "Liberal education and the nature of knowledge", Hirst (1974b) first attempts to define the concept of a liberal education, and begins with two important claims, one conceptual and the other historical. The conceptual claim is that liberal education, "is the appropriate label for a positive concept, that of an education based fairly and squarely on the nature of knowledge itself, a concept central to the discussion of education at any level" (p. 30). The historical claim notes that this definition of liberal education has an ancient and honourable pedigree which has retained its central meaning since the classical Greek view of *paeidea*. It is evident, however, from this essay and others in the collection that the most important claim of the two, for Hirst, is the conceptual one. The historical survival of the concept of a liberal education is regarded by Hirst as a puzzling phenomenon as he notes that,

> ever since Greek times this idea of education has had its place Sometimes it has been modified or extended in detail to accommodate within its scheme new forms of knowledge .... Sometimes, it has been strongly opposed on philosophical grounds .... Yet at crucial points in

> the history of education the concept has constantly reappeared. It is hard to understand why this should be so. (p. 31-32)

It is hard to understand unless one places education in a theory of culture and history that sees the striving for the ideals of the good, the true and the real as being an necessary part of Western tradition, since the Greeks. In particular part of a tradition which involves the individual seeking the truth about himself and the world in a critical and rational way, coupled with a belief in the possibility of a just society. Aspects of this tradition have often been temporarily thwarted, but if one believes in the worth of a liberal education then one is committed to the possibility of individuals knowing the truth about the world, as well as the possibility of creating a better tomorrow. A commitment to truth and justice represents the best of the Western tradition, and for an individual to be involved in promoting liberal education means committing oneself to this particular possibility. Hirst denies the importance of Greek metaphysical realism as a justification for this view of liberal education, and believes that it can be replaced with a more certain one based on epistemology. In other words what he says, in effect, is that if we use the term 'education' in this way then it has a normative meaning that is based on the certainty of knowledge, and not on the "predilections of pupils, the demands of society or the whims of politicians"
(p. 32). Hirst (1974b) maintains that the acquisition of this knowledge is, "neither more nor less than the achievements basic to the development of mind itself" (p. 22). Hirst puts this in unequivocal terms,

> to be without knowledge at all is to be without mind in any significant sense. Nor is it just that mind needs some content to

> work on, as if otherwise its characteristics could not be expressed. The acquisition of knowledge is itself a development of mind and new knowledge means a new development of mind in some sense. Knowledge is not a free-floating possession. It is a characteristic of minds themselves. (p. 24)

For Hirst, this relationship between knowledge and the development of mind is of central educational significance. Education has as its fundamental objective the development of the rational mind through the acquisition of those distinct types of rational judgement which exist within knowledge. These cognitive structures are what Hirst called the 'forms of knowledge', or at times 'modes of knowledge and experience', and what others might refer to as distinct disciplines. Hirst (1974b)originally stated (first published in1965) that these were mathematics, physical sciences, human sciences history, religion, literature and the fine arts and philosophy. However, Hirst in a later article (Hirst 1974c, first published in 1973) he adjusts his list. He changes the human sciences into social science, and then it and history disappear, to be replaced by inter-personal knowledge.

The forms of knowledge whatever their actual number, are, for Hirst (1974b), the basic articulations whereby the whole of experience has become intelligible to man; "they are the fundamental achievement of mind" (p. 40). Hirst states that these forms do exist in everyday discourse in a low state of development, but from this base they have grown in distinctive ways into more developed forms. What the nature and record of this growth looks like Hirst does not tell us, but presumably it is incorporated in the history of the development of each particular form. Perhaps what this means is that is physics, for example, in the university is a more developed form of knowledge than the common sense view of the physical world, and that this difference is

common sense. However, Hirst's interests lie not in contingent facts about the development of the forms of knowledge but in the conditions logically inherent in them.

The forms, or conceptual schemata, are in Hirst's view as fundamental and universal as one can expect knowledge to be. Perhaps there are modes of understanding or interpreting the truth that lie above or beyond these schemata; perhaps man may someday come across these other forms, but in Hirst's view, as far as humanity today is concerned this is the way in which what we know as the rational mind views and experiences the world. Certainly, these have developed in a certain cultural tradition, as pointed out by Kazepides (1982, p. 156). The whole idea of an education is historically bound to the Western tradition and is inseparable from the history of the achievements of knowledge and understanding in this tradition, and Hirst, does admit "it is only because man has over the millennia objectified and progressively developed those that he has achieved the forms of human knowledge, and the possibility of the development of mind as we know it is open to us today" (1974b, p. 41).

This is, of course, a strong claim, and one that must be dealt with by anyone seeking to design or implement any educational curriculum. Education based on knowledge, according to Hirst(1974b), gains its own justification because of the fundamental connection between knowledge and mind, and is thus more desirable than any other view of education. Hirst has done away with the need for any metaphysical doctrine about reality as he maintains that the pursuit of rational knowledge contains its own justification. In his words,

> it is in fact a peculiar question asking for justification for any development of the rational mind at all. To ask for the justification of any

> form of activity is significant only if one is in fact committed already to seeking rational knowledge. To ask for a justification of the pursuit of rational knowledge itself therefore pre-supposes some form of commitment to what one is seeking to justify. (p. 42)

However, justification can only take place if whatever is being justified is both intelligible under publicly rooted concepts and is assessable according to accepted criteria. These criteria are the principles of rational knowledge, that is the respect for evidence and sound argument, freedom of thought, consistency, and clarity. These principles limit the extent of rationality, for justification outside the use of the principles is not logically possible. Thus the boundaries of that which is the given have been set, and the connection between the pursuit of knowledge and the concepts of rational justification shown. For Hirst the 'forms of knowledge 'are then in a sense simply the working out of these general principles in particular ways.

Liberal education then, for Hirst, is the initiation of the student into the forms of knowledge; it is the ultimate form of education, and it knows no limits other than those necessarily imposed by the nature of rational knowledge. This, according to Hirst, makes "man the final court of appeal in all human affairs " (p. 43). What is more, he states that "as the determination of the good life is now considered to be itself the pursuit of a particular form of rational knowledge, that in which what ought to be done is justified by the giving of reasons, this is seen as a necessary part of a liberal education" (p. 43). Thus, for Hirst, a liberal education is both objective and moral, not because of any metaphysical reason, but because of the "necessary consequence of what the pursuit of knowledge entails" (p. 43).

At this point it is perhaps worthwhile to further clarify the concepts, of 'liberal education' and 'knowledge'. Certainly there seems to be no real difference between Hirst's 'liberal' education and Peters' (1966), or Bailey's (1984) notion of 'education'. For all of them to be educated is to have understanding and knowledge that are of sufficient breadth and depth to liberate man from the present and the particular. In fact at times Hirst (1974c) himself does not use the prefix 'liberal' and this can be confusing. However, he does make the distinction clear when he refers 'total education' in his article, "The forms of knowledge revisited". For him "Liberal education cannot be regarded as providing a total education. It explicitly excludes all objectives other than intellectual ones, thereby ignoring many central concerns, say physical education and the education of character"(p.96). The concept of 'character development' so much part of the classical and humanistic view of education is ignored. The question of the relation between liberal education and the very young child is dealt with though, and in Hirst's view most of the work done with students in primary schools is in the provision of instrumental skills such as reading and basic computation, or in the socialization and habituation them in necessary pre-rational forms of behaviour.

Thus, Hirst's view of liberal education constitutes only a part of his wider conception of education per se. Consequently, despite his claim for its central and powerful role in the transforming of young people into autonomous adults, it does not seek to provide for all aspects of the full development of the person. This view of an education based upon propositional knowledge, does not, as Hirst points out in his essay entitled "The forms of knowledge revisited" (p. 84), preclude the inclusion of other elements in the school curriculum. Schools can

have craft, art, music or practical activities, or even encourage the development of certain other affective states, but according to Hirst they are distinct from the curriculum based on the intellectual development of the rational mind (p. 97). Without entering into an argument for the importance of the acquisition of a broader array of human achievements or attitudes, suffice it to say that Hirst's view of a liberal education is one which due to its limited scope presents a number of difficulties, particularly in the arts. When Hirst comes to consider the place of history in terms of his 'forms of knowledge' theory he is also unable to adequately justify historical studies on cognitive grounds alone.

The nature of the 'forms of knowledge' themselves is a most difficult issue. Hirst himself admits that a great deal more work needs to be done in further defining and clarifying the distinctions. In fact, many critics, who themselves accept the basic premise of the importance of rational knowledge to any concept of a liberal education, tend to disagree on the distinctions between forms (e.g. Barrow, 1981, p. 43). Hirst maintains that these forms of knowledge are part of the domain of knowledge, which is centrally the domain of true propositions. The forms are logically distinct and are mutually exclusive. This autonomy or independence is arrived at by studying the nature of the true propositions which enable us to differentiate them. These are differentiated by Hirst (1974c) with reference to: 1) certain individual concepts, 2) the logical structure of various propositions, 3) the criteria for truth in terms of which they are assessed, and 4) the methods used for arriving at true propositions (pp. 85-86). The fourth feature which Hirst sees as important educationally is not in his opinion a necessary feature of the distinguishing criteria and he later relegates it to a position of secondary importance. While the forms of knowledge are

position of secondary importance. While the forms of knowledge are fundamentally distinct, some incorporate features of other forms in them, and Hirst maintains that the interrelation between them is complex and underdeveloped. While he does have some sympathy for a logical hierarchy of forms (p. 91) he maintains that this would be an oversimplification of the true nature of the relationship. The importance of the forms of knowledge, for Hirst, lies in their drawing together precisely those elements in a total education that are logically basic and in excluding all secondary considerations. This he sees as valuable, in particular when looking at the ends of education in a time of pragmatism, relativism or social dominance, and in this regard I agree with him that his theory, although it does not attempt to justify a concept of total education, is a most important statement of the logical relation between reason and education.

Thus, to review Hirst's arguments concerning forms of knowledge and the curriculum: education is concerned with the development of mind, which is logically one and the same thing as the acquisition of knowledge (in a certain sense), and to acquire more knowledge is to have a mind in a fuller sense. By knowledge here Hirst means only knowledge 'that' or propositional knowledge. It is knowledge in this sense that according to Hirst structures our experience. Because there are logically distinct kinds of concepts, different criteria for objectivity based on them and distinct methodologies for arriving at the knowledge, down the ages knowledge has been divided into a number of mutually irreducible forms. The curriculum of an educating institution must respect the formal characteristics of each form of knowledge, even if it uses other criteria to determine the inclusion of other subjects into the curriculum, or

teaching methodology. This respect, however, does not necessarily lead to the teaching of forms as separate subjects.

Whilst much discussion goes on concerning the exact nature of the forms, what is undeniably important in Hirst's thesis is the contention that if one seeks to educate young people one must in some way help them to acquire knowledge, and the claim that the nature of knowledge is such that it is divisible into certain logically distinct areas that are governed by some measure of objective considerations. An educational curriculum therefore cannot simply consist of whatever some special interest group, church, politician or individual teacher dreams up. To be truly educational it must take account of the nature of knowledge.

There are a number of problems with Hirst's theory, in particular his equating of the developed mind with the development of rationality. There is the question of whether judgements are purely rational, for example, particularly in the arts but also in the sciences, for it may be argued that volitional, practical and affective understandings are also involved. In fact Hirst (1974b) admits as much when he says that the knowledge of the forms "involves the use of symbols and the making of judgements in ways that cannot be expressed in words and can only learnt in a tradition" (p. 45). Hirst's theory proposes two important necessary components that have existed in some form in the tradition of liberal education since the Greeks, the objectivity of knowledge and its concomitant relation to reason, but he has missed, in my view, some important aspects of what a liberal education means. His theory has an underdeveloped feel to it, for by positing such a narrow view of the human mind, he has unnecessarily restricted the scope and potential of a

liberal education. It is also significant that Hirst places no great emphasis on the nature of human freedom as a key concept in any idea of a liberal view of man.

However, the issue which I wish to draw particular attention to, and which in terms of this thesis is of most interest, is the place of history in the 'forms of knowledge' theory. There are two aspects to this: first, there is the question of the history of the idea of a liberal education, secondly, the question of the history of the development of individual forms as they move from an underdeveloped state to states of full development, and thirdly, the question of the place of history as a form of knowledge and as a school subject.

In relation to the first two issues, Hirst (1974b) recognizes the pedigree of the idea of a liberal education, and notes that its justification was based in the past on metaphysical arguments which he states are no longer necessary (pp. 30-32). He maintains that a liberal education can be justified on epistemological terms alone, without any appeal to authority external to the process of logical analysis. For him this places liberal education on firmer ground, because it is free from a questionable metaphysical base, and also by implication the epistemologically justified concept is more fully developed than previous ones. Hirst is correct in maintaining that we cannot reasonably base our claims about education entirely on concepts that are widely regarded as being problematic. But does this not point to the historically relative nature of our thoughts? They are not now the 'ever fixed mark' by which we can navigate. Hirst (1974b) admits that the forms are changing, and that new forms are or may be appearing; but he makes no attempt to elucidate what that process may look like, or whether the changes occur as a result of internal

instability in each of the forms or external pressure from contingent events. Thus, Hirst avoids this most important issue as to the dynamic historical nature of knowledge.

On the issue of whether history is a form of knowledge Hirst has radically changes his view. [By the way it must be said that at no time does he state that history should no longer be taught in schools, but merely that it does not meet the criteria that would make it a form of knowledge. Presumably, it, like geography, is to be regarded as what he calls 'a field of knowledge' (Hirst, 1974b, p. 46)]. In his first attempt to define the forms of knowledge Hirst (p. 46) states that there are seven forms: mathematics, physical sciences, human sciences, history, religion, literature and the fine arts and philosophy. It may be significant that the term 'human sciences' is used as opposed to the more commonly used social sciences. Hirst gives no reason for this, but the terms have different histories and meanings. The 'human sciences' are the usual translation of the German *Geisteswissenchaften,* which means literally the study of the human spirit. History is a most important component of this approach. The term was used extensively by Dilthey and others in the hermeneutical tradition and was meant to distinguish these sciences from the physical or natural sciences. The social sciences derive from Comte and the positivist tradition, of which the hermeneuticists are most critical, in particular because of their reductionist element. However, when Hirst (1974c) comes to reconsider his view of the 'forms of knowledge', (p. 86) there is no mention of the term 'human sciences' and the term the 'social sciences' has replaced it . Hirst gives no reason for this and seems not to be aware of the fact or importance of the

event, both 'history' and 'social science' are no longer to be regarded as true 'forms', and he explains this decision in the following way,

> The question that for some while worried me considerably was the character of history and the social sciences...It now seems to me that both history and the social sciences are...logically complex in character. In part they are concerned with truths that are matters of empirical observation and experiment, truths that logically differ not at all from the kind with which the physical or natural sciences are concerned....On the other hand, history and some of the social sciences are in large measure not concerned simply with an understanding of observable phenomena in terms of physical causation, but with explanations of human behaviour in terms of intentions, will, hopes, beliefs etc. (p. 86)

History and the social sciences are now to be divided up and parcelled out between the physical sciences on the one hand and a new form called 'inter-personal knowledge' on the other. This new form contains knowledge both of one's own mind as well as other peoples. It will be recalled that Hirst is concerned only with propositional knowledge. The introduction of this new form therefore raises the very serious question of whether personal and inter-knowledge can be fully characterized, or characterized at all, in terms of propositions which can be subjected to public truth tests. In fact, most of one's own thoughts have to do with emotional or volitional states, and cannot be subjected to public truth tests. What then are these personal truths which are fully propositionable? Hirst does not elaborate and we are left to wonder. Far more appropriate in this connection is the concept of *Verstehen* or understanding used by Dilthey in his theory of the human sciences, which contains many components which are not of a strictly cognitive nature and which cannot necessarily be subjected to formal truth tests. We have the capacity to understand others because we recognise them in ourselves and

vice versa; we are all humans. This is not a question of logic but a condition of being human ; it is pre-rational. Thus part of the price paid for losing history as a full blown form of knowledge is the gaining of another form which itself seems irrevocably complex. Have we not, therefore, lost a great deal and not gained very much? Furthermore, we now have a foundational thesis about the nature of a liberal education which no longer contains, as an autonomous and integral part, one of the most important intellectual achievements of Western civilisation. This I would maintain, seriously undermines the educational importance of the forms of knowledge theory, even if Hirst can justify its reduction in terms of the internal logic of his criteria.

However Hirst is certainly right on another point when he seeks to distinguish between the natural and the human sciences, and this may in fact be the key distinction that is necessary when it comes to forming an epistemological basis for an educational curriculum. Bailey (1990), rightly in my view, in describing appropriate content for an education based in part on a proper moral respect for young people, makes the point,

> that the only logical distinction to be made is between inquires into all those 'goings-on' that are only understandable as activities or practices of persons or minds, and inquires into all those other 'goings-on' that are only properly understandable as not products of minds. (in Entwistle, 1990, p. 58)

The basis of this distinction, however, is not to be found in the logic of science or history, but in the nature of the object being studied. Natural phenomena for example, have no inherent meaning, so that when they are the object of study, and we wish to explain how they occur we look for causes which do not have intentions embedded in them. However, when the object of study are events

from the human realm, we need, in order to explain them, causes that are also reasons ; that require understanding and not merely explanation. Certainly historians must take into account physical factors when writing history, for example, flea-rat symbiosis is germaine to any study of the Black Death, but an historian's work really only begins where the epidemiologist's ends. Hirst (1974c) is, therefore, right when he states that "large tracts of sociology and psychology, and indeed parts of history, are therefore of the strictly physical science variety" (p. 86), but my contention is that when we are dealing with history the parts that are there when those elements of the physical sciences have been removed, cannot completely be explained in terms of 'inter-personal' knowledge. There is much more besides, which Hirst has lost through this categorization, in particular,the nature of historical time and its place in the Western world view, as well as the relationship between narrative form and knowledge.

With regard to the question of a culture's view of time it is evident that not all have the same view that has developed over the past two thousand years in western civilisation. Paz (1967) in his commentary on the work of the French anthropologist Levi-Strauss argues that the West may be unique in having a view of time based on succession and history, (p. 87), and that having such a view is an essential part of of being a member of that culture. Some primitive societies, according to Paz, live within an atemporal system and place little or no emphasis on this view of time. Others have a "vision of cyclical time (which) encompasses the historical happening like a subordinate stanza in the circular poem which is the cosmos" (p. 89). He maintains that "only the modern West

has identified itself fully and frantically with history, to the extent of defining man as a historical being" (p. 89).

A further important element is lost when Hirst divides history up in this way, and that is the unique nature of historical narrative. Ankersmit (1983), in a detailed review of narrative theory, argues for the autonomy of historical narrative, and resists any attempts to reduce it to deductive or atomistic approaches. He maintains that causal theories of the covering law model type cannot be used to successfully account for the relationship between the various parts of narratives, and in that sense they are not like logical arguments or games. It is significant that Hirst compares history to chess and states that the rules governing meaningful use of historical concepts "involves no necessary temporal order " or any "particular sequence of thought" (p. 118). This concept of sequence, however, is according to Ankersmit one of the distinguishing and necessary features of history,

> in fact, historical knowledge is not knowledge in the proper sense of the word; it is characterized as an *arrangement* of knowledge. What makes historical knowledge philosophically such an interesting phenomenon lies in the fact that it is always concerned with the question of *what* we should or should not say on reality and not with *how* we should speak about reality (the domain of the sciences). (p. 250)

Ankersmit also denies that a similarity between

> narratios and arguments does in fact exist. Unlike arguments, narratios have endings but no conclusions . The ending of a narratio is not a kind of shorthand of what was told before; nor is it possible to reconstruct a number of premisses that would lead up to the ending of the narratio in the way this can be done in an argument. (p. 46)

Hirst's lack of acknowledgement of the autonomy and significance of historical narrative and his reduction of history either to science or inter-personal

knowledge may not be surprising in the light of another of Ankersmit's claims that contemporary philosophy has not shown much interest in narrativist philosophy. He maintains that "contemporary philosophy of language considers solely the problems caused by words, sentences or statements, neglecting almost entirely the study of sets of singular statements, i.e. stories or narratios" (p. 58). He notes that Wittgenstein preferred to define the context which surrounds particular sentences in terms of extra-linguistic conditions rather than taking a narrativist course (p. 59). Ankersmit accounts for this by arguing that there has been a belief amongst linguistic philosophers that the "interesting problems in the philosophy of language occur only at the level of words and sentences (or statements), at what might be called the 'atomary' level" (p. 59). He feels that these philosophers by implication consider narratios as merely "'molecular' combinations of more basic "atomic", sentential elements and consequently are not considered to pose their own specific problems" (p. 59).

Hirst's theory of the 'forms of knowledge' makes an important contribution to the the study of the nature of the educational enterprise, but its narrowness, and its inability to recognise the true importance of history means that it is seriously flawed. What is needed is a not a less rational view of mind but one which reflects more completely the full nature of human knowledge and understanding.

While Hirst's reduction of history to science and interpersonal knowledge and his ambiguity about the dynamic and historical nature of knowledge are also serious difficiencies in his argument, perhaps even more disturbing for the validity of his case is the fact that by not dealing properly with the challenge of

history he seriously undermines one of his most important claims for a knowledge based education. That is, that it is one which is not based on "the predilections of pupils, the demands of society, or the whims of politicians" (Hirst, 1974, p. 32). This in effect claims that the 'forms of knowledge' theory provides what MacIntyre (1966, p. 96) calls 'norms for men as such' as opposed to norms which are 'historically relative'. MacIntyre denies that this is in fact a real alternative and points out the need both for some form of objective impersonal criteria, and for some means of describing particular situations, when attempting to frame practical question and answers. As he puts it,

> For certainly in asking for criteria to govern my choices ... I am asking for guidance of an impersonal kind, not just for me, but for anyone-anyone, that is in my situation. But the more that I particularize my situation the more I ask for guidance for people who belong to my time and place - or to other times and places of a sufficiently and relevantly similar sort. I am always going to be faced with two dangers. If I abstract, I shall be able to characterize my situation in terms quite apart from any specific time and place, but by so doing I shall not solve my problem but relocate it. For the highly general form of the problem and solution then has to be translated back into concrete terms, and the real problem becomes how to do this. If I do not abstract sufficiently, I shall always be in danger of making myself the victim of what is taken for granted in a particular situation. I shall be in danger of presenting merely the outlook of one social group or part of the conceptual framework for such men. (pp. 96-97)

Thus, Hirst, by not fully recognizing the dual nature of knowledge, its contingent as well as its necessary aspects, renders his thesis vulnerable to the charge of incompleteness as well as impracticality. Because without the inclusion of such a theory of historical knowledge it is not clear how we are to translate his ideas back to the concrete reality of the contemporary situation. What is needed is a theory of knowledge able both to justify the inclusion of history in the curriculum

of liberal education, and also to provide a solution to the dilemma outlined by MacIntyre. Unfortunately, Hirst's 'forms of knowledge' thesis does not do either and, its failure to do so seriously weakens the strength of his case, and thereby exemplifies the necessity for fully including history both in the justification as well as in the curriculum of a liberal education.

CHAPTER 5

Ernst Cassirer
Symbolic Form and History

Symbolic Forms

Before analyzing Cassirer's views on history it is essential that an investigation of his theory of symbolic form take place for it provides the epistemological base on which his idea of history is developed. Cassirer's work represents an attempt to provide a philosophical foundation for the study of language, science, culture and history, and while he makes no direct reference to any particular educational theories his ideas are very relevant to the idea of a liberal education. Cassirer maintains that philosophy

> has to grasp the whole system of symbolic forms, the application of which produces for us the concept of an ordered reality ... and it must refer each individual in this totality to its fixed place. If we assume this problem solved, then the rights would be assured, and the limits fixed, of each of the particular forms of the concept and of knowledge as well as the general forms of the theoretical, ethical, aesthetic and religious understanding of the world. (Cassirer,1923, p.447, quoted in Cassirer, 1979, p. 27)

Cassirer derived the concept of symbolic from both his studies of science and art. His realisation concerning the limitations of the structure of mathematical and scientific thought, when applied to the problems of the cultural sciences, led him to investigate and to differentiate the various fundamental forms "of man's understanding and apprehend each one of them as sharply as possible in its specific direction and characteristic spiritual form" (Cassirer, 1953, p. 69).

For Cassirer the starting point for philosophy was "the fact of the intersubjective understanding of meaning" (Krois, 1987, p. 43), and the decisive

fact for him is that language and other symbolic forms provide a bridge from individual to individual.

> This stands out for me again and again in the fundamental phenomenon of language. Everyone speaks his own language, and it is unthinkable that we should carry one person's language over to another. And yet we understand one another through language. And there is something like unity throughout the unending variety of different ways of speaking. In this lies for me the decisive point. And that is why I began with the objectivity of symbolic form, because here the inconceivable is accomplished. Language is the clearest example. We claim that we stand here on common ground. (Cassirer quoted in Krois, 1987, p. 43)

Thus the fundamental questions of philosophy for Cassirer are, how is it possible that there is meaning, and that we can understand one another? Cassirer, therefore, saw that the problems of the theory of knowledge, such as the nature of certainty or the criterion of truth, require a philosophical inquiry on the fundamental phenomenon of meaning. The task of philosophy is not the critique of knowledge but a critique of meaning. This task, for Cassirer, was to be accomplished by an investigation of ' the symbolic forms '. These refer to particular occurrences of meaning, to the different kinds of symbolic relation and most importantly to the cultural forms or ways of having a world such as myth, language, art, science or history.

In 1921 Cassirer first gave a definition of symbolic form and stated that "under a 'symbolic form' should be understood every energy of mind ... through which a mental content of meaning is connected to a concrete, sensory sign and made it adhere internally to it." (Cassirer in Krois, 1987, p. 50). While there are an unlimited number of signs, that does not mean that there are an unlimited number of symbolic forms, and Cassirer limits them by confining "symbolic form"to those specific, cultural matrices which help form a world view.

One criterion of such symbolic forms is, therefore, universal applicability. The other is the triadic nature of the symbol with its three elements, the perceiver, the perceived and the form of perception.

The underlying thesis of the entire philosophy of symbolic forms is that the problems of knowledge and the problems of language are inseparable. In modern philosophy, theories of the nature of language are generally classified as rationalistic or empirical. For the rationalists, language was an expression of the ideal of universal reason, and, therefore, reason and language are in principle inseparable. The empiricists, on the other hand, while acknowledging that reason cannot be completely separated from language, start from the assumption that the primary form of knowledge is simple awareness of sense data, and language is an addition to this awareness, which emerges later on. Cassirer sees both these positions to be inadequate, in particular the purely naturalistic theory of language, as he denies the possibility of pure experience and maintains that intuition and expression are inseparable. Thus the failure of linguistic science in the nineteenth century to attain the same certainty and exactness as the natural sciences is explained because it was based on an illusion, namely that language is a natural phenomenon. For Cassirer, therefore, the key to understanding how language works is to be found from within the human mind, through interpretation, and not merely by the explanation of external physical events such as sounds or objects. Thus meaning for him is the

> sine qua non of linguistic fact. Language for modern linguistics is not sound, nor again the motor and tactual sensations which make up the word psychologically, nor yet the association called up; it is *meaning*

> *itself* which, although conditioned by these, is not identical with any of them. (Urban, 1949, p. 409)

For Cassirer, the primacy of meaning has, therefore, important implications for the methodology used in the study of language, and he maintains that there are two primary modes of meaning, first, reference or indication, and secondly, equally important, representation. Therefore, language without meaning is not language and its importance cannot be overemphasized. To Cassirer,

> this element (or function) is an *Urphanomen* present in language from its simplest to its highest forms ... and the development of this mode of meaning -- from copy through analogy, to symbolic representation -- constitutes the thread to Cassirer's treatment, not only of language but of the entire range of symbolic forms. (Urban, 1949, p. 409)

For Cassirer language is thus present from the beginning ; objects are not perceived and then known; the primary experiences are at the same time primary forms of expression and constitute the 'natural' world picture. The empiricist claim that the primary and original form of knowledge is one in which we merely possess the sense data is for him a myth. Cassirer is further critical of the 'sensationalist 'approach "which sees all objectivity as encompassed in the 'simple' impression, and synthesis merely in the 'association' of impressions." (Cassirer, 1953, p. 102). The generic term 'association', in his view, does not adequately describe the nature of consciousness. It merely designates "the naked fact of combination as such, but does not say anything whatsoever regarding specific character and law" (Cassirer, 1953, p. 102-103).

Rationalism, however, according to Cassirer also fails to overcome the inner tension between two fundamental elements of consciousness, between its mere 'matter' and its pure 'form' and the

> principle objection to this formulation is that the antithesis expressed in it is a product of abstraction; the particular factors of knowledge are logically evaluated, whereas the unity of the matter and form of consciousness, of the 'particular' and the 'universal', of the sensory 'data' and pure 'principles of order' constitutes precisely that originally certain and originally known phenomenon which every analysis of consciousness must take as its point of departure. (p. 104)

This relationship Cassirer (1953) categorizes by the use of a mathematical metaphor of integration, and "the elements of consciousness are related to the whole of consciousness not as an extensive part to a sum of the parts, but as a differential to its integral" (p. 104). He further explains that

> the 'integral' of consciousness is constructed not from the sum of its sensuous elements (a, b, c, d, ...), but from the totality, as it were, of its differentials of relation and form (dr1, dr2, dr3, ...). The full actuality of consciousness is merely the unfolding of what was present as 'potency' and general possibility in each of its separate factors. (p. 105)

This integration, according to him, overcomes the illusion of an original division between the intelligible and the sensuous, between 'idea' and 'phenomenon', and although we still remain in a world of images

> these are not images which reproduce a self-subsistent world of 'things'; they are image-worlds whose principle and origin are to be sought in an autonomous creation of the spirit. Through them alone we see what we call 'reality', and in them alone we possess it: for the highest objective truth that is accessible to the spirit is ultimately the form of its own activity. (p. 111)

It is here that Cassirer in his critique of the dualisms of the empirical and rationalist position introduces the idea of the 'symbolic form'. This is what breaks the log jam of the antitheses created by the other two doctrines. Meaning is present from the beginning, and it is on the basis of this third force that Cassirer not only deals with the fundamental problems of the relationship

between language and the world, or the ideal and the real, but also provides a foundation for his subsequent cultural studies. Cassirer notes, "we shall seek to pursue the problem of signs, not backward to its ultimate 'foundations', but forward to its concrete unfolding and configuration in the diverse cultural spheres" (p. 105). For Cassirer the question of what the "thing in itself" means is "an intellectual phantasm", for reality cannot be found in the idea of an abstract being detached from the senses and more importantly from life. Not life in the biological sense, but human life which cannot be conceived without its necessary cultural context.

The aim of philosophy for Cassirer, is not to lift the veil of language or art or history so that the truth can be found within, but to reverse this direction of inquiry, and

> if all culture is manifested in the creation of specific image -worlds, of specific symbolic forms, the aim of philosophy is not to go behind all these creations, but rather to understand and elucidate their basic formative principle. It is solely through awareness of this principle that the content of life acquires its true form. (p. 113)

Human knowledge cannot get rid of these symbols, in fact it is these very forms that constitute it in the first place. Cassirer maintains that the foundation for such an explanation begins with the his concept of natural symbolism, "that representation of consciousness as a whole which is necessarily contained or at least projected in every single moment and fragment of consciousness" (p. 105). In his view natural symbolism is foundational to the artificial symbols or arbitrary signs which consciousness creates in language, art and myth. These are rooted in an original spiritual process which belongs to the very essence of consciousness. Therefore we can

> understand how a sensuous particular, such as a spoken sound, can become the vehicle of a purely intellectual meaning, only if we assume that the basic function of signification is present and active before the individual sign is produced, so that this producing does not create signification, but merely stabilizes it, applies it to the particular case. (p. 106)

A 'sign' is a sensuous embodiment of consciousness that has a twofold nature, one the sensible and the other free from sensibility."Thus the 'natural" symbolism which we found embedded as a fundamental characteristic of consciousness is on the one hand utilized and retained, while on the other hand it is surpassed and refined." (p. 106). For Cassirer the sign cannot be merely a copy of reality or a repetition of "determinate and finished, particular intuitive or ideational content" (p. 107). If this were the case and the essential function of language was to repeat in another medium that ready-made world of sensations or intuitions, then it would be empty and the sceptic would have a point. For Cassirer (1953) language and the symbolic signs found in myth and art do not acquire their meaning as a secondary step, in addition to being, but their being arises from their signification. Their content subsists primarily and wholly in the function of signification, and

> myth and art, language and science, are in this sense configurations *towards* being; they are not simple copies of an existing reality but represent the main directions of the spiritual movement, of the ideal process by which reality is constituted for us as one and many -- as a diversity of forms, which are ultimately held together by a unity of meaning. (Cassirer,1953, p. 107)

The role of the sign is as an intermediary between the mere "substance" of consciousness and its spiritual form., for "what constitutes the true force of the sign ... is precisely this: that as the immediate, determinate contents recede, the general factors of form and relation become all the sharper and clearer"

(p. 108). The particulars of consciousness contain within them, and are contained within the potential of the whole. This is the 'integration' talked about earlier, and the sign liberates this potentiality and enables it to become true actuality.

> Now, *one* blow strikes a thousand connected chords which all vibrate more or less forcefully and clearly in the sign. In positing the sign, consciousness detaches itself more and more from the direct *substratum* of sensation and sensory intuition: but precisely therein it reveals its inherent, original power of synthesis and unification. (p. 108)

Consciousness is both dynamic and synthetic and the sign serves not to represent its mere particulars but its complex general movement towards new perspectives. Cassirer uses the example of science to show the way in which one of the essential advantages of the sign operates. It not only offers a symbolic abbreviation of what is known, but opens new roads into the unknown. It is by its very nature, the integration of particular and universal, that it is impelled to extend its limits. The questions solved by Newton and Leibniz were known before they began working on them, "but all these problems were truly mastered only when a unified and comprehensive symbolic *expression* was found for them" (p. 109-110).

Thus the function of language is not to copy reality but to symbolize it. Cassirer thus puts forward in this connection a theory concerning the development of language from the sensual to the symbolic, and according to this theory language has developed historically through three stages: the mimetic, the analogical and the symbolic (p. 190). This abstract schema represents, however, a functional law of linguistic growth, one that has its specific and characteristic counterpart in other fields such as art and cognition.

For Cassirer man is not merely the reasoning animal, but the symbolizing animal, and thus emerges the question which underlies all these discussions, and that is : What is the nature of man? Cassirer sought to approach this issue of what he called 'anthropological philosophy' through his theory of symbolic form, and states that

> we cannot define man by any inherent principle which constitutes his metaphysical essence -- nor can we define him by any inborn faculty or instinct that may be ascertained by empirical observation. Man's outstanding characteristic, his distinguishing mark, is not his metaphysical or physical nature -- but his work. It is this work, it is the system of human activities which defines and determines, the circle of 'humanity'. Language, myth, religion, art, science, history are the constituents, the various sectors of this circle. (Cassirer, 1944, p. 68)

Thus a philosophy of man, for Cassirer, is one which gives insight into the fundamental structure of each of these human activities, and which at the same time enables us to understand them as an organic whole. These symbolic forms are not random creations, and are held together not by a substantial similarity but by a functional structure, and he maintains that

> this structural view of culture must precede the merely historical view. History itself would be lost in the boundless mass of disconnected facts if it did not have a general structural scheme by means of which it can classify, order ans organize these facts. (p.69)

This structure is to be found in the symbolic forms and Cassirer defines man not so much as an animal rationale, but as an *animal symbolicum* (p. 26). Cassirer's intention, therefore, is to understand the nature of man in terms of his culture, which is expressed in the various symbolic forms and he denies that man can be defined by reference to an hypostatized metaphysical essence.

However man is not determined totally by culture, because it is his creation, and he is free to envisage his own world of values and to reconstruct his human world in terms of his lived experiences. This freedom of course is not total, but exists within the historical achievements found in the various 'symbolic forms.'

In his book An Essay on Man (1944), Cassirer summarizes his life's work on the theory of symbolic form. He does not deny that man lives in and is governed by those biological rules which determine the life of all other organisms. However, man is not merely quantitatively different from nature,he has by becoming human undergone a qualitative change. This qualitative difference is cohesiveness around the symbol. As Cassirer expresses it,

> between the receptor system and the effector system, which are to be found in all animal species, we find in man a third link which we may describe as the symbolic *system*. This new acquisition transforms the whole of human life. As compared with other animals man lives not merely in a broader reality; he lives so to speak, in a new *dimension* of reality. (p. 24)

This new dimension means that, in Cassirer's view, man no longer lives in a purely physical universe but inhabits a symbolic universe as well where

> language, myth, art and religion are parts of this universe. They are the varied threads which weave the symbolic net, the tangled web of human experience.... No longer can man confront reality immediately; he cannot see, it as it were, face to face. (p. 25)

Cassirer maintains that human reason is grounded on these symbolic forms, and that the functioning of human consciousness is 'symbolically pregnant'. He illustrates this through an example of how consciousness functions in relation to its object . He asks us to consider a simple plotted line, a *Linienzug*, on the one

hand from an expressive or aesthetic point of view and on the other, from a mathematical or conceptual one. Our different interpretations of the line are not merely the result of our reading our "own inner states subjectively and arbitrarily into the spatial form ; rather, the form gives itself to us as an animated totality, an independent manifestation of life" (p. 202). Cassirer says,

> by symbolic pregnance we mean the way in which the perception of a sensory experience contains at the same time a certain non intuitive meaning which it immediately and concretely represents. Here we are not dealing with bare perceptive data .... Rather, it is the perception itself which by virtue of its own immanent organization, takes on a kind of spiritual articulation - which, being ordered itself, also belongs to a determinate order of meaning. (p. 202)

Perception of the sign and its meaning are all interwoven, and this means that even scientific knowledge is not merely the study of raw data, neither are time and space pure unmediated impressions either, but both necessarily imply a concept of order. Time, according to Cassirer, emerges from the process of recognition and identification necessary in viewing the world symbolically, as when

> former impressions must not only be repeated; they must also be ordered and located, and referred to different points in time . Such a location is not possible without conceiving time as a general scheme, as a serial which comprises all the individual events . The awareness of time necessarily implies the concept of such a serial order corresponding to other schema which we call space. (pp. 50-51

Thus memory implies a creative and constructive process as man, recollecting past data, organizes and synthesizes them and assembles them into a focus of thought. Thus, future becomes not only an image, a prudent fact, but also an ideal which is not an just an empirical fact but an ethical and religious task

which requires prophecy and foretelling. This ideal future sets up a dualism in man's view of himself between being and becoming and this conflict is exacerbated by the independence of the symbolic forms from individual will. The symbolic forms, which are man's attempt to express his life contribute a sphere of life that have a life of their own, a part of eternity by which they survive man's individual and ephemeral existence. Thus,

> in all human activities we find a fundamental polarity ... a tension between stabilization and evolution, between a tendency that leads to fixed and stable forms of life and another tendency to break up this rigid scheme . Man is torn between these two tendencies, one which seeks to preserve old forms whereas the other strives to produce new ones. There is a ceaseless struggle between tradition and innovation between reproductive and creative forces. This dualism is found in all the domains of cultural life. (p. 224)

This dualism is found very clearly in language in its conservative yet adaptive nature. In Cassirer's opinion, reason must neither be merely thought of as being synonymous with language, nor must it be given a global definition. Reason is the reason of the different symbolic forms; the reason of language, the reason of art, of science and of history and has no generic form, but becomes clear and distinct only when the specifics of the forms are added. Furthermore, the symbolic forms which constitute culture hold the world at a distance and liberate man from the narrowness of existence, and they are the key to self liberation from ignorance and injustice and fear. However, the complete denial of reason leads to man losing his freedom or his free will. This is the case in societies dominated by myth and according to Cassirer's theory of the historical development of the forms, man has in the past outgrown this dominance of the mythic state. Not that myth is not still there in man's consciousness, it forms a vital part of the religious form, and is alive and well in

consciousness, it forms a vital part of the religious form, and is alive and well in the arts, but it must be held in check by the reason of the other forms. In fact, for Cassirer, it co-exists in a dialectic unity with science, and history. However, if, as happened in Nazi Germany, myth is made to assume the dominant role it can help lead to tyranny. Late in life Cassirer, in his book The Myth of the State(1945)analyzed the phenomenon of Nazi Germany along these lines. He maintained that when the mythic form allied with modern techniques of mass communication and terror is used to control man's mind for the purposes of social control this has terrible results. He sounds a warning to any who would turn their backs upon the lessons of the Enlightenment and would wish to expunge reason from our culture. In times of crisis man reverts to these more primitive ways of thought and, thereby, risks losing his individuality and freedom. In my view an attempt at providing a liberal education for all people is one of the most important ways of maintaining this state of equilibrium between the symbolic forms. Those who seek to attack this equilibrium and replace it with ideologies based either on a deterministic or biological view of man, or with some irrational myth of the noble savage are the enemies of the true and full nature of the human soul.

Thus Cassirer's theory of symbolic form not only provides an epistemological foundation for language, culture and education, it also enables its ethical nature to be explained and defended. Man is not merely a biological fact, knowledge is not the etching created by random data banks on a clean slate, reason is embodied in our cultural lives. Myth lives in our hearts but must be held in dynamic equipose within reason. Any theory of education which does not account for this balance and which does not have as its goal the

continued monitoring of the ideal of human freedom is anti-human and potentially enslaving. The dangers today come not so much from the Nazis, but from those who would reduce human life to something less valuable, something merely law governed or purely existential. The positivists and their behaviourist offspring, the existentialists, the dialectical materialists and the ultra-romantics are all part of an array of doctrinaires who for, whatever misguided reasons, would see fit to trap man in an irrational or deterministic world view. The study of history is a key element in the battle to free the human mind and defend the city of reason against the barbarian hordes clamouring at the gate

History

According to Itzkoff (1977) Cassirer did not consider history as a symbolic form prior to his book An Essay on Man (1944). In this book he places history after myth and religion, language and art, and before science in importance. He had finished volume four of his work The Problem of Knowledge (1950) with a detailed study of the dramatic growth of historical studies that occurred during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Cassirer, according to Itzkoff (1977, p. 124), had realized that a basic tenet espoused in his philosophy of symbolic forms had been fulfilled, almost within his lifetime. This was

> the emergence of a new modality of thought, self consciousness about its canons of logic, evidence, subject matter and predictive status. The study of history as well as the vast increase in historical writings showed clearly to him that history was a unique and independent dimension of human thought. (p. 124)

In The Problem of Knowledge (1950), Cassirer traces this revolution in nineteenth century historical thought back to the Enlightenment. He maintains that modern historical thinking begins at that time and that philosophers, such as Voltaire, were not only familiar with this manner of thinking "but made use of it as one of the chief measures in the battle for (their) own ideals" (p. 217). Cassirer also cites Frederick Meinecke in support for this thesis (p. 217), and while he recognizes the contribution of Vico as well as Voltaire, for him it is Herder who is the most important precursor to the historists. This was because, for Cassirer,it was Herder who proclaimed that history was not "a mere chain of events but became a great inward drama of mankind itself" (p. 219). It was Herder's concept of man in history, Cassirer claims, that revolutionized historical thought, because,

> man is no longer seen exclusively or even predominantly, as the man of achievements, but as a man of feelings; no longer in the sum of his acts but in the dynamics of his feelings. All his deeds whether in the field of politics of philosophy, religion or art represent but his outer side after all. His inner life discloses itself only after one has penetrated behind these to examine his nature, and this appears in more primitive guise, more directly more uncorrelated, in his feelings that in his intentions and his plans. Here are discovered for the first time both the heart of nature and the beast of history, for is not the essence of nature in men's hearts. (pp. 219-220)

Thus the events of history were significant to Herder in so far as they were revelations and disclosures of human nature, for it was not merely the stringing together of one political or military event after another that mattered, but the study of the whole of humanity. The historism which Herder championed was, according to Cassirer, no mere relativism that repudiated all values, because at its heart was an ideal of humanity, "a general and universal binding principle

without which history had no meaning or unity" (p. 220). This ideal humanity was not present merely in one era and not the next, and neither was it remote from the present for "it was present in actuality at every moment where genuine spirituality and a perfect human life shone forth" (p. 220). History, therefore, to Herder was not the just external manifestation of man's actions, it was the study of the inside, of the soul of man. Its meaning, however, could not be revealed by the study of fragments study, but could be found only in the totality of phenomena, and this too "only in the form of a sequence not seen all together" (p. 221). Cassirer used Herder's words to show that this view was as one which saw the soul of man

> in the laurel wreath or the spectacle of consecrated herds, in merchant ships and in the captured banners themselves, there is nothing -only in the hearts that carved these things and strove for them and attained them and wanted nothing more-every nation has a certain felicity in itself alone, as every sphere has its centre of gravity. (Herder, 1744 quoted in Cassirer, 1950, p. 221)

In quoting at length from Herder, Cassirer was able to show that many of the features of an historical view of man, while they form a great part of the Romantic legacy in fact have their origins earlier in the Eighteenth Century. His sympathy for Herder reflect the spirituality and generosity of his own view of the human predicament, and when late in life he wrote his last two works in English, The Myth of the State and An Essay on Man he was to return to these themes, and to attempt to make sense of them in light of the experience of Nazi Germany, the Second World War and the Holocaust.

Cassirer's discussion of Herder's views raises questions about the relationship between the nature of man, an unchanging universal, and the flux

of events in time, i.e. man's historical reality. Furthermore, the dualism implicit in the idea of external and internal aspects of man's soul is also a problem which Cassirer, Dilthey and Collingwood attempt to deal with, but it is the universalist claims for history that Herder made that provides the most important contribution to Cassirer's thought, and the one to which he was to return. There was also the question of the relationship between the past and the present, not only in the sense that events actually happen one after another, but in the sense that when an historical consciousness in pervading thought has a certain effect upon our view of the present and the future.

Cassirer's experience in Germany in the 1930's and his exile and wanderings sorely taxed his earlier positive views of human nature and progress. In particular he was deeply shocked by the way in which the Nazi state was able to use the mythic form to not merely control men, but to change them. Not merely the uneducated and illiterate but also the educated, the intelligent and the honest succumbed to this modern tyranny and ceased to be free and personal agents. In The Myth of the State, Cassirer sounds a warning about the way in which modern, mass technological states can strip man both of his reason and his desire to be free, and enslave him through an appeal to the mythic element in the human soul. The recent popularity of Joseph Campbell's work on myth may be thought to show the longing, during a time of crisis, by individuals to immerse themselves into a pre-rational, pre-historic, pre-scientific form of thought. But Cassirer was never to lose faith in the possibility of good, and he quotes Herder again in this regard,

> is not the good distributed throughout the whole world? Simply because no one form of humanity and no one spot of earth could contain it all, it was divided into a thousand forms, transformed -- an eternal to Proteus,

> in every region of the world and in every century -- and yet a plan of striving forward is always visible -- my great theme. (Cassirer, 1950 p. 221-222)

This is where, according to Cassirer the modern view of the nature and value of history begins. He also maintains that the great German historian Von Ranke was fundamentally in sympathy with Herder, and quotes Ranke's famous remark that "every epoch belongs directly to God and that its value does not depend on what comes out of it but upon its own self" (p. 224). Therefore, one of the values of history is its claim to study the whole of man. The educational implications of this claim become clearer when one sees the continued deep influence of Goethe's thought on Cassirer's writing. According to Hugo Holborn (1972), Goethe's program of education became a living reality through Cassirer's work:

> The totality of Western Civilization was to be reconstructed and made a part of the consciousness of the modern individual and of present day civilization. The study of the processes and creations of civilization would lift the individual to a position from which he could see farther than "from day to day" and could begin to grasp the ideals forms and categories of the human mind. (Holborn, p. 156)

These perennial forms of human thought can provide the foundation for an educational curriculum and through an understanding and realization of these man could participate in a higher form of life.

In An Essay on Man, Cassirer (1944) summarizes his life's work on the philosophy of symbolic form, and begins the chapter on history by raising the question which lies at the heart of the whole book, namely "What is man?". He had already asked the question in the first chapter entitled "The crisis on man's knowledge of himself" and charted the history of philosophy's attempt to answer

it. His answer was that the view "that self-knowledge is the highest aim of philosophical inquiry appears to be generally acknowledged. In all the conflicts between the different philosophical schools this objective remained invariable and unshaken: it proved to be the fixed and immovable center, of all thought" (p. 1). Cassirer thought that prior to the nineteenth century there had been differences of opinion and theory concerning man's nature, but there remained at least a general orientation, a frame of reference, to which all individual differences might be referred. However, as a result in particular of the impact of ideas like the theory of evolution, this centre no longer existed. This led, in his opinion, to a belief that, if the theory of evolution and the scientific method were applicable not only to the physical world but to human life and culture itself then we must see man "as an animal of superior species which produces philosophies and poems in the same way as silk worms produce their cocoons or bees build their cells" (p. 20). Furthermore, if these were truly scientific theories then they must be able to develop laws and principles which outline the "hidden driving force which sets the whole mechanism of our thought and will in motion" (p. 21). This search for the underlying force which drives man, and which once found would give the answer to the age old question about his nature went hand in hand with the quantification of human studies. As mentioned previously, it was Comte who maintained that

> the only thing left ... is to complete positivist philosophy by including in it study of social *phenomena,* and then to summarize all this in a simple body of homogeneous doctrine. When this double work has been sufficiently advanced, the definite triumph of positivist philosophy will take place spontaneously, and will re-establish order in society. (Comte, Course de philosophie positive, Vol.1, 1836, quoted in Kristeva, 1988, p. 210)

There were others who challenged Comte in this regard and who while espousing an empirical, scientific approach, nevertheless, in Cassirer's view based their theories on arbitrary assumptions,

> and this arbitrariness becomes more and more obvious as the theory proceeds and takes on a more elaborate and sophisticated aspect. Nietzsche proclaims the will to power, Freud signalizes the sexual instinct, Marx enthrones the economic instinct. Each theory becomes a Procrustean bed on which the empirical facts are stretched to fit a preconceived pattern. (Cassirer, 1944, p. 21)

To Cassirer this lack of agreement concerning a frame of reference for answering questions concerning the nature of man has meant that "our modern theory of man (has) lost its intellectual centre" (p. 21). The lack of an established authority has led to a widespread subjectivism where, "the personal factor became more and more prevalent, and the temperament of the individual writer tended to play a decisive role ... 'every author seems in the last count to be led by his own conception and evaluation of human life" (p. 21). To Cassirer, modern man despite his great technical expertise and analytical finesse is bombarded by an increasingly large body of facts. Without a way of interpreting them man will "remain lost in a mass of disconnected and disintegrated data which seems to lack all conceptual unity" (p. 22). However, this is no mere academic labyrinth in which we find ourselves, but a situation which poses an imminent threat to the whole of our ethical and cultural life. Only by defining man as an animal symbolicum, according to Cassirer, and by doing so designating his specific nature, can we "understand the new way open to man -- the way to civilization" (p. 26).

The study of history is for Cassirer a key to this return to the path of civilization, particularly because it represents one of the most recently developed symbolic forms, which must play a key role in counteracting the regressive tendency of societies in crisis to revert to the mythic state. As mentioned earlier, Cassirer's own experiences and his interpretation of the Nazi state were a vital factor in bringing about his view of the fragility of civilization, and the grave threat that is posed to it by the conscious use of technology and myth to subvert free will.

In An Essay on Man, Cassirer deals first of all with the assertion made by Ortega y Gasset that "Man has no nature, what he has is history" (1944, p. 172). He feels that the question about man's nature is misleading and contradictory, because nature has to do with things, but according to Gasset "Human life is not a thing, has not a nature, and in consequence we must make up our minds to think of it in terms and categories and concepts that will be radically different from such as shed light on the phenomena of matter" (p. 171). Gassett's contribution is criticized by Cassirer, who sees the conflict between being and becoming as not a metaphysical but a logical dualism, in which

> we no longer speak of a world of absolute change as opposed to another of absolute rest. We do not regard substance and change as different realms of being but as categories -- as conditions and presuppositions of our empirical knowledge. These categories are universal principles; they are not confined to special objects of knowledge. We must therefore expect to find them in all forms of human experience. (p. 172)

Cassirer again is consistent in his resistance to any theoretical system which will reduce man to anything less than his true and full self. Man's history is not mere flux, and neither is man mere matter, but his world does contain a

substantial element even though it is not to be defined in the same way as the physical world. It is the world of symbolic forms, of myth, language, art, history and science.

If history is a symbolic system, and not just an interest in random events and artefacts, then as a system it must have some structure. In the case of the physical world the structure is matter, in the case of the human world the structure is an identity of form. The task of history is to discover beneath the "temporal flux and behind the polymorphism of human life" this constant structure. He refers to Burckhardt's definition of the task of the historian as "an attempt to ascertain the constant, recurrent, typical elements, because such elements as these can evoke a resonant echo in our intellect and feelings" (p. 172). In other words, according to Cassirer, man has a history because he has a nature.

The task of the historian, however, must be more carefully distinguished from that of the scientists, and the artist. In particular the question "What is an historical fact?" must be dealt with. To Cassirer, a fact is no mere locus of sense data, free from human judgement and theoretical content. Factual truth implies theoretical truth, and the empirical objective nature of fact is not located separately from human thought. Objectivity, he maintains, is not found in nature, but in the complicated process of judgement. It is the study of these judgemental acts that enable us to distinguish between scientific and historical facts. The claim that facts are the result of human thought does in no way lessen their importance, indeed Cassirer claims that their importance is great in historical studies."That history has to begin with facts and that, in a sense, these

facts are not only the beginning but the end, the alpha and the omega of our historical knowledge, is undeniable" (p. 174).

However, the question still remains; What is the nature of these judgements called historical and physical facts? The importance of this distinction cannot be under-emphasized for two reasons. First, because of the spread of the scientific approach into the study of human life with its concomitant claim that objectivity can only be a feature of scientific fact. The effect of the spread of positivist views in educational studies over the past century, has meant that a most unfortunate dichotonomy has emerged. The hard facts are to be obtained through psychology, and statistically verified 'empirical' research, which are objective, and all other questions which cannot be answered by this particular method are classified as being merely subjective. This elevation of the *Naturwissenschaften* over the *Geiteswissenschaften* meant a division of labour within the academic community, and a consequent radical dissociation between fact and value, which is highly inappropriate when attempting to either formulate or answer questions about thought and culture. This was discussed earlier in the paper and its negative effects outlined, and only through a re-interpretation of the nature of knowledge it can this crippling dichotonomy be resolved. Cassirer's value here to educational studies is great, and his careful study of the various modes of knowledge is invaluable. The importance and value of facts, Mr. Gradgrind notwithstanding, must be reasserted if education is to continue to be a potent force in the development of young minds, as Robin Barrow (1990) recently pointed out . Also in reasserting the importance and objectivity of historical fact we are moved to consider the nature of the way in which these

facts are obtained. If there are alternative ways of obtaining empirical truths other than through a scientific method, and if these ways are particularly suited to the study of human thought and culture, then the systematic study of education and teaching may not have to rely merely on the statistical or analytical approach in order to claim objectivity. The present flirting with non-quantitative methods of research is, of course, an attempt to break out of the positivist straitjacket. However, much of this so-called ethnographic or anthropological research is either the quantitative wolf in anecdotal sheep's clothing or subjective-autobiographical pseudo-literature. Without a systematic theory of human studies it is either semi-science or sentimental art. The study of history and an acquisition of an understanding and familiarity with its methods provides a way out of this morass.

The key to the distinction between physics and history is for Cassirer (1944) to be found not in differences in the logic of the two, but in their objects of study. "Historical and scientific thoughts are distinguishable, not by their logical form, but by their objectives and subject matter." (p. 176). Logic cannot provide an adequate basis for distinction because the historian in his quest of truth "is bound to the same formal rules as the scientist. In his modes of reasoning and arguing in his inductive references, in his investigation of causes, he obeys the same general laws of thought as a physicist or biologist." (p. 176). Neither, according to Cassirer, can the distinction be based on saying that the scientist studies present objects while the historian has to do with past objects. Geologists and astronomers are concerned with the past, as are evolutionary biologists. But the human historian, unlike the natural historian, seeks not to study the former state of the physical world, but past stage of human life and

culture. Historians can make use of the results of scientific enquiry, but must not be restricted merely to data available in the way. That does not mean that historical objects have a self-contained reality separate from the laws of nature, merely that despite this embodiment they belong, so to speak, to a higher dimension.

Furthermore, Cassirer (1944) is critical of the attempt to distinguish between history and science on the basis of the logic of the individual as opposed to the logic of the universal. He states that "Windelband declared the judgement of natural science to be nomothetic, those of history to be idiographic. The former give [sic] us general laws; the latter describes particular facts." (p. 186). This distinction became the basis of Rickert's whole theory of historical knowledge, and Cassirer repeats his claim that "empirical reality becomes nature, if we consider it with regard to the universal; it becomes history, if we consider it with regard to the particulars." (Rickert, 1902, quoted on p. 186). Cassirer regards this distinction as abstract and artificial, because in his opinion judgements are always the synthetic unity of universality and of particularity, "these elements are not mutually opposed, they imply and interpenetrate one another. 'Universality' is not a term which designates a certain field of thought; it is an expression of the very character, of the very function of thought ... Thought is always universal" (p. 186). Thus if thought of particulars contains universal elements, and thought of universals contains elements of the particular then neither the historicist nor the antiquarian can truly said to study history. Furthermore, to extrapolate again into the field of educational studies, if we accept that thought has this synthetic unity, then neither the positivist nor the subjectivist can make a case to be interested in

anything but a fractured one-dimensional aspect of truth in the human sciences. To look for generic laws to account for the nature of teaching or to merely give highly personal accounts of particular events without taking into account this synthesis will lead to severely inhibited conclusions.

So, if these are not sufficient reasons to distinguish between science and history what are the necessary criteria? The answer is, according to Cassirer (1944), as follows:

> A physical fact is determined by observation and experimentation. This process of objectification attains its end if we succeed in describing the given phenomena in mathematical language, in the language of numbers. A phenomenon which cannot be so described, which is not reducible to a process of measurement, is not a part of the physical world. (p. 174)

Now, of course, not all physical things are immediately measurable and the scientist is often dependent on indirect methods of verification and measurement. No physicist has ever "seen" the actual structure of an atom in the way a biologist can see a frog spawn or an ecosystem flourish or die. However, these "unseen" facts must ultimately be related to other directly observable or measurable phenomena. This relation must also be governed by the law of causality. Furthermore, the physicist can, if in doubt about the results, replicate the experiment and attempt to correct it or abandon it. The objects of his study are still there; they are constantly present ready to be subjected to his questioning at any moment. The scientist thus has this continuous and immediate relationship with the object of study. Cassirer maintains that the historian is in a different position in relation to what is studied:

> His facts belong to the past, and the past is gone forever. We cannot reconstruct it ; we cannot waken it to a new life in a mere physical,

> objective sense. All we can do is to "remember" it -- give it a new ideal existence. Ideal reconstruction, not empirical observation, is the first step in historical knowledge. (1944, p. 174)

Unlike the scientist the historian only has an indirect approach to his subject , which is man. Not indirect in the sense of the nuclear physicist, no matter how powerful the historian's instruments could be; there is no direct causal link between the physical source under scrutiny and the mind of the person or persons who were the creators. The scientist asks a question and seeks its answer in the physical world. However, the historian cannot confront the events themselves in order to answer his questions. Thus "ideal reconstruction, not empirical observation, is the first step in historical knowledge" (p. 174). Furthermore, because the historian studies the world and the mind of man he is studying a world of symbols, and finds from the very beginning of his researches a world not of physical objects but a world of symbols. One of the most important skills the historian must acquire is the ability to read these symbols. For Cassirer history is part of the ancient human quest for self-knowledge, and "art and history are the most powerful instruments of our inquiry into human nature" (p. 206). We cannot rely on introspection, and psychology merely gives us a picture of the average man. In fact if we were to know all the laws of nature, if we could apply to man all our statistical, economic, sociological rules, still this would not help us to see man in this special aspect and in his individual form. In order to get behind the front of the 'average man', Cassirer maintains, we must turn to art and history:

> In order to find him we must go to the great historians or the great poets....Poetry is not a mere imitation of nature; history is not the narration of dead facts and events. History as well as poetry is an organon of our

> self knowledge, an indispensable instrument for building up our human universe. (p. 206)

While Cassirer leaves many questions unanswered about history, what cannot be denied is the relevance of these ideas to a liberal education. The importance of history lies in its capacity to reconstruct the past in narrative form and attempt to make it part of the consciousness of the modern individual. Only in this way can the individual begin to see farther than the present and the particular, and start to grasp the ideal forms and categories of the human mind.

CHAPTER 6

Wilhelm Dilthey and Conclusion

The over extension of the scientific method into the humanities and human life in general, and the lack of an understanding of the underlying principles of science, which themselves are not subject to the methodology of empiricism, is in my view at the heart of an intellectual crisis facing education today. The fact that our schools of education are still dominated by the social sciences and the attendant distortion of student's views of the meaning of being human presents not only an intellectual but also an ethical threat to the continued life of a liberal society. For example, when a key text (Borich, 1989) used in the preparation of secondary student teachers at a major Canadian university lists one of the key 'behaviours' of effective teaching to be 'clarity' (p. 8). While behaviour can be clear or unclear, in terms of its meaning, and while a teacher may make his meaning very clear or be ambiguous by exhibiting various 'behaviours', the important question is what is going on in the teachers mind to give rise to those behaviours? What should be studied are his intentions, the knowledge that he have and how he regards his pupils? The idea that one can learn to teach educationally by exhibiting the appropriate behaviours is a misguided one; it misses the vital part of what makes good teaching that lies within the teacher. This tendency to reduce thought to manifestations of behaviour means that the students are being taught a theory of mind (if one can use that term to refer to a being who merely exhibits behaviour) which is inimical to the concept of a liberal education. It is to the credit of many of these students, and many who have passed through before them, that they do not accept this and continue on

with their careers on the basis of their own intuitions. However, in the meantime, a great deal of damage has been done, and students have emerged from such educational establishments confused or misguided about the nature of the enterprise they have just joined

The irony is, as Hesse (1972) points out, that the view of science on which this view is based is now being seriously questioned by many scientists themselves, and one must wonder why it has still such a hold on the minds of some educationalists, many of whom regard content as unimportant and process as the key to learning (Cheney, 1988, p. 8). Perhaps a concern with control rather than with the search for the truth has something to do with it. Glynn (1985) points out the irony of this situation,

> ...it is surely one of the ironies of our age that a large number of those in the human and social sciences, engaged in the earnest pursuit of academic respectability, are still struggling to emulate the positivistic or neo-positivistic epistemologies and methodologies of the physical sciences, or of Newtonian Mechanics to be more precise, and to employ them in the study of human subjects and their social relations, at a time when many of the most successful practitioners of physical science have long recognised this paradigm to be wholly inadequate even to the study of physical phenomena. (p. 104)

In this thesis, I have attempted to show the nature of the continuing influence of this neo-positivism, and to place it within the confines of a more universal and more humanly acceptable theory. A theory that cannot merely rely just upon analytical philosophy to provide its substance, but must turn to history to find a view of man that is both universal and yet contingent. Macintyre (1966) views this relation in this way:

> A history...which is concerned with the role of philosophy in relation to actual conduct, cannot be philosophically neutral. For it cannot but be at

> odds with the view of all these recent philosophers who have wanted sharply to distinguish philosophical ethics as a second-order activity of comment from the first-order discourse which is part of the conduct of life, where moral utterances themselves are in place. In drawing this distinction such philosophers have tried so to define the realm of philosophy that it would be a conceptual truth that philosophy could not impinge upon practice.....for it is here that Santayana's epigram that he who is ignorant of the history of philosophy is doomed to repeat it finds its point, It is all too easy for philosophical analysis, divorced from historical enquiry, to insulate itself from correction. (p. 3)

We cannot attempt to get on with the business of the liberal education enterprise unless we include history as well as philosophy as part of practice. That philosophy can play a useful as well as emancipatory role was a point that was recognised by Wilhelm Dilthey, and was a fundamental part of his theory of human studies or the human sciences [The German term *Geisteswissenschaften* is translated into English by various authors both as 'the human sciences' and as 'human studies'. I will use these English terms interchangedly, depending on the author being cited]. Bulhoff (1980) in commenting on this aspect of Dilthey's thought, states,

> the human sciences as formulated in the Introduction to the Human Sciences are the fruit of Dilthey's transformation of philosophy into an empirical or"scientific" enterprise. The human sciences are 'philosophy' in a form appropriate to the modern times: the speculative philosophy of former times had become the array of empirical sciences studying human life as it has been lived through the ages. The knowledge gained, Dilthey felt, would enable man to project his goals effectively, that is, in accordance with the inner tendencies of human life and history. Dilthey always rejected an esoteric philosophy - philosophy of the professors of philosophy, cathedra philosophy as he called it - that has no influence on practical life. Knowledge, and first of all philosophical knowledge, should be useful to man. (p. 28)

In a thesis of this length it is not possible to treat Dilthey's work in any detailed or extensive fashion,however even a brief glimpse of his ideas has shown their

potential importance, both theoretically and practically, for education. This is particularly so in respect of the relationship between science and history, because Dilthey saw himself as the philosophical spokesman for the historists who had set about explaining the nature of man in terms of historical developments. He maintained that science had at the end of the Middle Ages freed itself from the grip of metaphysics, but that the study of society and history had merely changed masters, and that "the growing power of science had led to a new bondage which was no less oppressive than the old" (Dilthey, 1989, p. 47). However, the historists had, in Dilthey's opinion only just begun the task of founding a truly independent human science. The historical school had not developed a theoretical basis for its claims, and "lacked philosophic foundations because its study and evaluation of historical phenomena was not linked to an analysis of the facts of consciousness and, therefore, not based on the only kind of knowledge which is ultimately certain" (p. 48). This had meant, in Dilthey's view that they had not achieved an explanatory method: "Historical vision and comparative procedures by themselves are incapable of establishing an autonomous system of human sciences or of exerting any influence on life." (p. 48). The shortcomings of this state meant that history could not competently argue with the positivists but could merely protest ineffectually. Dilthey saw his task as helping to provide a philosophical justification of the principles guiding the historical school and of the specific research inspired by it. As he put it: "so I came to need and to place a foundation for the human studies" (p. 160). For Dilthey this foundation was, not to be found either in science or in metaphysics but, "only in inner experience, in the facts of consciousness, have I found a firm anchor for my thinking" (Dilthey, 1989,

p. 50). The importance of this claim cannot be understated when it comes to understanding Dilthey's theories about science and history. In his words,

> all science and scholarship is empirical but all experience is originally connected, and given validity, by our consciousness (within which it occurs), indeed by our whole nature. We call this point of view which consistently recognizes that it is impossible to go beyond consciousness, to see, as it were, epistemological; modern scholarship cannot acknowledge any other. (Dilthey, 1883, in Rickman, 1976, p. 161)

This point of view gave to Dilthey the independence from positivism required by the human sciences and the justification lacking in the historical school:

> from this point of view our picture of the whole of nature stands revealed as a shadow cast by a hidden reality; undistorted reality only exists for us in the facts of consciousness given by inner experience. The analysis of these facts is the core of the human studies; knowledge of the principles of the world of mind remains, as the historical school assumed, within the sphere of the human studies which, therefore form an autonomous system. (p. 161)

This assumption that we can only evaluate and justify our knowledge of the world by considering the active mental processes by which we acquire it did not mean that for Dilthey the knowing subject was a pure consciousness or a transcendental ego. He acknowledged his agreements on this matter with Locke, Hume and Kant, but saw them as explaining experience and cognition merely from the facts of apprehension (p. 162). He also rejects the hegemony of cognition over the process of thought, which maintains that : "Cognition seems to develop concepts such as the external world, time, substance and cause from perception, imagination and thought." (p. 162). This for Dilthey was an inadequate explanation and he posited that what lay at the centre of epistemology was the whole human being shaped by historical conditions. "My historical and psychological studies of man as a whole led me to explain

cognition and its concepts in terms of the powers of man as a willing, feeling and imagining being." (Dilthey,1883, in Rickman, 1976, p. 162). These three elements cannot, in Dilthey's view, be detached from each other and are constitutive of mental structure; the cognitive, affective and volitional acts co-exist in every moment of consciousness. As summarized by Hodges (1952), the relationship between them is as follows,

> feeling bears conscious reference to some cognised content and volition involves the idea of what is willed; again, volition is moved by feeling, and cognition gives rise to feeling; again feeling tends to pass into volition, and cognition is governed by the volitional act of attending. Thus no mental act of any of these three types exists without at least one of the other two. (p. 41)

Dilthey, while starting originally from Descartes and Kant and the knowing subject, departs from this tradition by going away from its dominantly cognitive bias."He assumes that we know the world through our feelings and strivings as well as through our sense impressions and thinking" (Rickman, 1976, p. 15).

The whole human being thus becomes the real knowing subject. A being who is conditioned by the functioning of its physical self as well as by social and historical conditions. For Dilthey, the starting point for empiricism must be the rich varied experience of normal, mature observers, who

> see trees in bloom, talk to other people, read newspapers, enjoy poetry and music, play chess, worry about the future, remember past holidays and resent noisy neighbours, who are citizens of a state and members of a family, who tend their gardens and earn their living. (Rickman, 1976, p. 21)

The starting point of philosophy, therefore, is this complex experience which makes up life, within which history plays a vital role:

> I have related every constituent of present day, abstract scientific thought to the whole of human nature (as experience and the study of language and history reveal it) and sought to connect them. As a result the most important constituents of my picture and knowledge of reality -- personal individuality, external world, other persons, their temporal life and interaction -- can be explained in terms of the whole of human nature in which willing, feeling and thinking are only different aspects of the real process of life. The questions we all ask of philosophy cannot be answered by rigid a priori conditions of knowledge but only by a history which starts from the totality of our nature and sketches its development. (Dilthey, 1883, in Rickman, 1976, p. 162)

Dilthey distinguished between the idea of a detached perceiving mind and that of a whole human being, who wills, feels and imagines. To the perceiving mind external reality is merely a phenomenon, but to the whole human being it is something given, independent, immediate and as certain as his own self. According to Dilthey, we know this external world initially from the life of the will, and inferences of cause and effect are only abstractions from it. As he put it:

> this solves the most obstinate problem of this approach, the questions about the origin and justification of our convictions about the reality of the external world. To the perceiving mind the external world remains only a phenomenon but to the whole human being who wills, feels and imagines this external reality (whatever its special characteristics) is something independent and as immediately given and certain as his own self -- it is part of life; not a mere idea. (Dilthey, 1883, in Rickman, 1976, p. 162)

However, Dilthey did not lapse into complete idealism, because in fact the self was part of the world, therefore knowledge of self could lead to knowledge of the external, in particular of the minds other people. Dilthey also fully recognizes the physicality of man, and the fact "that the permanent effects of his acts of will only persist as changes in the material world" (p. 164). But man is more than matter, he is "the psycho-physical unit which is the whole man.

Organized into society men form the reality which is the subject-matter of the historical-social discipline" (p. 164). This inner and outer distinction is, according to Dilthey, not one that is radically disconnected, but, nevertheless, the division between these worlds is the division between the human and natural sciences. Dilthey rejects any view that makes these two states completely separate: man in his view has a double relationship with the world. This relationship Dilthey characterizes as the different appearances of one thing. Natural science dissects the causal order of the physical world, and

> where this dissection of the causal order of nature reaches the point at which a material fact or change is regularly related to a mental fact or change without a further intermediary link being discoverable., we can only note this regular connection but cannot apply the relation of cause and effect to it. (p. 164)

At this point in the relation the human sciences are needed to provide reasons for the occurrence of events, and, while there may be points of confusion as the knowledge of both the sciences and human studies mingle, they are nonetheless mutually dependent. It is by examining this meeting of the two worlds that we can get insight into Dilthey's theory of human studies.

Rickman (1961) gives an example that illustrates this well, when he compares a tree being blown down by the wind and one felled by himself using an axe.

> In the first case all we can or want to know is the relation between the force of the wind as the cause and the splintering of the wood which is the consequence. In the second case there is, of course, a causal relation between the force with which the axe is wielded and the fall of the tree; but there is also quite a different relation which has to be taken into account if the situation is to become intelligible, namely that between my intention, the idea or purpose in my mind -- and the action. (p. 38)

The tree falling in the wind can be explained in terms of causality, but in the case of Rickman cutting the tree down there is awareness of himself as a conscious power within the environment. The second situation is filled with meaning and can be understood in a sense from within, while to talk about what the wind meant is absurd. Nature can be explained in terms of cause; in order to account for the human world understanding is necessary. A great deal of Dilthey's epistemology of historical and inter-personal insight hinges on this concept of understanding (*Verstehen*). "Understanding is insight into the working of a human mind, or as Dilthey himself says, 'the rediscovery of the I in the Thou'" (Rickman, 1961, p. 60).

Dilthey saw the human sciences divided into two classes of discipline, first "the study of history (including the description of the contemporary state of society) and the systematic human studies" (Rickman, 1961, p. 68). However, these were not separate and detached but were dependent on each other and formed a solid whole. The distinction made earlier between "inside" and "outside" once again becomes crucial. The physical world (outside) has no meaning; it is merely accessible to the senses. Dilthey saw the true value of history in this turning towards self-knowledge, in the movement of understanding from the external to the internal.

> In history we read of productive labour, settlements, wars, foundations and states. They fill other souls with great images and tell us about the historical world which surrounds us; but what moves us, above all, in these accounts is what is inaccessible to the senses and can only be experienced inwardly; it is inherent in the outer events which originate it and which, in turn, react on it. (Dilthey in Rickman, 1961, p. 69)

This understanding (*Verstehen*) which the human sciences aim at occurs when they try to understand something internal through the analysis of its outward manifestations. Dilthey rejected the view that considers psychology as representing completely our knowledge of this inner side, because knowledge of one's own inner self or spirit allows the possibility of seeing something similar at work in the objective achievements of other humans. This is not the contemplation of the "unknowable workings of insulated ghosts" as Ryle (1949, p. 57) puts it, nor the resonation of tuning forks in harmony. It is not the direct knowledge of others' inner psychology but the interpretation of the products of those other minds. In fact mind is an objective reality, and the meaning of works of art or political structures are not found in the psychological experiences of the artist or the statesman, but in those very forms which are manifestations of mind. This is close to the theory of mind proposed by Hirst when he maintains that mind, language and the forms of knowledge are intricately interrelated. Furthermore, for Dilthey, a knowledge of man could be gained only from history.

Dilthey' ideas about the nature of the human science and history, his concept of *Verstehen* and hermeneutics are ones that are rich with possibilities in our attempt to understand, justify and organise the educational enterprise. This brief study has only touched on this potential and now that his works are being fully published in English perhaps they can serve to provide for us approaches to education which are neither reductionist nor narrowly analytical, but which fully incorporate history, of the autonomous kind I have alluded to in this thesis, at all levels from concept to the classroom.

Dilthey, more than any other theorist discussed above, maintains that the concept of man as an historical being is of fundamental importance in

philosophical studies, and in this thesis I hope I have furthered this cause of 'philosophical anthropology', or 'anthropological philosophy'. I have attempted to show that at present there is deep intellectual confusion in the educational world, primarily because of a misanalogy between nature and man. In my view, neither the kind of neo-positivist empirical studies that go under the name of 'educational research', nor an ahistorical analytical approach to language and logic can provide a view of man adequate to the task of refurbishing the foundations of a liberal education. As Hirst and many others, have shown, the ideal of a liberal education incorporates an ancient emancipatory and universalist vision of man; those of us who believe in this vision are duty bound to encourage and enhance such an education, and make it part of the preparation for life of future generations. This liberal education is, I would claim, not only intrinsically valuable, but also of great instrumental and practical utility. Liberal education forms one of the most important elements in the concept of a just and democratic society, and it is no accident, I would claim, that those states which still seek to oppress their citizens are also most active in the suppression of any form of liberal education. We, therefore, have an ethical responsibility to make the case for a liberal education as strong and as irrefutable as possible, and, in my view, this can only be done if we include history, in the form I have outlined in this paper, as a necessary part of the enterprise.

CHAPTER 7.

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