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THE DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM  
WITH RELATION TO  
THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE COSMONOMIC IDEA

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## CONCLUSION

The theories of knowledge most prominently displayed in this dissertation - that of Paul Hirst, and our own development of the theory of knowledge of Herman Dooyeweerd - differ at the most fundamental level. Hirst's and our starting-points are to be located in divergent answers to the question of the source of meaning in human experience. For Hirst, this origin is in man's subjective logico-lingual functioning, for "it is only by virtue of conceptualisation that there is anything we can call meaning at all."<sup>1</sup> For us, this Origin is none other than God himself, God who speaks his Word to creation, bringing it into being and sustaining it thereby.

It is because Hirst holds such unbounded hopes for human rationality, exalting Reason as the final court of appeal in all human affairs,<sup>2</sup> that he can also place an all but limitless confidence in a liberal education, for a liberal education is that type of education which is "based fairly and squarely on the nature of knowledge itself."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it is "the ultimate form of education," for it "frees the mind from error and illusion," and "remains basic to the

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1 Hirst, *Knowledge and Curriculum*, p. 64.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

freeing of human conduct from wrong."<sup>1</sup>

An educational confession which is a response to the Scriptures cannot attribute such absolute redemptive benefits to the school, for we must acknowledge another Source of insight into truth and moral rectitude.

The religious choice which confronts us is to accept either a position which confesses human reason to be ultimate (so that Hirst indeed may speak of "the canons of objectivity and reason, canons against which christian, humanist and buddhist beliefs must, in their turn and in their appropriate way be assessed...."<sup>2</sup>) or for a stance which, stated in the negative, confesses such "reason" to be at best derivative, and in fact radically marred by the Fall of Man, and expressed positively, confesses that God alone is the creator of meaning, and that all human experience is a response to his Word.

We are interested in the educational implications of these conflicting world-views, and of the theoretical systems that rest on these religious foundations.

Schematically, we may represent these initial differences in the following manner:

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

2 Paul H. Hirst, "Christian Education: A Contradiction in Terms?," *Learning for Living*, March 1972, 8-9.

1. Who is the source of meaning?	Man	God
2. What is man?	(Autonomously) Rational	Creature in God's Image
3. What is the world?	Diversity without unity	Unity in diversity
4. What is knowledge?	Rational order imposed on the manifold	Insight into the created order
5. What is education?	Initiation into the order which man has constructed	Guidance into knowledge by interaction with the created order

It is the fifth question which focusses on our primary concern, and in articulating our response in distinction from a humanist response, we will further clarify the main themes that have emerged in the course of our investigation. Before we proceed, however, we should notice that the Hirstian position is only one amongst many possible humanist positions, though it does deserve to be classified as a *type* of rationalistic humanism. At the opposite pole of the humanist spectrum is that form of humanism which orients itself to man's autonomy (whether rational or not), and which understands knowledge not so much as rational order, but as that which is instrumental to the attainment of a certain end-in-view; this personalistically-oriented humanism is represented in the educational debate by the trend which is known as progressivism. On this position, education is not initiation into a constant order that has been constructed by men, but the injunction to the child to make

his own meaning. Although Dewey represents a compromise between the two positions, in that he accords to science the dignity of being the highest form of instrumental knowledge, many who would wish to be considered his heirs may accurately be characterised as having swung to the "irrationalist" pole in humanist educational theory and practice.

The Hirstian position has been recognised by many critics as a justification of the traditionalist approach in education,<sup>1</sup> because it accepts the *givenness* of the forms of thought which have been progressively accumulated by man, and outside of which there is indeed no meaning at all. Rationality, says Hirst, is "a matter of developing conceptual schemes by means of public language," and it is these conceptual schemes which establish the very limits of intelligibility and reason; to ignore these schemes is to speak nonsense.<sup>2</sup> But what it is important to underline, is that these *forms* of knowledge are not indeed purely *formal*, but that they cannot be grasped apart from their substantive articulation; that is to say, Hirst is not speaking only of the limits to the *possibility* of certain sorts of orientation to the world, but of the contentful schemes within which alone meaning is possible, and hence of the necessity of understanding *just these* conceptual schemes, if any

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1 Cf. David Adelstein, "'The Philosophy of Education' or The Wisdom and Wit of R.S. Peters," in *Counter Course: A Handbook for Course Criticism*, ed. Trevor Pateman, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, pp. 115-139.

2 Hirst, *Knowledge and Curriculum*, pp. 92-93.

insight or knowledge is to be acquired. The conservative - because anti-critical - nature of this assumption is evident, and the implications for curriculum construction are also clear. As Hirst's close collaborator, R.S. Peters, writes, "education consists essentially in the initiation of others into a public world picked out by the language and concepts of a people and structured by rules governing their purposes and interactions with others...." The responsibility of the teacher towards his students is "to act as a guide in helping them to explore and *share* a public world whose contours have been marked out by generations which have preceded both of them."<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere, Peters speaks thus of the role of language in the formation of the public world and of the mind of the individual:

The objects of consciousness are first and foremost objects in a public world that are marked out and differentiated by a public language into which the individual is initiated.... The individual, as owner of experiences welded to each other in a unique life-history, represents a particular and unrepeatable viewpoint on this public world.... His consciousness, as well as his individuality, is neither intelligible nor genetically explicable without the public world of which he is conscious, in relation to which he develops, and on which he imprints his own individual style and pattern of being. But that does not make individual consciousness any the less important.... (2)

The child has to "get on the inside of" the social world, "to in-

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1 R.S. Peters, *The Philosophy of Education*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 26.

2 Peters, *Ethics and Education*, p. 50.

corporate it in his own mental structure."

This he does mainly by learning a language; for a people's language is the key to the form of life which they enjoy. By means of it they pick out and create a public world peculiar to them. The working class man, for instance, who has access only to a limited vocabulary and to a limited set of symbolic structures, literally lives in a different world from the professional man who has a much wider and more varied vocabulary.... It is a grave error to regard the learning of a language as a purely instrumental matter, as a tool in the service of purposes, standards, feelings, and beliefs. For in a language is distilled a view of the world which is constituted by them. In learning a language the individual is initiated into a public inheritance which his parents and teachers are inviting him to share. (1)

There are two complementary conclusions to be drawn from this passage. Firstly, the "public" world is not as public as one might initially assume: what we are faced with are in fact many "public" worlds. Which one are we then to choose as the arbiter of meaning? (Peters' predilection for the "middle-class Englishman" is renowned.<sup>2</sup>) Secondly, each of these public worlds embodies a *view of the world*: the claim of reason to universality and objectivity would seem to collapse in this way also, for one is faced with a fundamental choice between conflicting world-views. Who is to determine what is the most public, the consensus position (unless, perhaps, the State, one-sidedly identified with the total society?)

However, assuming the monolithic public world that both Hirst

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1 *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

2 Cf. Hirst and Peters, *The Logic of Education*, p. 76.



and Peters require for their theories of knowledge and education to carry any weight, one must enquire as to the possibility of criticism within that tradition. It may be noted that there is really no mechanism for the *growth* of knowledge within the Hirstian framework: the bar of empirical applicability turned out to be only a slightly more complex linguistic test, and not in fact a means of advancing the grip of the conceptual schemes on the world. The real test of knowledge, as "an evolutionary product"<sup>1</sup>, is its historical tenacity, so that that which captures the consensus is necessarily legitimated as the good, the true, and the beautiful. Though Peters concedes a plurality of linguistic worlds, Hirst must ultimately defend a totalitarian notion of truth. That which does not accord with the "consensus" espoused by the majority (or the powerful, or the "educated men"), must finally be denied a place in the dialogue within those forms which the "public consensus" dictates. The present and the future belong to the mighty, and History records the manifestation of the Absolute. The Objective Mind, Reason, dictates in particular the secularisation of all "public" areas of life, and the impotence of a religious commitment, such as Christianity, to contribute in an integral way to the advance of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> But this is to avoid the central religious

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1 Hirst, *Knowledge and Curriculum*, pp. 92-93.

2 Cf. Peters, *Ethics and Education*, p. 319; Hirst, "Christian Education: A Contradiction in Terms?," 9.

question: Whether Man or God is the measure of all things.

Having decided the question as to the source of meaning in favour of Man, the humanist must determine, "Who is this Man?" Again, the answer given by Hirst (and similarly by Cassirer and Phenix) must be judged unsatisfactory. Hirst's notion of man is internally antinomic, for on the one hand man is the reflection of the diversity of forms of knowledge into which he is initiated, and on the other hand, man is supremely the *animal symbolicum*, with all diversity reduced to this one common denominator. In either event, he is the creator of all meaning, a position which is untenable in the light of the Biblical revelation.

The Christian view of man maintains that he is made in the image of God, and placed as the ruler of creation to unfold its meaning to the glory of the Creator. He is not meaning-maker, but meaning-unfolder. His identity stems not from one or other of his functions, but from his integral personhood as a being in God's image. The diversity of his functioning, the range of meaning that he may experience, is not the product merely of his evolutionary development, but of his interaction with a creation which also is a diversity-in-unity. The limits of human functioning - the laws for this functioning - are established by God in his creation of the world. Man is one, though he acts and knows in many ways.

The Christian view of man and his world entails that man's knowledge of the world cannot be encapsulated within one of its

modes of functioning. Indeed, his knowledge of the world is in the first place *religious*, being the creature's service of his Creator in the Creator's world. Nothing that a man does can be abstracted from the religious context. In essence, it is man's religious heart-unity that is the guarantee of his identity in the diversity of his tasks.

It is only if man's identity is confessed to reside in his conceptual abilities - if his meaning is believed to reside in his capacity to make meaning by way of conceptualisation (whether formally conceived in terms of the logical norms, or materially in the conjunction of logical and lingual norms, for example) - that the unity in the diversity of his experience must be taken to be conceptual. The Christian perspective opens the way to (one could say, *demand*s) a pluralistic view of knowledge, which does not risk losing the unity of man in a complexity of meanings, nor yet require the artificial imposition of unity by an absolutisation of one dimension within the complexity. If knowledge is insight into norms, and these norms are diverse, then there are many forms of knowledge. If knowledge is a conceptual scheme, then even if the "manifold" is recognised, only the schematisation may count as knowledge.

If man is held to *create* the order in experience - if the a priori is subjective - and if the guarantee of its objectivity resides in its intersubjectivity, it follows that the road to know-

ledge is by initiation into the public forms, the communally-held a prioris.

If man is held to *respond* to the order in experience - if the a priori is ontic - and if the guarantee of objectivity resides in the givenness of this order and the faithfulness of God in maintaining it, it follows that the road to knowledge is by way of interaction with this given order. Of course, this is a communal task, as all men are created in Adam and potentially redeemed in Christ, and the responses of others to this order are not disparaged as worthless: it is merely that these concepts, structures, and tests (and so on) are not to be elevated to the position of the law, to which they are but a response.

It seems, then, that we should speak of the forms *for* knowledge, to which the various forms *of* knowledge may be a response. That is to say, we need to distinguish between, on the one hand, the diverse but coherent law-order which sets the limits for all human knowledge, bound as it is to the structure of creation, and on the other hand, the actual diversity of human responses to that coherent diversity of laws, the subjective (not arbitrary, but *subject to* the forms for knowledge) formulation of insight into the creational order.

Hirst, Phenix and Cassirer, no less than Wittgenstein and Kant, may be understood to be asking the same question, namely, what are the categories within which all possible meaning must be ordered:

what are the universal conditions for human knowledge of the world. The answer of Kant's "Copernican Revolution" in epistemology - that these forms must ultimately be located in the human mind - is in one sense not new: it had been formulated more than a millenium before by the Hellenists, in repudiation of the Classical Greek answer in terms of the objective impingement of the world. That the Hellenistic answer was prevented from assuming dominance in philosophical thought during the Middle Ages is not only of historical interest: it was the Christian ground motive that resisted such an answer. Descartes attempted a reassertion of the Hellenistic position, by according to the human mind the central role in understanding the world, independently of revelation or non-theoretical experience, but it is only in the post-Kantian period that the radically subjectivist answer attains exclusive hold on Western philosophy.

The Christian perspective recognises that the forms for knowledge are established by the Creator, and upheld by his Word. Not being faced with the threat of a diversity-without-unity, which promises to send man into the world without vision or coherence, the Christian has no need to attempt to re-establish a fixed point within man's experience by an appeal to one facet of his being. The forms of knowledge developed in response to the creational structure may indeed be diverse, but the unity of man is guaranteed by his transcendence of this diversity in his religious heart-

unity. The internal dialectic of Hirst's position (and again, of the positions adopted by Kant, Cassirer, Phenix and Wittgenstein), a polarisation of diversity and unity, which leads to the leveling of the differences between his many forms as equally conceptually structured schemes, a dialectic which obscures the distinction between a subjectively analytical approach to the world, and other modes of interaction, need not plague a Christian epistemology.

The process of theoretically delineating the law-order of the cosmos is an ongoing, properly progressive, and fallible investigation. It is because the forms *of* knowledge are ever to be distinguished from the forms *for* knowledge, that there is at root no necessity for a Christian classification of types of knowledge to rigidify into a static conception which is as conservative and as traditionalist as an account which would identify the actual and the real with the rational and the true. The Truth is not that which can be captured in a concept, for the Truth is both the Way and the Life: the Truth is God Incarnate in Christ, and the Truth is thus to be lived in the context of the community that is Christ's Body, which is moving on in its task towards the *eschaton*. Knowledge is not exhausted in the present forms of language, but is ever growing in the interaction of a living community with the world over which it rules.

It is this living community, a Body with members each possess-

ing gifts which they are to contribute to the upbuilding of that Body, which is entrusted with the task of education. This Body must recognise in its theory and in its practice both the givenness of creation, and the communal nature of its task. In both creation and community, there is unity-in-diversity.

The model we have proposed for the Christian school is that of the *integral* curriculum. Taking creation as the given unity-in-diversity, we must orient our task in the school to this given. We must neither reduce the diversity to a monochrome unity, so that understanding is held to be singularly rational, or aesthetic, or emotional, etc. Nor must we lose the unity in the diversity, so that we are left with a fragmentation of the curriculum, in which the meaning-character of reality, in which all things refer to one another and cohere with one another, is lost from sight. Thus, we do not speak of an *integrated* curriculum, in which one attempts to "put the pieces back together again", to restore a meaning that seems to have disappeared, amidst the analytically-oriented fragmentation of the curriculum into (not merely *distinct* but) *separate* subject areas; whether this "integration" is performed by the teacher or the curriculum theorist, as the Nature-oriented humanists would espouse, or by the child, as the Freedom-oriented humanists would desire, is irrelevant. The creation is *integral*, and the curriculum must reflect this *integrality*. Creation is *revelation*, and it comes to man as that which demands a response, and not

merely as that which has been objectified, defined and delimited, responding only to the questions that man puts to it. The child must be opened up to creation in all its dimensions, as it is given, for it carries the Word of the Lord to his creatures.

As a *communal* task, education must proceed in recognition of the diversity of talents that God has given to members of the community. No person is self-sufficient, nor is one individual identical with another. Confining our attention largely to the question of the structure of knowledge, we have developed a theory which purports to display the structural limits to the differentiation of knowing, disclosing the potential for varieties of individual understanding: we have provided a theoretical foundation which allows the school to recognise in practice the many ways in which men may gain insight into the creational order. There is one path to knowledge: it is the way of submission to God; but there are many ways within creation in which this knowledge may be expressed: there is a plurality of ways of knowing. God's world is rich, but it is ordered; man's life is diverse, but it is coherently structured by the Word of God.

Finally, it will be fruitful to consider some of the range of possible research programmes that may ensue from the present investigation.

1. Perhaps the most pressing question in respect of the applicability of our theory of knowledge in the practical educational context, is that concerning the parameters of growth and develop-



ment in the extension of concrete experience and within each differentiated way of knowing. Such research would be particularly concerned with:

a) the period at which the possibility of distantiation from concrete experience occurs,

b) whether it occurs at approximately the same time in all ways of knowing,

c) whether there is a genetic relation of interdependence between various ways of knowing, such that the realisation of one is the condition for the possibility of another,

d) whether there is an internal order of genesis within each way of knowing, such that the development of aesthetic sense precedes the development of aesthetic technique, for example, in the primary unfolding of aesthetic functioning.

The investigation of these developmental parameters would be freed from the Kantian presuppositions which have undergirded the Piagetian programme, not only in the study of the development theoretical (formal operational) thought, but also in the applications of the Piagetian approach to the study of the development of religious and moral insight, by Goldman and Kohlberg respectively.

2. In a different area of educational concern, we may suggest:

a) an investigation of the pedagogical methods appropriate to each way of knowing,

b) the consequent construction and testing of curriculum

materials at various levels of schooling.

The challenge is to develop an approach which breaks free of the rationalistic, propositional approach to, for example, art or language, and yet also avoids the abyss of un-normed individual autonomy, wherein no normative guidance may be given to the student.

3. Detailed studies need to be made of the actual methods of working employed by artists, businessmen, preachers, politicians, and so on, utilising case studies, biographies and philosophical analysis, so that the bare analytical frame we have described may take on flesh, and teachers may become attuned to recognising nascent insight in specific dimensions, and may be better equipped to nurture this insight in non-theoretical ways.

4. Our structural investigation of distantiation should be complemented by a genetic investigation of creativity. Suggestive here is Koestler's analysis of the creative possibilities engendered by the conflation of two distinct matrices of thought, or two distinct systematic approaches or attitudes to the world: we may understand the connection between this perspective and our own analysis of the opening-process in terms of the unfolding of anticipatory moments under the leading of superstratum aspects of meaning.<sup>1</sup> Also of interest is De Bono's understanding of "lateral thinking", whereby again, creativity emerges as a function of the conjunction

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1 Cf. Koestler, *The Act of Creation*.

of two quite disparate ideas.<sup>1</sup> Further, we may pursue the connections between the distinction of convergent and divergent modes of thinking, and our distinguishing of the anticipatory and retrocipatory directions in human acting.<sup>2</sup>

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Recognising that religion is that ultimate commitment which directs and undergirds all of man's life-activities, we have argued for a distinctively Christian education, which recognises God in Christ, and not Man, as the Source of meaning. Beginning in that ordered creation which God has placed in man's care, that diverse and integral concrete experience which is the site of man's execution of his task, we have argued for a curriculum which finds its starting-point and its continual point of reference in this experience. We have built on this the notion of the possibility of a variety of ways of orienting oneself to this experience, of taking distance from the everyday in order to lead on the process of meaning-unfolding. This is a response to the laws *for* human activity that God has established: the positivisation of these laws in concrete experience remains relative to these laws.

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1 Cf. Edward de Bono, *The Use of Lateral Thinking*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971; *PO: Beyond Yes and No*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, rev. ed., 1973.

2 Cf. Liam Hudson, *Contrary Imaginations: A Psychological Study of the English Schoolboy*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967.

Our investigation of the ways of knowing has of necessity been *theoretical* in character. Whereas the boundaries between pre-theoretical and theoretical concepts are unclear in Hirst's account, so that often it is the *theoretical articulation* of a form which assumes dominance in the acts of human knowing which he as- says to describe, our delineation of the ways of knowing makes no pretence to being a description of these acts from the subjective standpoint of the knower; our account is self-consciously a theoretical reflection on these ways of knowing, and hence it is characterised by its formality and abstraction from the concrete acts themselves. A further investigation of these ways of knowing, which would take the analytical framework as a guideline, might attempt to describe each way of knowing *phenomenologically*, as it were, so that the vitality of each mode of experience is disclosed in a material fashion.

Christian education will not only be distinguished from traditional "curriculum-centred" education, but also from progressive "child-centred" education. The reason for this is apparent: although the Christian educator knows that there is not just *one* path to knowledge of the creation, or only one sort of insight that may count as knowledge, neither will he maintain that merely *any* sort of interaction with the creation will count as knowledge. Knowledge is a response to the norms which God has established: it is insight into these norms. Knowledge is therefore not unstruc-

tured, or indifferently structured: it is structured by the Word of God. The Christian teacher cannot maintain the absolute autonomy of the child, the freedom of the child to do what he will; he may not defend the view that what is true is so only by virtue of its instrumentality to certain specific ends, that what is true in one situation cannot be true in another, as it is necessarily a different situation requiring a different truth. The Word of God remains constant, even though in a dynamic creation which is moving on from its beginning to its consummation, the positivisation of understanding will no doubt require variable formation. There *are* norms established for human action, and these norms are binding on the child and the educator alike.

The humanist position, in its scientific and in its personalistic forms, will necessarily lead to the disintegration of the curriculum, because of the disintegration of the underlying perspective; this disintegration is in itself a function of the attempt to find a point of integration where it may not be found - *within* the creation. Although Hirst and Peters, for example, would see in language the common thread in all forms of understanding and modes of experience, we have seen that even here Peters admits the variability of world-views. Language is a human function, which cannot autonomously provide coherence, for it is rooted in a religious perspective. The relative community of a linguistic area, in which people share the same terms, the same formal syntactical structures,

cannot provide the absolute coherence of vision which stems from a religious perspective alone: this is the case even in highly specialised linguistic communities, such as those of the special sciences; in mathematics, for example, the mathematical "community" is fragmented amongst formalists, intuitionists, empiricists and logicians; the community of English speakers is even more extensively split amongst Christians, Marxists, liberal humanists, Jews and so on: within the English-speaking linguistic area, does not the term "God" cover a great diversity of denotative and connotative meaning, so that the very publicity of this term is no guarantee of consensus amongst those who employ this term. Even more complicated linguistic units, sentences such as "God is good" or "God is just", are no evidence of unanimity amongst those who utter such sentences.

However inevitably forms *of* knowledge, the products of human cultural response to the creational order, are tied to language, the forms *for* knowledge are tied only by the Word of God. The diverse and relative forms *of* knowledge may not be elevated to the status of forms *for* knowledge. There will always be a tentativeness and a relative character to our guiding of children into the forms of knowledge, because we confess that no human response in itself may provide the unchanging law for human activity; both as teachers and as students, we must submit ourselves in our learning to the divine law-order, which always calls into question as fallible all that we undertake.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BJES</i>	<i>British Journal of Educational Studies</i>
<i>EPAT</i>	<i>Educational Philosophy and Theory</i>
<i>JCE</i>	<i>Journal of Christian Education</i>
<i>PPESA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia</i>
<i>PPESGB</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain</i>
<i>PR</i>	<i>Philosophia Reformata</i>

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