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The Role of English in the Conversation of Humankind: Humanism and creativity in Newbolt (1921) and the national curriculum (2014)

> *English is not merely the medium of our thought, it is the very stuff and process of it... It connotes the discovery of the world by the first and most direct way open to us, and the discovery of ourselves* (Newbolt, 1921: 20)

Introduction: the place of creativity

The publication of a new national curriculum (sic) in England (DfE, 2014) has had an impact on secondary English classrooms on a number of levels. Although it technically does not apply to the two-thirds (http://www.thegovernor.org.uk/academies.shtml) of secondary schools that have converted to state-funded academies, nor to independent schools, the national curriculum is significant because it provides the basis of examination rubrics. The revision of the GCSE specifications in response to the new curriculum (purportedly to make them more rigorous (www.gov.uk/government/news)) caused many schools to make large-scale adjustments to their English provision. This is welcomed by some for 'reinvigorating' practice (Bullen, 2017) but decried by others because an examination-centric approach circumscribes students' wider understanding and access to culture (Yandell and Brady, 2016; Yandell, 2017; Bomford, 2018).

Less well-publicised, but arguably of equal import, is the disappearance of the term 'creativity' from the English orders. While the previous national curriculum for English included creativity as one of its four central pillars (QCA/DCSF, 2007), the current curriculum contains not one reference to the term (nor any word with the 'create'

root), perhaps because creativity runs counter to other powerful discourses in education, including the importance of examination results as the measure of a student's merit (Moules et al, 2011).

Yet, historically, creativity has long been central to teaching. Creative, student-centred pedagogy can be traced back to the writings of Pestalozzi in the late eighteenth century; Elizabeth Mayo, who established the progressive Home and Colonial [Teacher] Training College in 1836 (Gillard, 2018) was inspired by Pestalozzi's belief that learning happens through the 'head, hand and heart' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Heinrich_Pestalozzi). The adjective 'creative' is first specifically applied to English pedagogy when Sharwood Smith of the English Association defined one of the four essentials for the development of the 'true' child as '[t]he encouragement of a creative spirit' (1919: 30)[1]. By the late 1960s, there is wide-spread use of the noun 'creativity' in English circles as evidenced by publications from the Dartmouth Conference (e.g. Dixon, 1967); 'creativity' appears for the first time in a policy document on English education a few year later (Bullock, 1975) and is present in the first five iterations of the national curriculum for English 1989-2007 (Smith, 2018). Throughout, creativity is associated not only with valuing and creating the aesthetic, but with *becoming*, or personal growth, as if the creation of a 'whole' adult depends upon it; creativity is attendant upon 'possibility thinking' through imagination (Craft, 2005) and 'inter-thinking' - effective and worthwhile communication between people (Littleton & Mercer, 2012). McCallum offers the

[1] The other three essentials are: i) a teacher who is 'fond' of literature, ii) a 'first rate' library, and iii) dramatic power - a concept which is not fully described, but seems to be that which enables children to act out Shakespeare (ibid).

plural ‘creativities’ (2012: 20) to reflect this wealth of associations. Creativity is not an end in itself: it is vital in the life-giving sense; creativity makes us fully human.

In The Teaching of English in England (Newbolt, 1921) the connection between humanism and creativity is made explicit. This article explores the themes of humanism and creativity in Newbolt and considers the impact of creativity’s absence from the current curriculum. Using a definition of humanism derived from the work of Michael Oakeshott, it argues that humanism is central to a liberal education and that creative approaches are at the heart of English. It suggests that familiarising themselves with Newbolt will support new teachers in defining the English they wish to teach.

The inquiry uses a hermeneutic approach which, it goes on to argue, is particularly appropriate both to humanism and creativity. It thereby promotes hermeneutics as a method for educational research.

Oakeshott’s humanism and its significance for education

In 1921, the year in which The Teaching of English in England was published, Michael Oakeshott (1901-1990) was a second year History undergraduate at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. He went on to become an eminent political philosopher. His writing is chiefly concerned with individual freedoms and the relationship between enterprise and the civil in any society. As such, he is associated with Conservatism, but in some ways he cannot be easily politically badged.

Oakeshott’s interest in history underpinned his philosophical thinking. Influenced by the eminent German philosopher Dilthey (1833-1911), he recognised that history (as

all human sciences) is not based on ‘facts’ but interpretation of what has survived, and that interpretation is dependent on the interpreter. Also like Dilthey, he appreciated the Arts and the aesthetic.

In The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind, Oakeshott describes the civilised human condition as a ‘conversation’ – ‘an unrehearsed intellectual adventure’ (1959: 11). That it is a ‘conversation’ stresses the centrality of human relationships and necessity of effective communication; that it is an ‘unrehearsed… adventure’ suggests it relies on spontaneity yet is also potentially risky. It is ‘intellectual’, so relies on judgement and thought. Oakeshott presents imagination as a mode of thought which helps us to make judgements (because imagination allows us to envision and so consider various possibilities), while poetry - which he defines as the making of images of any kind - acts as ‘the voice of contemplation’ (1959: 39), so enabling thought.

Thus, poetry contributes to a ‘society of conversationalists’ (1959: 57). Although we all speak in our own ‘idiom’ – since we are each unique, we bring our own exclusive experience to that conversation – poetry enables us to contemplate or ‘see’ the way between the idiomatic differences, and thereby come to understanding. Oakeshott makes clear that he values poetry because the aesthetic is life-enhancing and democratic (everyone can appreciate it), but he argues that poetic imagination is not a preserve of the Arts: such imagination is equally necessary in conversations about science and other practical concerns.

Oakeshott considers education specifically in The Voice of Liberal Learning (1989). He defines learning as how we come to see ourselves in the world through a process of ‘doing and submitting at the same time’ (Kitchen, 2014: 110). *Doing* is active

engagement which enables us to try things out and so learn judgement; such activity might be practical, but thinking or imagining is also *doing*. *Submitting* is to a more knowledgeable other (such as a teacher) or to practices and traditions. This dual process is successful when the learner knows not just *what* but *how*. We are merely 'carrier[s]' (2014: 131) of information, the *what*, until we gain the judgement – *knowhow* - to use that information autonomously and appropriately. Oakeshott gives as an example learning a language: however well one learns vocabulary and grammar, such information is of little use until it can be applied independently in a conversation. This can be applied to any human 'language:' history, philosophy, life itself.

For Oakeshott, then, a humanist education has liberal aims. It is about connecting individuals for a common good in which pleasure and delight are as important as economic standing. He argues that we each need to be educated in order to fulfil our human potential. In sum, a humanist education should enable us to grow as individuals, intellectually and imaginatively, through guidance and experiment. We are thereby equipped to participate fully in the 'conversation' of life, making choices that contribute to the benefit of all.

Hermeneutics as a humanist and creative paradigm

Oakeshott's interest in Dilthey has added pertinence to this paper through Dilthey's influence in the field that underpins this inquiry, hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation of language, having 'human communication, language and discourse at its centre' (Gardner, 2010: 39). Hermeneutists hold that language is the foundation from which things that matter to

humans (relationships, ideas) are built; it is therefore radical, in the sense that our lives are *rooted* in it. However, language *by itself* is not enough: for communication (or conversation) to take place, language needs to be understood, interpreted. Dilthey's major contribution to hermeneutic thought is that ideas need to be examined in relation to the social and cultural context from which they come. Thus, small events can be interpreted in terms of larger ones (a battle in the context of a war) and it is important to know details of the 'characters' involved to understand things from their perspective and so interpret their actions. There is the need for us to use our imagination to see through another's eyes and come to a hermeneutic understanding. This chimes both with Oakeshott's view of history as interpretation and his emphasis on the importance of the imagination.

Hermeneutics is therefore a creative paradigm, concerned as it is with finding meanings through a synthesis of interpretation. Because hermeneutists are always questioning in their search for a deeper interpretation and understanding, the conclusions reached and knowledge gained are never static or secure, but simply the basis for the next question. The necessity of using one's imagination and applying a creative approach makes hermeneutics an 'art' (Gardner, 2010:41).

The twentieth century philosopher, Hans-Geog Gadamer (1900-2002), was also influenced by Dilthey. Like Oakeshott, Gadamer understood that all knowledge is tentative and conditional: the philosopher is on a perpetual journey to an unknown destination. Gadamer used two hermeneutic tools extensively in his research: the fusion of horizons and the hermeneutic circle. 'Fusion' takes place when two horizons, that of the interpreted (the text or speaker) and the interpreter (the reader or listener) are 'fused' in mutual understanding, forming a new perfect 'unity' of their two respective horizons, one which 'does not allow the interpreter to speak of an

original meaning of the work without acknowledging that, in understanding it, the interpreter's own meaning enters it as well' (Gadamer, 2004: 578). The hermeneutic circle is a dialectic tool of interpretation whereby understanding of the whole is confirmed through exploration of its parts. It can be envisaged like the focusing in and out of a microscope, enabling one to look at a portion of a sample on the slide in detail, then zoom out to see the entire sample, then zoom in to take a close look at another portion, in order to learn more about the substance being analysed at various levels.

Applying hermeneutics to education research

The historian Philip Gardner is, like me, a teacher educator. He researches history education in the twentieth century (2010, 2011), suggesting the study of history should be itself hermeneutic. I follow his precedent by applying a hermeneutic approach to the present inquiry. In so doing, I draw on the hermeneutist Kinsella, whose research is in a medical field but is not unrelated - she is involved in the education of health professionals. Kinsella argues that because an inquiry will be unpredictable (like a conversation) and because the researcher's use of language will necessarily be different to that of the text (reminiscent of Oakeshott's understanding of our individual idioms), it is important for the researcher to maintain 'vigilant subjectivity' (Deluca, 2000 in Kinsella, 2006: 7). Since there can be no authoritative reading of a text, ambiguity is inevitable, yet this might be an advantage, as ambiguity can provide opportunities to explore unexpected meanings.

In analysing The Teaching of English in England (op cit) (hereafter the Report) and the current national curriculum (op cit), I apply the hermeneutic circle and fusion of

horizons through Kinsella's three-tier model. The approach involves i) holistic analysis (reading for overall meaning), ii) selective analysis (identifying key extracts) and iii) detailed analysis (identifying key details) (Kinsella and Bidinosti, 2016).

Context: "The aim is to train generally all who are born men to all which is human." (Comenius n.d. in Arnold, 1880 in Newbolt, 1921: 48)

Since we are situated in history (Gadamer, 2004), it is important first to provide the context before exploring the Report. Here is offered some brief information on i) the socio-economic and educational context, ii) English as a school subject and iii) Newbolt himself, better to enable interpretation of the text.

i) Newbolt was commissioned in 1919, the year after the end of the First World War which had ravaged Europe. The War had claimed the lives of 900,000 British men and wounded 2,000,000 more (https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I/Killed-wounded-and-missing); there was resentment against the government for its handling of the conflict that had led to such catastrophic loss of life; the class system had begun to crumble; women were empowered to take on roles that had previously been the preserve of men (including as secondary teachers).

An Education Act of 1918 was designed to set the country on course for successful rebuilding. The principle of universal education provision had already been established in 1870 and strengthened in 1902 with the introduction of Local Authorities (Gillard, 2018); now the universal school leaving age rose to from 12 to 14, tertiary provision was expanded, ancillary services were included and all fees for state elementary schools were abolished (https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/parliament-and-the-first-world-war/legislation-and-acts-

of-war/education-act-1918/). Clearly the government was prioritising investment in the young generation.

ii) The subject English was still relatively new in 1919. Its recognition is due in no small measure to the work of the famous poet and school inspector, Matthew Arnold (1822-1888). He had argued in Culture and Anarchy that enabling the working classes to access the 'wisdom and beauty' (1869: 47) of literary culture would inspire them to intellectual pursuits and so enable them to escape the 'anarchy' of their boorish lives. Although Arnold appears to have a paternalistic view of the poor and an idealist, elitist view of culture, his philosophy is humanist. He makes clear that education should not be 'Intellectual food prepared in a way that [politicians and religious influencers] think proper for the actual condition of [what they call] the masses,' as that is 'indoctrination' (1869: 69/70). Instead,

> *culture works differently. It does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgements and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men (sic) live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely, nourished and not bound by them (ibid).*

This quotation demonstrates his egalitarian, liberal stance. He suggests that such an education is the means of changing (to appropriate the words of one of his most famous poems) the 'darkling plain' of the present into 'a land of dreams' with 'joy... love... light... certitude... peace [and]... help for pain' (On Dover Beach, 1851).

Arnold's efforts validated literature in English (as opposed to the Classics) as worthy of study. Oxford opened a School of English in 1893; Cambridge followed suit in 1917 (Medway et al, 2014). On the back of a flurry of interest in English education prompted both by the recognition of English as a subject and the 1902 Education Act, a group of teachers and academics established the English Association (EA) in 1906. Sir John Henry Newbolt (1862-1938) was one of their number; he went on to be the EA's president in 1928. Popular and active, the EA ran regular conferences and published a series of around 50 pamphlets between 1907 - 1921 on topics pertinent to English teachers (https://archive.org/details/pamphletsonteach00engl).

iii) Newbolt, knighted in 1915, was a lawyer, novelist, historian and – like Arnold – an admired poet. The son of a middle-class country vicar, he had attended local grammar schools before winning a scholarship to the then new and progressive Clifton College, Bristol, from whence he progressed to read Law at Oxford. It was perhaps the fame of Newbolt's patriotic poems Vitai Lampada (1892) and Drake's Drum (1910), together with his role in the War Propaganda Bureau, that reassured the president of the Board of Education that Newbolt was the appropriate establishment figure from whom to commission The Teaching of English in England.

Newbolt gathered on his committee six women and eight men. Among their number were fellow founder members of the EA, including the Shakespeare expert and school inspector Dover Wilson; school inspector Miss KM Baines; Professor Caroline Spurgeon, the first female professor at the University of London and first female Professor of English Literature in the country; Newbolt's former schoolmate, Sir

Arthur Quiller Couch - novelist, critic and editor of The Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1900; and George Sampson, already widely published, who went on to write English for the English (1922), the first full-length book on English teaching. Thus, Newbolt gathered around him the expert and erudite, men and women who were familiar with the work of elementary, grammar and independent schools, were presumably respected both by English teaching professionals of the day and, through their works, the wider public.

English as the 'keystone' for a humanist education

The Report's concern for an educational system that benefits all is immediately apparent. The very start of the General Introduction includes a metaphor that would have resonated with contemporary readers familiar with the Bible, condemning the education system as a 'faulty' (1921: 5) arch that should be rebuilt with English as the keystone. The Report claims that a system which maintains privilege for the few in independent (and grammar) schools - with the majority of children taught in ill-financed elementary schools - is broken, as it perpetuates the divide between rich and poor and so (referencing Arnold) 'disunites classes' (1921: 6). (Incidentally, Newbolt [2]acknowledges the difficulties and 'struggle' (1921: 59) facing elementary school teachers: he is not blaming *them*.) He calls for a common liberal education that would 'form a new element of national unity, linking… all classes' (1921: 15) and so help heal the nation after 'the great ordeal [it] has just passed through (1921: 58).

[2] References to Newbolt hereafter assume consensus between and shared authorship by Newbolt and his committee

The damning criticism of the status quo is followed by discussion of a second 'failure', the 'divorce between education and reality' (1921: 7). Newbolt suggests that lessons consisting of 'lifeless facts' (which he found to be all too common) hold no 'living interest' (1921: 8) for the child – the semantic field of life presents school as deadly-dull. Further, the system does nothing to encourage 'a community of interest between pupil and teacher' (1921: 7). In Newbolt's view, education should instead be about:

> *teaching the student to follow the different lines on which life may be explored and proficiency in living may be obtained. It is, in a word, guidance in the acquiring of experience... The most valuable for all purposes are those experiences of human relations which are gained by contact with human beings. (1921: 8)*

Central is the idea of experiential learning. The repetition of 'human' shows that this happens through establishing meaningful human relationships and suggests the humanist perspective which the Report later makes explicit. It goes on to state that the relationships of the classroom are the most important of all,

> *since it is there that he will come under the influence of not one but two personal forces, namely, the creative power of the author whose record he is studying, and the appreciative judgment of the teacher who is introducing him to the intimacy of a greater intellect (1921 :8).*

Influenced by the creativity of a writer, learners are themselves creative in developing their own thinking, albeit under the guidance of a teacher - prefiguring Oakeshott's *doing* and *submitting.* The quotation reinforces the committee's view of the central place of literature in English and in education as a whole. Recalling

Arnold and foreshadowing Oakeshott, Newbolt celebrates literature as central to the development of individuals and thus to human progress: he discusses the human 'love of goodness, the love of truth and the love of beauty' (1921: 9), here citing the Dean of St Paul's (which, coupled with the earlier biblical allusion, reinforces that his Humanism is complementary to and not separate from Christianity). Literature being 'the most direct and lasting communication of experience by man to men' (1921: 9), it should be 'treated as an art, a means of creative expression, a record of human experience' (1921: 11). Thus literature, though enabling us all to access and appreciate beauty and 'hear the voices of those who have known life better than ourselves' (1912: 17) teaches us empathy and values; it helps us to be truly human.

'The essence of a liberal education is the study of a great literature' (1921: 30)

The view that the aesthetic is *the* means of human development is not uncontentious. For industrialists who believe that human progress is achieved through a flourishing economy, education should be about teaching a workforce self-discipline, patience and the ability to complete 'utilitarian' tasks (Davison, 2014: 20), while Newbolt himself acknowledges that universal education is seen by some as the means of social control - imposing ideas rather than encouraging the masses to think for themselves (1921). However, the Report favours education for 'life' not 'livelihood' (Fleming, 2015: 5). Newbolt defends his liberal perspective and justifies his emphasis on the importance of literature in the second chapter of the Report through providing a history of humanism in which he emphasises the practical and instrumental. He argues that humanism developed during the Renaissance, when a humanist education aimed to produce 'the good citizen, possessed of sound

judgement in practical affairs, and at the same time strongly emphasised the aesthetic' (1921: 29).

For these early humanists, classic literature was essential, as it was only through the classics that 'human nature in the plenitude of intellectual and moral freedom' (Symonds, n.d. in Newbolt, 1921: 29) was portrayed, no other literature then coming close. Newbolt suggests that the ideals of humanism did not take off earlier in England due to the difficulty of teaching children to read fluently in Latin and Greek and the simultaneous reluctance of the elite to allow teaching in English because that was the language of the 'illiterate Vulgar' (sic) (Locke, 1690 in Newbolt, 1921: 37). It was not until English literature was recognised as a true art form in its own right, and the English language was finally recognised as the best mode for the education of English-speakers – both ideas vigorously encouraged by Arnold, who had argued that study of 'the best English authors and Composition (sic)… would tend to elevate and humanise' (1860 in Newbolt, 1921: 46) - that humanism could again be influential in education. For Newbolt, its time had come: the opportunity to promote humanism as the principle on which education in England should be based had arrived.

1921: Humanism through creative English

This suggestion by Arnold that it is not only through reading literature but through 'composition' that the aesthetic should be encouraged is developed by Newbolt. Newbolt is explicit that English does not include grammar and philology as these are 'scientific studies' (1921: 11); rather, English is an *art* that should be taught *creatively*.

The Report's main recommendations are that children should be 'train[ed]' in i) 'sounded speech', ii) standard English (both spoken and written), iii) in reading and iv) the 'use of literature' (1921:19). Yet while the tone might here appear authoritarian, and the noun 'use' more prosaic than emotional, perhaps the repeated use of the severe-sounding verb 'to train' is to assuage the traditionalists and reassure them that the curriculum will be suitably formal. Similarly, the Report praises the 'army' of teachers: perhaps in the post-war context the military semantic field is deliberately redolent of self-sacrifice and heroism. What the Report actually goes on to promote is a creative pedagogy based on experiential learning, as is now shown through a brief examination of the three modes of talk, reading and writing.

The Report recognises that oral skills are the prerequisite of good communicators. If a child's spoken English is a 'negative quantity' (1921: 59) the teacher's role is to help them to become 'articulate' (1921: 60), but Newbolt is not about imposing Received Pronunciation or shutting down expression – he wants to promote individuals' voices. In a classroom, a child's questions are as important as the teacher's. Local dialects are valued: children are encouraged to consider and take pride in the language of their community through, for instance, using traditional folk plays as texts – which emphasises that culture and the aesthetic are not always about the canon. Drama, too, is 'very important' (1921: 310): children should dramatise familiar ballads, stories or fairy tales, or famous historical incidents. This all points to a pedagogy that allows teachers and pupils to develop oracy through selecting appropriate texts (using this term in the widest sense), encouraging the imagination and enabling children to try language out in different scenarios.

Newbolt argues that children should learn to read aloud and to find literature 'a possession and a source of delight… an equipment for the understanding of life'

(1921: 19). There is criticism of literature teaching conducted through ‘linguistic, historic and comparative methods’ (1921: 118) as such approaches fail for want of emotion. Literature is not ‘a mere knowledge subject (1921: 117); rather, children should be encouraged to choose their own reading matter from well-stocked libraries, their appetites having been whet through introduction to ‘great English writers’ (1921: 118). The teaching of literature with reference to the visual arts, music and architecture is advocated, to enable focus on beauty and expression; once again, Arnold’s presence is felt through this endorsement of culture as a means of both providing pleasure and stimulating thought, and again the importance of experiential learning is stressed.

Writing is presented as a tool for thinking. Not only are creative approaches encouraged as a means of exploring the art of others (as writing a poem helps a child better appreciate the writing of published poets), but of exploring ideas: ‘As our discoveries [of the world and of ourselves] become successively wider, deeper and subtler, so should our control of the instrument which shapes our thought become more complete and exquisite, up to the limit of artistic skill’ (1921: 20). The implication here is that students *themselves* are creative, so their artistic skill should be nurtured. *Taking* stimuli from literature enables children to *make* something of value to themselves. Exercises in ‘descriptive and imaginative writing, as well as practice in verse composition, in letter writing, and in dialogue… with a view to encouraging self-expression’ (1921:103) are recommended, although the Report is critical of some practice seen in which ‘imaginative subjects’ are insufficiently challenging. ‘Full use’ should be made of any teacher who has a ‘special aptitude’ for teaching poetry or written composition (1921: 348).

In summary, English is presented as fundamental to the 'full development of mind and character of English children' (1921: 20) and simultaneously a fine art which should be taught as such. The Report suggests that through practising language and imbibing culture, pupils are inspired to think and to grow, to make choices and to create. Newbolt yokes these elements together in the Conclusion: 'a humanised industrial education is the chief means whereby the breach between culture and the common life of man may be healed' (1921: 352). He is attempting to reassure capitalist politicians that the Report's view of English is suitably 'industrial' whilst being humane. The explicit reference to 'culture and common life' mirrors the title of <u>Culture and Anarchy</u>; that Newbolt recognises a breach between them acknowledges that Arnold's ideal is as yet unrealised, but is still possible. The final phrase is pleasingly ambiguous – the 'healing' of an English education can be applied to the individual and the collective.

2014: Humanism and creativity suppressed?

Yet, a century on, we might ask how far Newbolt's ideal has been achieved. At a time when education is recognised by the ruling Conservative party as 'the engine of the economy' (Gibb, 2015, n.p.), requiring that children gain the 'knowledge and skills' (ibid) that they need to succeed in the workplace, to what extent does the national curriculum in English promote a *humanised* industrial education?

To provide some context, the current curriculum (2014) was published soon after the election of 2012 returned a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government after 15 years of Labour. Changes to the curriculum were energetically championed

by the new Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, who was persuaded that pupils were suffering from a ‘knowledge deficit’ (Hirsch, 2007).

While Newbolt wore his humanist values on his sleeve, there is no explicit statement of the values underpinning this curriculum. Accordingly, the stated aim of the full curriculum (covering all subjects) raises questions:

> *The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.* (DfE, 2014: 5)

We are taken from the prosaic ‘essential knowledge’ of the first sentence to the grandiose ‘the best that has been thought and said’ of the second. The direct quotation from Culture and Anarchy is unacknowledged. Is it to be understood that ‘essential knowledge’ *is* ‘the best that has been thought and said’, or additional to it? The final phrase, separated from the main clause by a clumsy semi-colon, is ambiguous: pupils are to appreciate ‘human’ creativity – as opposed to what? Is ‘achievement’ a result of ‘creativity’ or independent of it? Is a connection assumed between ‘knowledge’ and ‘creativity and achievement’ or is creativity somehow in opposition to knowledge? This is significant because, in a curriculum that goes on to promote ‘knowledge’ extensively (the term is found a further 78 times in its 100 pages, with 20 references within the English orders), ‘creativity’ is absent entirely from the orders specific to English. The values of commerce - with pupils fuelling the ‘engine’ – seem to be the primary rationale, the ‘industrial’ trumping the ‘humanised’.

Turning to the English orders specifically, it is stated that pupils should learn English to prevent them being ‘disenfranchised’ (2014: 13). While this recognises the role of

an individual in society – perhaps thereby acknowledging their place in the conversation of mankind - it seems to ignore the personal. A brief look at the three modes of talk, reading and writing confirms this.

Although there is the statement that spoken language 'continues to underpin' (2014:13) other elements of the curriculum, the emphasis is on practising formal spoken Standard English: 'giving short speeches and presentations…'; 'participating in formal debates and structured discussions' (2014: 17). Such practice does not of course exclude drama or aesthetic work, but there is no overt mention of either. Thus presented, the purpose of oracy appears rather to expound (to promote, to sell) than engage in conversation; the human element is absent.

In terms of reading, finding 'enjoyment' (2014: 13) from books is encouraged. However, the challenging and prescriptive content, which includes the requirement to study at least one Victorian novel, a play by Shakespeare and Romantic poetry at key stage 4, does not necessarily lend itself to pleasure, and nor is there much opportunity in a crowded curriculum for teachers (or pupils) to choose other texts to study – texts which might better serve conversation in a diverse twenty-first century society (Yandell, 2017).

Regarding writing, secretarial skills are privileged above compositional skills. Unlike all previous national curricula, there is an entirely separate section on Grammar and Vocabulary which is almost as long as the Writing orders themselves. Presumably without irony, it notes that 'there are different schools of thought on grammar' (DfE, 2014: 21), but goes on to define the 'correct' (ibid: 13) usage through a dense 18-page glossary. When translated into the examination mark scheme, a candidate at

GCSE will score more highly through a piece of writing that is boring and accurate than one that has flair but technical flaws.

In this current curriculum, therefore, students are obliged to be *receivers* of culture through their reading of the canon but not *makers* of culture. It could be argued that Gove's legacy is to disenfranchise students by limiting creative opportunities in the classroom, contrary to his mission.

Concluding thoughts

Arnold had criticised the Revised Code of 1871 that paid schools by results. Similarly, Newbolt recognised that another of the problems facing teachers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the tyranny of the test:

> *Now, as then, there is the danger that a true instinct for humanism may be smothered by the demand for definite measurable results, especially the passing of examinations… and if those who are anxious to do justice to English find it so hard to carry out their desire, what is to be expected from those who will remain indifferent?* (1921: 55)

Even those English teachers who wished to teach in a creative, experiential manner felt stymied. A century on, the problem has intensified. Ever greater store is set by examination results as a means of demonstrating a rise in educational standards in individual schools at a local level and, internally, England's standing in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) league tables. Even the 2007 curriculum that made creativity a central pillar was, arguably, relatively impotent in the later years of schooling in such an exam-results-driven context.

This has led to a situation in which creative practice in English is now prescribed and commodified. Creativity has been circumscribed and 'creative' has been redefined. Where 'creative' was once an adjective describing a child-centred approach to teaching and learning, it is now associated almost exclusively in the English classroom with the 'Creative writing' element of the GCSE, which has become a thing-in-itself, a compound noun, a page of purple prose completed in 45 minutes in silence. Oakeshott may have been Conservative, but he would surely have seen that such *anti* creative practice does little to promote his 'unrehearsed intellectual adventure' (op cit).

New teachers who are unfamiliar with the place of creativity in English need to be made cognisant of the history of the subject in order to help them make sense of the current situation and understand its restrictive nature. Newbolt's Report is a good place to start. By understanding the humanist ideals that have shaped English, and the intimate relation between humanism and creativity, they may be inspired to ask the critical questions necessary to enable them help their pupils discover themselves and be fluent conversationalists with humankind.

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