

# Reclaiming paedeia in an age of crises: Education and the necessity of wisdom

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## Introduction

We would be hard pressed to find anyone who did not think that the contemporary world was facing a variety of crises. Sluggish economies and an unwillingness to sacrifice or compromise a way of life financed by debt seem to be leading some Western economies to the brink of bankruptcy. Natural disasters around the world have added to insecurity and caused terrible hardship. Demographic change sweeping most of the Western world at least, though Asian countries are not immune to this crisis, reveals an ageing and numerically declining population. There is little trust in social institutions, particularly banks, but also churches, police, lawyers, medical specialists and there is negligible faith in politicians. Recent riots in London are seen as symptomatic of the despair that some sections of the community are experiencing as a result of a combination of economic, cultural, social and political pressures. Though these crises are not necessarily related to one another, the picture that emerges is pessimistic. It is against this background of crisis that a critical reflection on the capacity of current conceptions of education and educational practice to adequately prepare young people to take their place in the community is needed. The need for such reflection is not new, as in every age and generation, the kind of education that is best for people has been fiercely debated and the question of its aims keenly contested.

In what follows, we shall begin with a brief sketch of some of the currents of thought which have influenced the rise of neo-liberalism and economic rationalism in the Western world. As a consequence, education has taken a functionalist hue, and its purpose one of ensuring that pupils have sufficient generic skills and competencies to meet the needs of employers. This usually is not all, because governments also want people who will take their civic responsibilities seriously and will be model citizens. This is expressed time and again in the aspirational reports that governments produce periodically when they wish to make changes to educational policy.<sup>1</sup> Hopefully, governments and educational departments have the best of intentions and truly wish to provide their citizens with the best education that they can, but it is suggested that though the aspirational goals of education sketched by governments in various reports and documents are important, that these are not enough: it is argued that the aims of education are broader than this. Education needs to prepare students to have understanding of themselves, of their relationships to others, to have an ability to make good moral and other judgements and to act on these. If education has a role to play in the alleviation of the crises facing the world, then there is some urgency in reflecting on what kind of education is needed in order to prepare young people to tackle these many crises. It is our contention that the major problem with modern education is that it has forgotten that its main task is helping students to learn to be wise. That is, in considering the aims of education, it is proposed that it is wisdom which is the main aim of education. This will be so whatever level of education we are discussing, though much of our discussion refers to higher education.

## Economics, Neo-liberalism and Education

There are different approaches that can be taken to explain the rise of neo-liberalism and economic rationalism. Certainly it is possible to trace it from the beginnings of the industrial revolution in England in the eighteenth century and to show the influence of the advocates of liberalism such as J.S. Mill and Jeremy Bentham, who paved the way for a recognition of the importance of individual autonomy, but at the same time, that the state was responsible for ensuring the greatest good for the greatest number. Nineteenth century liberalism undoubtedly was the underlying political philosophy which served as the justification for the rise of industrial capitalism up to the beginning of the twentieth century (Olsen, O'Neill & Codd, 2004).

Karl Marx, however, who argued for the primacy of labour over capital and for the overthrow of the capitalist system, was equally influential in the middle of the nineteenth century in shaping our understanding of the relationship between labour and capital.<sup>2</sup> Marxism as elaborated later by Lenin and Stalin was to bring untold misery, suffering and death to millions. Meanwhile, in nineteenth century United States, immigration and the opening up of the West, along with rapid industrialisation, witnessed the growth of a robust liberalism (Boers, 2007). The latter half of the nineteenth century also brought with it in the Western world the beginning of universal education for all. In Australia, this was marked by the passage in the various States of legislation for the establishment of free, secular and compulsory education (Austin, 1965; Grundy, 1972). The next important change occurred post World War 2 when mass education truly arrived with the expansion of education to cater for the burgeoning generation of baby boomers, but by the mid-seventies, governments were finding it increasingly difficult to maintain adequate funding for education for all and the rhetoric began to change.

Neo-liberalism and economic rationalism have been a feature of English speaking Western societies since the 1980s when Thatcherism and Reaganism first articulated the view that governments should reduce their spending, particularly on welfare, encourage individual independence and that services provided by the State, could be better supplied by the private sector.<sup>3</sup> The values of democracy, personal autonomy and citizenship that are articulated are seen in the context of a radical individualism which has no commitment to the common good.<sup>4</sup> Individual autonomy is seen as an absolute and this is accompanied by a proliferation of rights in many directions. The State exists only to ensure that there is as little interference in the satisfaction of individual needs as is possible. In this Hobbesian conception of the state, its only role is to defend the nation and to ensure competing interests within the state are kept from destroying one another.<sup>5</sup> This is in stark contrast to the Keynesian welfare state, which viewed the role of the State very differently. In a social democracy, the government sees its role as promoting the common good, ensuring full employment, adequate social welfare provision and, through the education system, provide the social basis for a democratic society and regulated, stable economy. Unfortunately, various factors have led to the economic collapse of the welfare state in much of the Western world, and, as a result of the rise of neoliberalism, educational policy has been taken over by economic policy (Codd, 1999). Codd remarks that the application of neo-classical economics to educational policy can be seen in two main ways, constructing it as either human capital or as an economic production function. Both of these cut education from its social base and reduce it to an exchangeable commodity. Addressing the question from the New Zealand perspective, Codd notes that the role of higher education and education more generally, is to ensure that there is economic growth, employment opportunities and social cohesion. Most, if not all, governments would subscribe to this view. Economic models of education fail, he says, because they do not take into account the social behaviour that human beings engage in. More strongly, we might add that human beings are not reducible to the function they perform in the workplace or in the economy. Hence, reducing the aims of education to training and skilling individuals to perform needed functions in the workforce is simplistic and ignores the complexity of human needs and aspiration.<sup>6</sup>

The adoption of neoliberalism has led to significant inequalities that are evident in the United States and are increasingly evident in other Western nations also, though not to the same extent. Education, especially higher education, remains largely restricted to the middle and upper classes, a situation exacerbated by neoliberalism (Bradley, 2008). The largest corporations and the wealthiest individuals in the United States, for example, pay little or no tax, resulting in vast imbalances in which the poor have little access to basic health care and welfare programs (Giroux, 2004). Neo-liberalism emphasises individual autonomy, but the other side of this is the abandonment by government of the provision of public services and the minimisation, particularly in the United States, of the regulation of financial markets. Given the importance of the United States economy to the rest of the world, this is a recipe for financial instability and the perpetuation of poverty for many. If education is a commodity, the poor will not be able to afford to purchase it and so will be condemned at best to low paid jobs. In the worst case, they will be condemned to long term unemployment or even unemployability.

Even if we accept the neoliberal, economic rationalist reconfiguration of education as a commodity, and see it in instrumental terms as means of producing skilled workers, the question is whether this actually serves the community and the wider society well. The level of dissatisfaction with the skills of school leavers and their readiness for employment suggests that education, at least as employers are concerned, has not delivered all that was promised. This, of course, needs quantification with evidence, which is beyond the scope of this discussion, but the response, by governments in the conduct of various reviews of education and the preparation of new curricula in the light of those reviews, points to a recognition that the current state of affairs is failing to provide an adequate preparation for work and life. Consequently there is a desire to improve the quality of education being received by young people. The strategy, in every case, is not to hearken back to education as it once was, for it is clear that it was elitist in the past and arguably served a different purpose, but to take stock of what it is and how it can serve the individual and the community better now. What is contended is that there is no reason to suppose that mass education need only to concern itself with instrumental ends or that these are all that human beings crave.

### **The Aims of Education**

The flight to an entirely instrumental education, which is to say, an education in which any mention of the intrinsic value of anything which might be learned is studiously avoided, is symptomatic of a reductionist conception of education in which only measurable utilitarian ends are taken seriously. Claims that structural changes, following the adoption of corporate practices in American Higher Education, have resulted in degraded undergraduate instruction, marginalised faculty membership and most concerningly, have threatened the mission of the academy understood as devoted to the common good have also been made in Australia. It is evident that economic pressures and corporatization are leading to considerations of productivity and cost effectiveness threatening the traditional values of enlightenment and individual growth as essential components of education (Shrecker, 2010; Marginson, 2004; Marginson, 2009). Such values as are taught are superficial, extolling the virtues of democracy, personal autonomy and citizenship, but, failing to take into account the profound conflicts which arise amongst these because they are not underpinned by deep commitments to the common good. The idea that there is a common good, albeit contested, is not taught or debated, hence, if a deep commitment to the common good, to democratic values and responsible citizenship is really desired, then an important element of education is missing.

Although he addresses his remarks to higher education, Robert Maynard Hutchins proposes that the aim of education, whatever else it is, is about wisdom<sup>7</sup>. Hutchins is a strong advocate for a liberal arts education which would teach a student to think well. Importantly, he sees the main aim of education was teaching which led to knowledge, and since knowledge is about the truth, education everywhere should be the same, as truth was objective. Metaphysics is important, therefore, if we are to know something about the nature of the good and of the good life. Moreover, in being able to know what the nature of the good is or of the good life, a student will need to have studied philosophy and history. Hutchins criticises American universities for being little better than trade schools, where intellectual rigour is missing. Writing during the Second World War, his thoughts are remarkably prescient of our present time, as he notes that if we wish to solve the crises that we face we need to have some means of judging the facts that present themselves to us. In order to do this, we will need to have some standards of judgement and this will require philosophical and historical study (Hutchins, 1943). The kind of education he recommends is one which develops a social consciousness and a social conscience, arguing that in order to believe in democracy, we need to believe in truth and falsity, good and bad, right and wrong, and significantly, that truth, goodness and right are objective standards, even if they cannot be experimentally verified (Hutchins, 1943). The education which Hutchins advocates is one in which the human being exercises reason, since there are many problems concerning truth, goodness and justice to which science will not be able to provide answers. In order to exercise reason, however, human beings need disciplined minds that will enable them to think freely. This in turn will require an education which will enable individuals to form good habits of mind. (Hutchins, 1943)

Arguably, Hutchins conception of education has much in common with a religious conception of the aim of education, since he clearly appeals to absolute conceptions of the truth, the good and of justice. Human beings, if they are to live fulfilled lives, need to be able to discern what is best for them and this, according to a religious view, has been ordained by God. According to Hegel, and idealists such as T. H. Green, human beings serve a higher purpose and that is self realisation, which in some sense, is also the self realisation of God. This involves higher and higher levels of consciousness, becoming more rational and more knowledgeable, with a wider understanding of ourselves and of the world (Green, 1907). John White comments that this view of the aims of education appears to have been superseded, though the idea has not completely vanished. White says that in Dewey<sup>8</sup> the same idea of the growth of the human mind persists as the aim of education. Education has no further aim outside itself, but the religious dimension which appeared in the work of T. H. Green disappears in Dewey and is replaced by nature in evolution (White, 2010) White's comments are directed towards the argument that education has intrinsic aims and this, he thinks, requires a religious point of view. (White, 2010). Whether White is right or not will depend on what is taken to be a religious point of view and while it is arguable whether the idealist position of Green and also Hutchins is a religious point of view in a traditional sense, it does support the possibility of the perfectibility of humankind.<sup>9</sup> What is salient in this conception of education is the appeal to an education which is not merely utilitarian and practical, but which encourages students to look to what is beyond a limited educational horizon, to what justifies and gives meaning to their lives. Being able to live does depend on basic necessities, but beyond this depends on living lives which have meaning and purpose.

The importance of what might be considered an idealist position about the aims of education is echoed by Barnett (2010), who in his discussion of what it means to be a university, argues for the centrality of an education which is concerned with truth, justice, honesty and our responsibility for the other. Barnett recognises the changing nature of higher education, but equally believes that there are perennial aims with which universities must be concerned. In arguing for aims which are intrinsic to the being of a university, Barnett is conscious of those values and transcendent realities which we argue are intrinsic to an education which takes wisdom as its core aim.

Barnett (2010) says that there are many different conceptions of the idea of a university and argues for what he terms an ecological university. This view of the university takes its global responsibilities seriously and the possibilities that present for global engagement, retaining some elements of what he calls the metaphysical university, one which keeps a connection between ways of knowing and an ascent into higher realms of being. The metaphysical university takes the connection between human beings and the transcendent world seriously and scholarly endeavour encompasses seeking the universal.<sup>10</sup> This leads Barnett to claim that the University itself is partly mysterious, since it is not possible to fully explicate all its activities. This is important, since it is in this mysteriousness or inexplicability that the central aim of higher education – or education in general<sup>11</sup> – is to be found. Wisdom, at its most advanced level is not easily characterised. As we shall see, wisdom is not just to be understood at its most transcendent level, there are other levels of wisdom can be recognised and, as a start, individuals can be educated in these.

Importantly, Barnett says that a university has many different facets and its value system is rarely explicated, but it is through these that students become themselves. Barnett laments that in the modern world, there is an insistence that everything should be explicit, whereas it is evident that there is much that is not able to be explicated. In the end, because this attempt to be explicit acts to limit the university since it limits its possibilities, the ability of its scholars to reach out into the unknown and to be creative is also going to be limited. We can conclude that what is offered to students will also be limited. Barnett (2010, p. 16) says, "To engage in talk of the university in categories of spirit, being, culture, emancipation and becoming is now *outré*; and, of course, here, God is dead. No such talk – with its metaphysical categories – can be tolerated any longer." On the other hand, Wittgenstein's famous aphorism at the end of the *Tractatus*<sup>12</sup> does not mean that what we cannot speak about does not exist, rather that there are a multitude of things about which we do not have the language to fully disclose. Truth, justice, honesty, respect for the Other are amongst those things which cannot be fully disclosed, yet are central to our humanness.

Barnett recognises that though the metaphysical university that existed until the nineteenth century appears to be gone, that we now live in a liquid modernity (Baumann 2000) or a virtual society (Woolgar, 2002) or amid global complexity (Urry, 2003), that this does not mean that we no longer care about creating a better world (Barnett, 2010). There is still a hunger after truth, fairness, honesty and respect for the Other. It is reaching for these that we realise the importance of an institution which is still concerned with these values which are essential to us, if we are to live fulfilled lives. However expressed, we have here the central values of an education which aims at wisdom.

### **Wisdom as the central aim of education**

Newman sees higher education, more specifically, university education, as developing general capabilities and a sense of how things connect together rather than specific skills. Importantly, Newman talks about the student forming a connected view or grasp of things. Knowledge, claims Newman, forms one whole and every part is intimately connected to another. To be sure, what Newman has in mind is that the world is intelligible because God, who is the author of creation, lies behind the realities with which we are familiar in our mundane world (Newman, 1996). Whether we subscribe to this view or not, it is most familiar to scientists, whose every endeavour is to uncover the laws which establish the relationships between observable phenomena. That is, scientists assume that the world is intelligible and that there is an underlying structure to what can be observed. Wisdom can be conceived as insight which enables us to see the interconnectedness of things, to realise that the knowledge that we possess is to be understood in relation to whatever else it is that we know. In some respects, this is also at the heart of constructivism, which claims that what we come to know is not merely a matter of what is transmitted to us by a teacher, but what we make our own. An essential component of the knowledge is that we come to see how it fits with what else we know and hence, the interrelatedness of knowledge. This cannot be easily characterised because the extent of our web of knowledge and the relationships between the various elements of what we know are always changing as we add what we have learnt to our body of knowledge.

The interconnectedness and interrelationship between forms of knowledge also applies to our understanding of wisdom. Taking Bonaventure (1996) as our guide, we argue that wisdom has four interrelated elements:

1. The first form of wisdom is technical know-how and art of applying skills and knowledge. Wisdom lies in the way in which technical skills are deployed. It is evident that we need technical skills first, otherwise, even if we are able to discern how we should go about solving a problem, if we do not have the requisite skills we will not be able to actually carry out what needs to be done. Moreover, it is in the application of technical knowledge and skills that we begin to understand the limits of our world and of our ability to manipulate certain features of it. We also learn about our own physical capabilities and limitations. If we are skilled boilermakers, we learn particular welding skills, but also something about ourselves and our abilities. In addition, we learn the discipline of a trade and, if we can anticipate our last form of wisdom, that taking our trade seriously and working to the best of our ability, we contribute to the well-being of our community. This is because we exhibit skill, technical excellence, which means that what we produce can be relied upon. Our work can be trusted. We can speak here of Peters' idea that a carpenter with a good education is able to see things from a different perspective – to travel with a different view (Peters, 1965). This is very important, since it introduces a moral element even in the way technical work is carried out. Doing something skilfully has a moral dimension and so is part of wisdom.
2. The second form of wisdom involves the education of our senses to be able to see things. Sensory knowledge of the world is gained through learning how to connect different sensory experiences together to obtain a coherent picture of the world and how one should act in that world. Our senses are our windows on the world, enabling us to be able engage with our surroundings. This is, however, not just a matter of us looking uncomprehendingly at things that come into our field of vision, for example, but active engagement with the phenomenal world. Through vision we see many things, but conscious observation of them enable us to classify them, to study them and to investigate the relationships between them. Our hearing similarly helps to distinguish different kinds of sounds and also to classify objects and living things according to the sounds that they make. Speech enables us to communicate with other human beings and we learn to give our attention to what others have to say.

Through touch we communicate our empathy for others in a particularly powerful way. Smell and taste are also significant in teaching us about the world. In all, it is through the senses that we are able to begin to make sense of our world and to confirm the theories we construct about its nature. Permeating our use of our senses is also a recognition that we need to ensure that what we perceive is honestly reported and that what we say to others can be trusted. Once more, there is a seriousness with which our senses need to be trained and a moral dimension to how we use them.

3. The third form of wisdom is philosophical insight. Being able to look deeply into questions and see them from a philosophical point of view; to be able to see the interconnectedness of values and of ideas. In this form of wisdom, crucial to being able to live in the world, is the ability to make judgements about the world, to theorise about what our senses have told us and to draw conclusions from what we have generalised. Philosophical insight includes science, culture, art and the myriad ways in which human beings experience their world. Wisdom in its third form encompasses rationality, our conviction that the world is intelligible and so we are preoccupied in this third understanding of the world with firstly, metaphysics and ontology and secondly, how our empirical understanding of the world can be generalised. In philosophy, we are also concerned with the nature of truth, of existence and questions of meaning, as well as of morality. It is more abstract than the two forms of wisdom already discussed, and central to how we organise our theoretical understanding of the world. Without philosophy, there can be no science, and we would add, there is no religion or theology either.
4. The fourth form of wisdom is concerned with our relationships with each other, our community and with the world in which we have our being. This form of wisdom is a realisation of the deep mysteriousness of what it is to be a particular human being and of the open-ended possibilities of each human person. Despite our finiteness, each encounter with another human being is an opportunity for new relationships and new knowledge, since each individual has a unique perspective on the world. This fourth mode of wisdom also enables us, in the recognition of our finitude to speculate about what lies beyond our limited boundaries and to realise that there are ideals, values and principles which transcend our mundane concerns and which call us to respond to those ideals. In the fourth form of wisdom we realise that truth, love and justice are worth dying for. For the theist, the fourth realm of wisdom brings us to God, to personal relationship with the Creator. For the atheist, though there is not the personal relationship with a loving God, there is still the realisation of the preciousness of human beings and the importance of our relationships with those we love. The atheist is still able to see how profoundly mysterious are life and the manifestation of love in our lives. Love is something to which we all respond. In this fourth form of wisdom, we realise the universality of the good, of what is right and what unites us as human beings.

It is the fourth form of wisdom which calls people to be troubled by the problems which beset the world, despite being caught up in their own difficulties. There is a hunger for justice, for the poor to be fed, for refugees to be helped, for truth and honesty from politicians, for banks and financial institutions to be trustworthy. There is a desire that the terrible depredations visited on the environment end and that the world and all its creatures are treated with respect. There is rage in many quarters that the uneven distribution of wealth results in wars, famines and homelessness for many millions of people. It is a conviction that the world can be a better place, that it does not need to be how it is now. That this is an inchoate conviction does not mean that human beings are not aware of something bigger than themselves, but suggests that there is a need for more education which is reflective and which teaches about truth, justice and the nature of the good and what practical steps we need to take to learn about these.

### **The shape of education for Wisdom**

It is a major challenge to devise the kind of curriculum and modes of teaching and learning which we would hope would help form the kind of education which takes wisdom as its core aim. Here, we can only gesture to the kind of education we have in mind. Wisdom does not necessarily involve learning and teaching in new ways, but a greater attentiveness to what we are doing and the reasons for doing it. Wisdom involves paying attention to how we teach and learn, rather than what. Knowledge of how to make and do things – the first form of wisdom – is vital and most institutions are reasonably good at imparting this, since it is measurable. Either a person is able to, say, make a table or she cannot. The second form of wisdom is also able to be tested – either a person can identify a harmonic seventh in music or he cannot. The most difficult will be

gaining wisdom of the third and fourth kinds, but it is not impossible. It is here that we can find argument for some kind liberal education which seeks to broaden the experiences of students.

It is worth noting that practical wisdom is only one element of wisdom and in one sense of it is a technical skill, rather than the exercise of Aristotelian prudence which demands that persons have been habituated to the cardinal virtues of temperance, fortitude (or courage), and justice. If we consider students in professional programs, practical reasoning enters their lives through four interrelated tasks: reading a situation, crafting an action strategy, realizing the action strategy, and learning through reflection (Fitz, 2001, p. 4) Each of these, however, requires the exercise of insight and judgement, which are high level abilities that are not measureable. Values enter because what is required is not a better way to learn skills, but a greater attentiveness to what they mean in the broader scheme of things.

The major problem with seeking to develop the third and fourth forms of wisdom is that they do not depend so much on acquiring more and more knowledge, rather they depend on habituating oneself to certain habits of mind and to disciplined study. It takes time and effort to develop the habits of mind which are a requirement for philosophical study. The intellectual life – the life of the mind – is not easily acquired but requires constant work and attentiveness to the tasks one has set oneself. The Benedictines, for example, had a clear understanding that intellectual work required a love of reading and a joyful willingness to engage in the rigorous, demanding work which the study of a difficult text very often requires. (Benedict, 1975) Philosophical illumination extracts a heavy price, since it requires commitment and if wisdom is to be gained, the individual must be prepared by an education which teaches discipline, responsibility for one's learning, attentiveness and perseverance. Much of the learning which takes place here is not found in a subject outline or listed amongst graduate attributes.

If the requirements for the third form of wisdom are demanding, they are even more so for the fourth form of wisdom. This is because it deals with the ineffable, with our relationships with one another and with the absolute. It is to be understood as the impulse human beings have to make the world better. It is in this impulse of wanting to learn more, to gravitate to truth, beauty and justice, that drives human beings to try to change the status quo. In all cases, every person is driven, in different ways, to seek the truth or some conception of it. To cultivate the fourth form, human beings need to be encouraged to be critically reflective, to question, but most of all to learn that the attainment of their own good requires commitment to, and responsibility for, the good of others. The challenge is for educators to find a way to do this. We have the concept of slow cooking, perhaps we need to develop the notion of slow education, so that wisdom can be acquired.

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## NOTES

1 In Australia, the most recent reports have been the Bradley Review of Higher Education (2008) and the Melbourne Declaration (2008).

2 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology*, Chapter IV, section 10. In this section Marx discusses the necessity of revolutionary action to overthrow the old order. See Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1969) *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works, Vol. 1* (Moscow, Progress Publishers), p. 75

3 Thatcherism and Reaganism refer to a political ideology which believes in low taxation, free markets and individualism.

4 Anti-perfectionism is a feature of neo-liberalism, that is, the view that there is no common good, but many competing conceptions. See, for example, Nozick R. (1974) *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York, Basic Books), for an account of a radical neo-liberalism.

5 The minimalised State of the neo-liberal is powerless to prevent aggressive competition between powerful interest groups, such as multinationals, and, since it eschews regulation because it believes in the efficacy of the free market, it begins to destroy people's belief in justice and that the State has any interest in governing for all the people but only for sectional business and political interests. Values are relativised.

6 Bourdieu comments that the neoliberal programme tends overall to favour the separation between the economy and social realities and so to construct, in reality, an economic system corresponding to the theoretical description, that is to say, a kind of logical machine, which presents itself as a chain of constraints impelling the economic agents (Bourdieu,

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1988). We can interpret this as proposing that the language of economics constructs a representation of an education system which becomes reality. This is because, firstly, language is the means by which we represent reality, and secondly, because it is also transparent to us, just as we are not consciously aware that what we see is mediated by our eyes, so too is language the vehicle by which we mediate our experiences of the world. We simply do not notice that language also has the power to represent our experiences in a certain way. That is, language constructs our representations of the world, hence labelling a student as a customer assumes a particular framework and context in which education becomes an exchangeable commodity.

7 Hutchins says, “Now wisdom and goodness are the aim of higher education. How can it be otherwise? Wisdom and goodness are the end of human life. If you dispute this, you are at once entering upon a metaphysical controversy; for you are disputing about the nature of being and the nature of man. This is as it should be. How can we consider man's destiny unless we ask what he is? How can we talk about preparing men for life unless we ask what the end of life may be? At the base of education, as at the base of every human activity, lies metaphysics” (Hutchins, 1943, pp. 23-24).

8 See Dewey, J. (1944) *Democracy and Education* (New York, The Free Press). See especially chapter 4, where Dewey discusses the idea of education as growth, arguing that it has no end beyond itself.

9 Green's idealist view, as advocated by Whitehead, Peirce, James and others, is a process view, which holds that God is immanent only, and not transcendent, leads to a conception of God which removes most of the traditional attributes of God. Further discussion of this takes too far from our central concerns, however. See Morris, R. B. (1991) 197-201).

10 Barnett, wants to use the term metaphysical, rather than transcendent, because he thinks that transcendent already implies that the conclusion of the educational journey will end in the transcendent and – one might add – a particular kind of transcendent end. The metaphysical university, he says, seeks to avoid the value-ladenness implied by the idea of the transcendent university. He suggests that the metaphysical university is a broader conception, not reliant on particular values. (12) Barnett, however, does not offer any reason why we should think that the metaphysical university will not be any less value-laden than any other conception, since, as Nagel has shown, there is no view from nowhere. (1986)

11 If we accept White's premise (White, 1997, p. 9) that there is no distinction between various forms of education – i.e. primary, secondary and higher education, just different stages of development.

12 “Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must pass over in silence,” (Wittgenstein, 1961, para. 7).

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