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Bringing Knowledge Back In:

Perspectives from Liberal Education

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Abstract

From the vantage point of liberal education, this article attempts to contribute to the conversation initiated by Michael Young and his colleagues on 'bringing knowledge back' into the current global discourse on curriculum policy and practice. The contribution is made through revisiting the knowledge-its-own-end thesis associated with Newman and Hirst, *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model of a liberal education. The central thesis is that if education is centrally concerned with the cultivation of human powers (capacities, ways of thinking, dispositions), then knowledge needs to be seen as an important resource for the cultivation. A theory of knowledge is needed that conceives the significance of knowledge in ways productive of the cultivation. Furthermore, a theory of content is needed that concerns how knowledge is selected and translated into curriculum content and how content can be analysed and unpacked in ways that open up manifold opportunities for cultivating human powers.

Keywords: Liberal Education; Knowledge; Content; Curriculum; Didaktik; Schwab.

There is literally a disappearance of knowledge in current global trends in curriculum policy and curriculum planning. This is evident in a shift in curriculum policy from a concern with knowledge to a preoccupation with competencies and academic outcomes (Yates & Collins, 2010; Young, 2009). Accompanying this shift is a move to bypass formalized curriculum planning—concerned with knowledge selection and organization for teaching and learning in schools—in favour of the development of academic standards and competency frameworks (Hopmann, 2008; Karseth & Sivesind, 2010). Behind these developments is the pervasive rhetoric of the knowledge society that eschews knowledge in favour of generic competencies needed for the 21st century (cf. Biesta & Priestley, 2013). The relative absence of attention to knowledge, too, has something to do with the 'learnification' of educational discourse—the global shift towards talking about learning rather than education (Biesta, 2010) wherein knowledge is seen as merely a tool, with no educational value and significance in itself.

Over the last ten years, Michael Young and his colleagues have embarked on a project of 'bringing knowledge back' into the recent global discourse on curriculum policy and practice (see, e.g., Young, 2007; Young, Lambert, D. Roberts, & M. Roberts, 2014; Young & Muller, 2015). Based on social realism and the works of Durkheim and Bernstein, they develop a social realist theory of knowledge that differentiates between academic, disciplinary and everyday knowledge, and further, between different types of disciplinary knowledge. The basic premise is that disciplinary knowledge, while reflecting certain human interests, ideologies or standpoints, has an 'objective' conceptual structure with properties and powers of its own (see Young, 2007; also see Beck, 2013). Created by specialist communities, disciplinary knowledge[1] is *powerful knowledge* because the acquisition of which equips students with certain 'powers' in terms of moving beyond their particular experience, envisaging alternatives, and participating in debates and

controversies (Young & Muller, 2013). Therefore, helping students gain access to disciplinary knowledge that they cannot acquire at home needs to be seen as the central function of schools—an entitlement for *all* students—and (thus) a social justice issue (Young, 2013).

Young's argument about of the educational power or significance of knowledge, albeit developed within the tradition of sociology of education, bears resemblance to the 'knowledge-its-own-end' thesis—notably advanced by educational philosophers like John Newman (1801-1890) and Paul Hirst (1946-2003)—within the traditions of liberal education in the UK (R. White, 1986). [2] The thesis is also underpinned by a theory of knowledge that differentiates different forms of academic knowledge and sets them apart from the realm of common sense and practical or instrumental knowledge. Academic knowledge is 'powerful' because the pursuit of such knowledge entails the development of intellectual powers or capacities. As such, disciplinary knowledge ought to be studied in its own end and for its own sake. The central aim of a liberal education is the development of intellectual capacities through initiating students into various forms of academic knowledge and their relationships.

As in the UK, in Germany and the US the cultivation of human powers through the imparting of academic knowledge is held as the central goal of liberal education (also called *general education*)—as particularly typified in *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the University of Chicago's tradition of liberal education (the *Chicago tradition* hereafter). *Bildung*-centred Didaktik, developed by neo-humanists in the late 19th century and the early 20th century, is directed toward *Bildung*—that is, toward the formation of self and the cultivation of human powers or dispositions and values—through interactions with knowledge and culture. The Chicago tradition—associated with Robert Hutchins (1899-1977), Richard McKeon (1900-1985), Joseph Schwab (1909-1988), and Donald Levine (1931-2015), among others—is centrally

concerned with the cultivation of the powers of the mind (capacities and dispositions) through interactions with the essence of academic disciplines (Levine, 2006; Westbury & Wilkof, 1978). This tradition is best represented by the Schwabian model of liberal education which was built upon the thinking of McKeon and Dewey and developed from Schwab's involvement as a key figure in the collegiate curriculum reform initiated by Hutchins (see Levine, 2006; Westbury & Wilkof, 1978).

In this article I wish to to contribute to the conversation initiated by Young and his colleagues on bringing knowledge back into the current global discourse on curriculum policy and practice (also see Deng, 2015a & 2015b). The contribution is made through revisiting the knowledge-its-own-end thesis, *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model of a liberal education, with a focus on the role and significance of knowledge in the development of human powers (capacities, ways of thinking, dispositions). The knowledge-its-own-end thesis is examined because it represents a classical way of thinking about the important role of knowledge in the development of human intellectual powers—a perspective which provides a 'bulwark' (Pring, 1993) against the current tendency toward downgrading knowledge in favour of generic competencies in educational discourse. *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model are discussed because they both provide a powerful way of thinking about the significance of knowledge in relation to the cultivation of human powers—a perspective that, as will be shown, carries important implications for the development of competencies or capabilities in the 21st century.

In addition, this article intends to introduce *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model to a wider audience in the UK and beyond and to contribute to philosophical discussions on the idea of liberal education in the 21st century. Whereas there has been a significant interest

in the concept of *Bildung* as an ideal of liberal education (e.g., Løvlie & Standish, 2002; Norbenbo, 2002; Wahlström, 2010), *Bildung*-centred Didaktik—concerning how *Bilduing* is translated into curriculum planning and classroom teaching—tends to be overlooked. Likewise, whereas there has been a renewed interest in the idea of liberal education represented by Newman and Hirst (e.g., Mulcahy, 2008, 2009; Ozoliņš, 2013; J. White, 2009), the Schwabian model has received little attention. These two models, as will be shown, provide a viable way forward for reinventing liberal education for the 21st century.

The knowledge-its-own-end thesis: Newman and Hirst

The knowledge-its-own-end thesis is arguably first formally expounded in the mid-19th century by Newman and a century later finds a contemporary articulation in Hirst's theory of a liberal education. In his seminal *The idea of a university* Newman provides an eloquent, forceful defence in the post- Enlightenment era of the virtue of what he thought as a liberal education against the demand for utility, the growing scepticism about liberal education, and the questioning of the place of theology in a university (Ker, 1990). According to Newman, liberal education, unlike professional education, is centred on the development of the intellect for its own sake: '(L)iberal education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect, as such, its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence' (Newman, 1982, p. 92).

Behind this vision of a liberal education is a theory of knowledge which construes all knowledge as a unified and organic whole consisting of various branches of learning which are in relationship to one another.

> …all knowledge is a whole and the separate sciences parts of one…. all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the great Creator and his work. Hence it is that the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiple bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, and balance each other. (Newman, 1982, p. 75)

These various branches including Sciences (theology, science and literature) represent varying ways of arranging and classifying phenomena, uniting them under common laws and tracing effects to causes.

Such a theory of knowledge provides the essential basis for the discussion of the nature of a liberal education and its curriculum planning. The cultivation of the intellect is achieved by way of imparting to students various branches of knowledge and their interrelationships. When proceeding in an active, in-depth manner, the acquisition of knowledge entails the cultivation of mind: it allows us to grasp things as they are, view things as a whole, and develop the capacity of 'discriminating between truth and falsehood', of 'arranging things according to their real value', and of making normative judgments (Newman, 1982, p.115). Therefore, 'Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind' (Newman, 1982, p. 77). In this connection, curriculum planning consists in identifying and justifying a core of studies to ensure that all students learn the main outlines of knowledge.

The thesis of Newman prefigures the 'forms of knowledge' thesis Hirst advanced in the mid-1960s. In his celebrated classic essay 'Liberal education and the nature of knowledge', Hirst (1965) developed a theory of a liberal education 'based fairly and squarely on the nature of

knowledge itself' (p. 113). [3] Like Newman, he holds the rational development of mind through the pursuit of knowledge as the central purpose of liberal education (Hirst, 1965; Hirst & Peters, 1970). And knowledge is pursued in its own end; it 'is in itself the good of the mind' (Hirst, 1965, p. 126).

This vision of a liberal education is undergirded by a relatively contemporary theory of knowledge which can be seen as developing Newman's proposition of the unity and interconnnnedness of knowledge (Ozolinš, 2013). According to Hirst (1965), knowledge is made up by seven fundamental, logically distinctive forms of knowledge—mathematics, physical sciences, human sciences, history, religion, literacy and the fine arts, and philosophy—which are interconnected, forming a unified whole. Furthermore, each knowledge form has four distinguishing structural features—(1) central concepts, (2) relationships, (3) principles, and (4) methods and techniques of inquiry, generating and testing knowledge. The seven forms of knowledge represent how the human mind thinks, organizes and structures experience.

It is with such a theory of knowledge that Hirst justifies the central task of a liberal education and addresses its curriculum planning. The central task is to initiate students into these seven forms of knowledge which are necessary for the full development of mind. The acquisition of these knowledge forms allows students to see things in perspective and relate things to one another, and 'to see, to experience the world in a way otherwise unknown' (Hirst, 1965, p. 125). A particular knowledge form, 'if it is to be acquired beyond a general and superficial level, involves the development of creative imagination, judgment, thinking, communicative skills, etc., in ways that are peculiar to itself as a way of understanding experience' (Hirst 1965, p. 122). On this account, curriculum planning is, first and foremost, a philosophical or theoretical endeavour consisting of identifying 'the central concepts, modes of enquiry and distinctive truth-tests of

different forms of knowledge as the basis for establishing curriculum aims' (Pring, 1993, p. 50; Hirst, 1965).

Overall, the knowledge-its-own-end thesis, in the form of Newman or of Hirst, asserts liberal education is centrally concerned with the development of mind through the acquisition of academic knowledge and that such development must be based upon or informed by a well-articulated theory of knowledge.[4] Nevertheless, the thesis has been subject to numerous criticisms. Chief among those criticisms is that the thesis espouses a vision of liberal education which is indifferent to the social and economic needs of a society and excludes other kinds of knowledge (practical, experiential, social) that can be resources for the development of human powers broadly construed (e.g. Martin, 1994; Mulcahy, 2009; Pring, 1993). With the growing demand for vocational and professional education for all students, as Pring (1993) asserts, the development of mind, needs to be

> not only in the acquisition of different forms of [academic] knowledge but also through the application of useful knowledge, through practical 'know-how' in the world of business, through the virtues of enterprise and entrepreneurship, through the espousal of social dispositions such as citizenship, and through the formation of appropriate social skills. (pp. 50-51)

Another related main objection is that the curriculum, with its exclusive emphasis on the development of the intellect, ignores the development of capacities for practical, moral and ethical reasoning and dispositions or virtues such as caring, empathy, compassion, and social responsibility (e.g. Martin, 1994; Mulcahy, 2009; Ozoliņš; 2013; Pring, 1993). As such, the

curriculum is geared to produce 'human being as knower' rather than as 'human being as agent' (cf. J. White, 2004).

All these issues surrounding the knowledge-its-own-end thesis have to do with the use of a theory of knowledge per se as a point of departure for theorising the nature of liberal education and its curriculum planning. This way of theorising prevents educational theorists from adequately seeing the role and significance of knowledge (broadly conceived) in education, and subsequently from understanding what is entailed in curriculum planning and classroom practice concerned with realizing the significance of knowledge. After all, with an exclusive focus on the intellectual development of an individual, such an approach to theorising liberal education entails a distortion of the ancient Greek ideal of liberal education (*paideia*)—the well-rounded formation of the self through culture (Elvin, 1977; Tingley, 2002). I now turn to *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model, both of which entail a re-interpretation of the Greek ideal as a response to the challenges confronting education within a particular social and historical context, and both of which employ an innovative, reconstructive approach to the significance of knowledge with respect to curriculum planning and classroom teaching.

***Bildung*-centred Didaktik**

Bildung-centred Didaktik provides a theory of curriculum and instruction that seeks to translate *Bildung* into state curriculum planning and classroom teaching. Such a theory consists of three essential components: (1) a concept of *Bildung*, (2) a theory of knowledge for *Bildung*, and (3) a theory of content that serves to inform curriculum planning and classroom teaching.

As the product of neo-humanism that flourished in Germany between 1770 and 1830, the concept of *Bildung* was articulated as response to the challenge of modernity posted by the Enlightenment and as a revolt against the then Christianity dominant ideology in schooling. Inspired by the ancient Greek notion of *paideia*, neo-humanists re-conceived education as the development of the full potential of an individual as an independent human being—rather than in the image of God (Løvlie & Standish, 2002; Nordenbo, 2002). On this account, *Bildung* refers to the formation of the full individual, encompassing the development of intellectual and moral powers, the cultivation of sensibility, self-awareness, liberty and freedom, responsibility and dignity (von Humboldt, 2000; also see Hopmann, 2007). The concept is later on extended to include the development of self-determination (autonomy) co-determination (participation) and solidarity (Klafki 1998). In short, underpinning *Bildung*-centred Didaktik is an image of a 'responsible and socially aware person contributing to his or her own destiny and capable of knowing, feeling, and acting' (Gundem, 2000, p. 242)—constituting an end in point in education.

As a result of the interaction of an individual with culture and society, *Bildung* is achieved through linking the self to the world in 'the most general, most animated and most unrestrained interplay' (von Humboldt, 2000, p. 58). The individual seeks to 'grasp as much [of the] world as possible' and to make contribution to the humankind through developing his or her own unique self, intellectual and moral powers (von Humboldt, 2000). The world, independent from human thinking and practice, is processed by human thought represented by academic disciplines such as humanities and sciences (Lüth, 2000).

With *Bildung* as a point of departure, neo-humanists 'translated the general problem of how to conceive of historical knowledge into the educational question of how to forge the link

between the person and his culture' (Løvlie, 2002, p. 467). A theory of knowledge for *Bildung* is articulated wherein the role or significance of knowledge is conceived or reconceived of as:

- a means of expressing, exercising and intuiting powers;
- a potential stimulus for human development;
- a counterpart to mark out the boundaries of the individual; and
- a means of objectivizing ideas and powers in order to leave traces in the world (Lüth, 2000, p. 77).

As such, knowledge is to be 'used in the service of intellectual and moral *Bildung*' (Lüth, 2000, p. 77)—rather than to be sought in its own end or for its own sake. Academic disciplines are an indispensable *resource* for *Bildung* (Klafki, 2000). There are several forms of disciplinary knowledge—historical, social, linguistic, geographic, mathematical, physical, and chemical—each of which give us access to a particular aspect of reality, and each of which has potential for the cultivation of a particular type of human power (Weniger, 2000).

All German states have a state curriculum guideline, the *Lehrplan*. Curriculum planning at the state level entails a deliberative and interpretative process of selecting contents from academic disciplines and other sources (e.g., human experience and wisdom) within a particular social context, with specific groups of learners in mind (Klafki, 2000; Weniger, 2000). It is informed by a theory of content consisting of four interrelated notions, *contents of education* (*Bildungsinhalt*), *educational substance* (*Bildungsgehalt*), *the elementary* (*das Elementare*) and *the fundamental*(*das Fundamentale)*. Contents of education result from a deliberative process of selection and organization of the wealth of academic knowledge, experience and wisdom for *Bildung*. Such contents, set aside for teaching, are seen as embodying educational potential for moral and intellectual *Bildung*:

> …these contents, once the children or adolescents have internalized and thus acquired them, would enable them to 'produce a certain order' (Litt) in themselves and at the same time in their relation to the world, to 'assume responsibility' (Weniger), and to cope with the requirements of life, and take the free chances of life. The contents of teaching and learning will represent such order, or possibilities for such order, such responsibilities… (Klafki, 2000, p. 150)

The educational potential lies in the educational substance (*Bildungsgehalt*) of content constituted by *essential* categories or aspects (concepts, principles, relations, values, methods) that could contribute to *Bildung*. Content, by virtue of its educational substance, can bring about a *fundamental* change in the perspectives, modes of thinking, dispositions and ways of being-in-the-world of individual students (Krüger, 2008).

Based on such a theory of content, for a school subject, the state curriculum guideline specifies the content (topics, themes, issues) to be taught in schools but *not* the educational substance and meanings— which are to be identified, interpreted and unpacked by teachers in their classroom situations (Hopmann, 2007). Classroom teaching is viewed as a 'fruitful encounter' between content and the learner (Klafki, 2000) rather than a mere acquisition of academic knowledge. In this context, instructional planning entails a *didaktik* analysis of content informed by the theory of content. The teacher is to identify those essential elements (categories or aspects) of content that could contribute to *Bildung* and to unpack their educational meanings with particular students in mind and within a particular historical context (present and future) (Klafki, 2000). As such, the teacher *reduces* content to 'what is basic, elementary, *the elemental*' (Krüger, 2008), acting as an 'unlocker' of the 'reality' for the learner. Likewise, the learner is to open up or unlock himself or herself for the reality disclosed. In other words, teaching 'opens up

a world for the student, thus opening the student for the world' (Hopmann, 2007, p. 115; also see Klafki, 2000).

Taken together, the above theory of knowledge and the theory of content represent a reconstructive, categorical approach to the significance of knowledge for *Bildung*. It is *reconstructive* because knowledge, and in particular content, are not taken in and of themselves, but reconceived or reconstructed in ways that are productive of *Bildung*. The approach is *categorical* in the sense that categories are used to 'open up' the world and the learner (see Hopmann, 2007). Overall, Didaktik provides a powerful way of thinking about how knowledge or content can be used as an important resource/vehicle for the development of general human powers encapsulated in the concept of Bildung. However, it does not address how knowledge or content can used for the development of specific human powers deemed important in a society at a particular time—an issues that is a central concern of the Schwabian model, to which I now turn.

The Schwabian model of a liberal education

As indicated earlier, the Schwabian model is deeply embedded in and shaped by the Chicago tradition of liberal education. Like *Bildung*-centred Didaktik, this model can also be seen as consisting of three essential components: (1) a vision of a liberal education, (2) a theory of knowledge for the kind of liberal education envisaged, and (3) a theory of content that seeks to inform curriculum planning and pedagogical practice.

Schwab's vision of a liberal education is centred on an image of an educated person who possesses an understanding of culture and the world and a set of powers that allows him or her to face the challenges and problems in the society of his times. Such an image was first articulated

by McKeon in ‘Education and the disciplines’—in which he attempted to restore the ancient notion of liberal arts to the centre of the curriculum (Westbury & Wilkof, 1978).

> Whether it is called the trivium or not, whether it is applied to old books or new books or even to oral presentations, whether or not principles are thought to determine the sequence, a student should emerge from such a general education with a knowledge of how problems, whether of life or science or of art, have been treated, and with some insight therefore into how problems may be treated; and, joined to that knowledge, he should possess an ability to understand positions other than his own, to present his own convictions relevantly, lucidly, and cogently, and finally to apply informed critical standards to his own arguments and those advanced by others. (McKeon, 1937, p. 377)

The powers of an educated person, later on further articulated by Schwab, include a ‘capacity for “syntactical communication”’, a disposition to ‘quest, beyond mere survival, for a state called “happiness”’, an ability to ‘deliberate wisely about technologies based on science’ and ‘to choose thoughtfully among several technological methods’(Levine, 2006, p. 119). The powers too include ‘abilities and insights to face the new problems of our times and to use the new instrumentalities with wisdom and freedom’ (McKeon, 1953, p. 113) and ‘critical and organizing power and deliberative command over choice and action’ (Schwab, 1978, p. 125), among others.

The cultivation of such intellectual, social and civic powers is achieved through the interaction of individual students with various forms of knowledge embodied in contemporary academic disciplines—which supplant the medieval liberal arts (Ward, 1950). Accordingly, a theory of knowledge is articulated which conceives of the essence of academic disciplines in

ways productive of cultivating human powers. According to McKeon (1949), there are three types of academic disciplines—natural sciences, social sciences and humanities—the significance of each of which in liberal education is determined by a distinct set of *arts* or *methods of inquiry* rather than content or subject matter per se. As Levine (2006, p. 99) explained,

> …the place of the natural sciences in general education was determined by the arts required to analyse problems, validate knowledge, and communicate statements about natures and things. The place of social sciences in general education was determined by the arts required to deal with problems concerning associations set up by humans to achieve common values. The place of the humanities in general education was determined by the arts required to analyse the great achievements and products of human creativity when considered with respect to their formal structure. All three of these arts, McKeon insisted, are applicable to all subject matters.

Building on McKeon , Schwab conceives of an academic discipline as consisting of not only statements/conclusions but also arts or methods employed in disciplinary inquiry, an understanding of which enables the development of liberating human powers that are applicable to wide-ranging situations and practices.

> The 'intellectual' arts and skills with which the liberal education curriculum is concerned are not then intellectual as to subject matter, and thus exclusive of other subject matters, but intellectual as to quality. They are the arts and skills which confer cogency upon situations and actions whether these be scientific, social, or humanistic, general and

> abstract or particular and concrete. The liberal arts, however formulated, are to be understood as the best statement of our present knowledge of the human make, of various means—some special in their application to specific subject matters, some general—by which the understanding frees us from submission to impressions, beliefs, and impulses, to give us critical and organizing power and deliberative command over choice and action. A liberal curriculum is one concerned that its students develop such powers. (Schwab, 1978, p.125)

Such an exposition of the significance of arts or methods of inquiry in liberal education is also informed by Dewey's construction of experience (cf. Dewey, 1938/1998).[5] It is innovative, representing an important contribution that Schwab made to the reformulation of the liberal curriculum in Chicago (Westbury & Wilkof, 1978).

As with *Bildung*-centred Didaktik, curriculum planning entails a deliberative and interpretive process of selecting and translating knowledge from academic disciplines within a particular instructional context, with a particular group of learners in mind. The process is informed by a theory of content consisting of three *faces* in accord with the above theory of knowledge. Identified from the fund of academic knowledge, contents take the form of scholarly materials (histories, scientific reports, literacy works, etc.) that reflect the 'revisionary' character of knowledge rather than just 'rhetoric of conclusion' (Schwab, 1962). The selection process necessitates a discovery of the educational potential—in terms of educational possibilities—of a particular piece of material under consideration by means of three interpretive categories or faces. The first face is the *purport* conveyed by the material, referring to, for instance, an account of a political event by a historical segment, a way of classifying physical phenomena by a scientific report, a moral dilemma or an image of person by a literary work. Having students encounter the

purport as such can open up opportunities for widening their horizons, transforming their perspectives, and cultivating their moral sensitivity.

The second face is the *originating discipline* from which scholarly material derives, referring to a coherent way of inquiry—a problem identified, an investigation executed, the data or argument sought and a conclusion reached. Having students understand and experience the problem, method, principle and conclusion of a disciplinary inquiry can give rise to the development of independent critical thinking, an ability to judge the validity and reliability of knowledge claims, and an understanding of the merits and limitations of a particular mode of inquiry. The third face refers to *access disciplines* that can be brought to bear on scholarly material to disclose its full complication and sophistication. When a piece of material is scrutinized by asking different types of questions, different perspectives and different methods of inquiry, it can render diverse opportunities for cultivating critical thinking, freedom of thought, self-understanding and prudent thought and action.

An analysis of educational potential is required for all pieces of scholarly material competing for a place in the curriculum. The final decision on the inclusion of a particular piece of content into the curriculum is made with reference to is educational potential and in view of the four curriculum commonplaces—the subject matter (content), the learner, the teacher and the milieu (Schwab, 1973).

The theory of content also serves to inform classroom teaching construed as an encounter of students with the essence of content. As with *Didaktik*, instructional planning presupposes a careful analysis and unpacking of the educational substance, meaning and significance of content. This can be seen in *College curriculum and student protest* in which,

Schwab (1969), using as its pretext the student protest movement in the 1960s, provides a restatement of his conviction about the nature of liberal education. He illustrates how to recover the meaning in scholarly material through 'arts of recovery'—in terms of the meaning conveyed (the purport), a particular way of inquiry involved (the originating discipline) and multiple ways of inquiry brought forth (access disciplines) that could be brought to bear on the material. By means of these three categories, a scholarly material or text is made to open up manifold opportunities for challenging the understandings of students and cultivating their intellectual and moral powers.

Overall, the above theory of knowledge and the theory of content together represent a reconstructive, categorical approach to the significance of academic disciplines for the cultivation of human powers. It is *reconstructive* because the outcomes (concepts and principles) and methods of a discipline are not taken in and of themselves, *but* re-conceived or reconstructed for liberal education. As with *Didaktik,* this approach is *topical* in that a set of categories is used to reveal the possibilities of content for the cultivation.

Convergence and divergence

There are significant signs of convergence between *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model. Both employ as a point of departure for thinking about liberal education an image of an active individual—an intellectual and moral agent—with developed human powers (capacities, ways of thinking, dispositions) in a changing society. Both treat knowledge, not in and of itself, but as a resource/vehicle for the cultivation of human powers and hence reconceive the significance of knowledge in ways that are productive of the cultivation. Also, both view

curriculum planning as a deliberative and interpretive undertaking and classroom teaching as an encounter between students and the essence of knowledge.

There are, of course, differences between *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model. The former views the cultivation of human powers as resulting from interactions with not only academic knowledge but also society and culture, whereas the latter conceives the cultivation as primarily resulting from interactions with disciplinary and, to some extent, practical knowledge (see Schwab, 1969). The former tends to view academic disciplines as established bodies of knowledge, whereas the latter see them in terms of not only achievements but, more importantly, also arts or methods of inquiry. In addition, *Bildung*-centred Didaktik is concerned primarily with general education at the school level, whereas the Schwabian model is primarily with general education at the collegiate level.

Differences aside, both *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model diverge markedly from the knowledge-its-own-end thesis. As noted earlier, in the thesis the central purpose of a liberal education is the development of intellectual capacities. Knowledge is conceived in its own right and as being taught in its own end. Curriculum planning is largely a theoretical undertaking consisting in identifying the key forms of academic knowledge and their respective central concepts, principles, methods and techniques. And classroom teaching is seen as a process of transmitting academic knowledge.

Behind these signs of convergence and divergence are two rather different orientations and approaches to liberal education. *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model are reformative. Both entail a re-interpretation of the ancient ideal of liberal education as a response to the social and cultural challenges to education in a particular historical context. Furthermore, both approach to liberal education in the Aristotelian spirit. Both conceive the liberal education

as a *practical* undertaking aiming to produce the active moral agent rather than the knower or theoretician. As such, both are concerned with practical task of what it means to develop the individual for political, social and cultural participation in a changing society. And both Klafki (a key representative of *Bildung*-centred Didaktik) and Schwab take the burden of translating a vision of liberal education into curriculum planning and teaching within a particular instructional context—rather than merely pursuing theoretical analyses regarding liberal education, knowledge and the curriculum (Reid, 1980). [6]

By contrast, the orientation associated with the knowledge-its-own-end thesis is largely defensive or restorative. What Newman or Hirst provides is a defence or restatement of an idea of liberal education in response to the 'crisis' of identity of liberal education in society (R. White, 1986). Furthermore, both Newman and Hirst treat liberal education as largely a *theoretic* undertaking concerned with establishing theoretical principles that underpin the liberal education curriculum. As noted earlier, their visions of a liberal education are directed toward preparing the human being as knower rather than as moral agent. As a result, rather than addressing how to educate the active, participatory individual in a changing society, both Newman and Hirst engage themselves in analysing what a liberal education entails and what content best trains the mind for 'intellectual excellence'. And both draw implications for curriculum planning and classroom teaching based on the theoretical analyses (Reid, 1980). [7]

Discussion and conclusion

Examining three models of liberal education, this article makes a contribution to the recent conversation initiated by Young and his colleagues on bringing knowledge back into the current

global discourse on curriculum policy and practice. The knowledge-its-own-end thesis, despite inherent issues and problems, lends support to their argument that helping students gain access to disciplinary knowledge is an essential function of schooling and that this function needs to be informed by a well-articulated theory of knowledge. Furthermore, the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge entails the development of intellectual powers—such as analytic skills, logical reasoning, and making normative judgements—in addition to those identified by Young and his colleagues noted earlier. On this account, a conventional subject-based curriculum –directed toward transmitting disciplinary knowledge or 'learning for its own sake'—always has a role to play in developing intellectual powers. The challenge is how to reformulate school subjects to provide student with access to various forms of disciplinary knowledge and to enable them to develop intellectual powers needed for this day and age.

As alluded to earlier, linking the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge to the development of intellectual powers captures only in part the role and significance knowledge can play in the development of human powers—broadly construed. The central argument of this article, which goes beyond the knowledge-its-own-end thesis or Young's theory of powerful knowledge, is developed through an examination of *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model. If education is centrally concerned with the cultivation of intellectual, moral, social and civic powers, then knowledge needs to be seen as an important resource for the cultivation rather than as something taught in its own end. For this, a theory of knowledge is needed that conceives or re-conceives the significance of knowledge in ways that are productive for the cultivation. Furthermore, a theory of content is needed that concerns how knowledge is selected and translated into curriculum content and how content can be analysed and unpacked in ways that open up manifold opportunities for cultivating human powers.

To be clear, there are two major issues in *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model. Like the knowledge-its-own-end thesis, these two models have a tendency, particularly evident in latter, to overlook other forms of knowledge (practical, experiential, common-sense or everyday knowledge) that could be meaningful resources for developing human powers. The second issue, closely related to the first one, has to do with an elitist orientation associated with both *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model. The former is largely employed for teaching academically-inclined students in *gymnasium* (academic-track high schools), while the latter was developed for the first two years (general) education of a highly selected group of undergraduates at the University of Chicago (Levine, 2006). Therefore, when applying these two models to the current context, it is necessary to take account of other pertinent forms of knowledge. Furthermore, it is necessary to extend the cultivation-via-knowledge function of schooling to *all* students regardless of their background, gender or ethnicity.This is a social justice issue because the development of human powers or capabilities is inevitably tied to 'pedagogic rights' of all students to individual enhancement, social inclusion and political participation (McClean, Abbas, & Ashwin, 2013). I now turn to discuss the implications of the two models for the development of competencies or capabilities needed for the 21st century and for what is entailed in bringing knowledge back into the discourse on curriculum policy and practice.

To call attention to the cultivation-via-knowledge function of school education from the perspectives of *Bilung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model is particularly timely and pertinent in view of the current global trend toward delineating the central purpose of education in terms of competencies needed for the knowledge society. Such a trend is underpinned by a competency discourse which, originating in the field of human resources management, is shaped

by the European framework of key competencies for life-long learning and OECD's Competencies (DeSeCo) Project. Essentially economically-driven, this discourse tends to ignore the need for developing students' self-awareness, autonomy, and democratic agency, thus being at risk of treating a student as 'an object of other peoples' interventions' (Biesta and Priestley, 2013, p. 46). It too creates serious problems of implementation in classrooms as within the framework of this discourse competencies are translated into bodies of skills and performance to be taught, independent of the content of the school curriculum (Willbergh, 2015).

Both *Bildung*-centered Didaktik and the Schwabian model provide a viable alternative to the competency discourse. From the perspective of Didaktik or the Schwabian model, the formation of a moral and intellectual agent—self-aware, autonomous and responsible individual—is the central aim of education. The formation entails the cultivation of a wide range of human powers that can be extended to include many of those so-called 21st century competencies such as problem solving, critical thinking, innovation, and creativity (Carlgren, 2005; Willbergh, 2015). Furthermore, the cultivation of human powers (broadly construed) is achieved in and through the content of the school curriculum. This calls for an innovative, creative way of reconceiving the significance of knowledge, of selecting, organizing and translating knowledge into content, and of analysing and unpacking content for cultivating human powers—to which I now turn.

Informed by *Bildung*-centered Didaktik and the Schwabian model, three points can be made concerning bringing knowledge back into how we think about curriculum policy and practice geared towards the development of human powers in the 21st century. First and foremost, there is a need to articulate a vision of an educated person in the 21st century as an agent rather than a knower (Mulcahy, 2009; J. White, 2004). What does it means to be an active individual—

an intellectual and moral agent—who is actively participating and interacting with the current social, cultural and physical world characterized by globalisation, rapid technological advancement, an ever-increasing rate of informational exchange, and mobility? What are the intellectual, moral, social, civic, aesthetic, technological and (even) physical powers such an educated person needs to possess? Such questions still need to be tackled, despite 'answers' in terms of 21st century competencies or capabilities are available in literature. Such answers should not be taken for granted, but as a useful starting point for further discussion and inquiry.

Second, there is a need for a theory (or theories) of knowledge directed toward the formation of the envisaged educated person, in particular, toward the cultivation of the broad range of human powers deemed desirable for life and work in the 21st century. The development of such a theory entails more than differentiating various forms of worthwhile knowledge and identifying their respective elements, conceptual and methodological features—a task that has been the preoccupation of Hirst or Young and his colleagues. In addition to academic, disciplinary knowledge, what are the other forms of knowledge that could contribute to the cultivation of human powers for all students? How would all these knowledge forms be conceived or re-conceived in ways that are productive of the cultivation? Such questions are not merely questions of epistemology or sociology; they are fundamentally normative, educational and curricular questions that call for serious studies of various forms of knowledge to discover their relationship to education. They, as well, call for a creative approach to theorising or conceptualising the essence of knowledge in various forms for the purpose of cultivating human powers.

Third, there is a need for a theory (or theories) of content that can inform curriculum planning and classroom teaching directed toward the cultivation of human powers in the 21st

century. Such a theory is concerned not so much with the matter of selecting, sequencing and pacing academic knowledge for knowledge transmission as seen by Young and his colleagues (see Young, 2013; Young & Muller, 2015) as with the process of selecting, organizing and translating knowledge for the cultivation purpose. How would various kinds of knowledge be selected, translated and organized into the content of the curriculum geared toward cultivating human powers for all students? How would content be analysed and unpacked in ways that open up manifold opportunities for self-formation and the cultivation of human powers? Such questions are not merely philosophical; they are educational and curricular questions which call for a creative, innovative approach to content selection and organisation and to analysing and disclosing the educational potential of content. The above Schwabian idea of three faces and the Didaktik concept of educational substance, I believe, remain powerful heuristics for tackling such questions in the current context. They both lend support to issues-based, cross-disciplinary approaches to curriculum planning and classroom teaching that are more pertinent to the cultivation of human powers (see Klafki, 2000; Levine, 2006; Westbury, 1978).

Such three kinds of questions are at the heart of *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and the Schwabian model—both of which, as indicated above, result from an endeavour of reinventing liberal education in response to the challenges confronting education in a particular social and historical context. Then, to call attention to these two models is to invite readers to participate in the search for ways of reformulating liberal education in view of the current challenges of preparing students for life and work in the 21st century. We need to move beyond recent philosophical discourse—centred on defending, recovering, reinstating or clarifying the ideal of liberal education (e.g. Ozolinš , 2013; Miller, 2007; Mulcahy, 2008, 2009; J. White 2010)—to engage in re-inventing liberal education directed toward the cultivation of a wide range of human

powers for all, with a curriculum and pedagogy suited our times. Such a task 'calls for intellectual engagement of an order no less difficult and challenging than the most demanding forms of scholarly research' (Levine, 2006, p.176). Both *Bildung*-centred Didaktik and Schwabian model are sources of inspirational and creative ideas for such an endeavour.

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[1] For Young and his colleagues, this knowledge is derived from traditional disciplines like mathematics, physics, geography and history rather than from multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary studies such as ecological economics and human ecology (Young, 2007; Young & Muller, 2015).

[2] This is not to suggest that Young and his colleagues have been influenced by Newman or Hirst when developing their argument. My intent in this paper is not to trace the intellectual antecedents of the work of Young and his colleagues, but to point put an important strand in their thinking which seems to have a historical antecedent. How and whether there is a connection with the thinking of Newman or Hirst is an issue of discussion and debate.

[3] Hirst retracted this theory thirty years later, partly because of numerous criticisms of the theory from the academic community, and partly because of the 'practice turn' in his thinking about liberal education and the curriculum (see Mulcahy, 2009).

[4] To regard Newman and Hirst as spokesmen for the knowledge-its-on-end thesis is not to imply that there are differences between these two thinkers. In terms of philosophical orientation, the writing of Newman is informed by his Catholic religious belief and commitment (see Ker, 1999), whereas the writing of Hirst is grounded in the analytical tradition of educational philosophy associated with the University of London (see Pring, 1993; J. White, 2009) . In terms of episemology, Newman holds that knowledge found in academic disciplines is a true account of reality, whereas Hirst rejects such a claim yet holds on to the belief that academic disciplines or the various forms of knowledge embody ways of understanding reality (Mulcahy, 2009). A discussion of their differences is beyond the scope of this article.

[5] Dewey (1938/1998) speaks of the significance of scientific method in the construction of human experience. As the 'pattern and ideal of intelligent exploration and exploitation of the potentialities inherent in experience' (p. 108), scientific method has liberating powers in terms of 'getting at the significance of our everyday experiences of the world' and providing 'a working pattern of the way in which and the conditions under which experiences are used to lead ever onward and outward' (pp. 111-112).

[6] For more discussion on the convergence, see Künzli (2013). The significant degree of convergence can be explained in terms of the Germanic influence on the Chicago tradition. As Reid (1980, p. 259) observed,

> For Schwab, however, and some of his contemporaries at the University of Chicago, an inheritance of Germanic rather than English styles of scholarship, combined with the need to view educational problems in terms of the social and political conditions of a mature republican democracy, produced circumstances under which a brand of neo-Aristotelianism became both possible and attractive.

[7] In the UK, the Aristotelian practical spirit of mind, once highly influential, 'was progressively abandoned by English educators of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' (Reid, 1980, p. 252).

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