

Discourse

**Learning and Teaching in
Philosophical and
Religious Studies**

Discourse:

Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies

Editor: Dr David J Mossley

If you have any comments or queries about the content featured in *Discourse*, please contact the editor on:

+44(0)113 343 6745

david@prs.heacademy.ac.uk

Deputy Editor: Julie Closs

If you have any comments or queries about production or distribution issues, please contact the deputy editor on:

+44(0)113 343 1166

jules@prs.heacademy.ac.uk

Distributed freely to all individuals and PRS departments in UK Higher Education and to those registered in our subject areas.

Editorial board:

Dr Darlene Bird
Subject Co-ordinator
Subject Centre for PRS
University of Leeds

Dr Gary Bunt
Subject Co-ordinator
Subject Centre for PRS
University of Wales,
Lampeter

Ms Danielle Lamb
Resource Co-ordinator
Subject Centre for PRS
University of Leeds

Mr George MacDonald
Ross
Director
Subject Centre for PRS
University of Leeds

Dr Clare Saunders
Subject Co-ordinator
Subject Centre for PRS
University of Leeds

Dr Simon Smith
Associate Director
Subject Centre for PRS
University of Leeds

Dr Joe Cain
Chair
Dept. of Science and
Technology Studies
University College
London

Prof Tom Sorell
BPA Representative
University of Birmingham

Dr Rachel Cooper
BSPS Representative
Institute for Environment,
Philosophy and Public
Policy
Lancaster University

Dr Dominic Corrywright
BASR Representative
Oxford Brookes
University

Prof David Evans
BPA Representative
The Queen's University
of Belfast

Ms Julie Gallimore
Employability
Consultant
Julie Gallimore
Associates

Dr Ron Geaves
AUDTRS
Representative
University College
Chester

Dr Graeme Gooday
Division of HPS
Dept. of Philosophy
University of Leeds

Dr Mary Mills
AUDTRS
Representative
Newman College of
Higher Education,
Birmingham

Discourse:

Volume 7, Number 1, Autumn 2007

The journal of the *Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies* of the *Higher Education Academy*

Contents

Editorial..... 4

News and information

The Higher Education Academy.....7

The Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies.....8

Departmental Visits, Workshops and Contacts.....9

Calls for Nominations for Awards and Calls for Papers.....11

Reports

Hands-On Philosophy: Learners as Teachers

John Foster..... 19

Theology and/or Religious Studies? A Response from Graduate Students

Angela Quartermaine..... 33

Articles, Discussion and Practical Teaching

The Discourse Interview

Graeme Gooday..... 63

Teaching Philosophy Historically: the Case of Personal Identity

David Evans..... 81

The Critical Being of the Liberal Arts Student

Stuart Hanscomb..... 95

Teaching Quinean Indeterminacy

Susana Nuccetelli..... 125

Portfolio, Partnership and Pedagogy

Martin Groves and Phillip Tovey..... 135

The Hind Report: Theological Education and Cross Sector Partnerships

Gary Wilton..... 153

Minding the Gap: Employing Formative Assessment Techniques

James Nelson..... 179

About Discourse..... 192

Editorial: Context, Communication and Engagement

Welcome to Discourse.

Over the summer we ran a survey of users of the Subject Centre. We will be publishing a full breakdown and analysis of the results in the next issue, but it was encouraging to note that 73.5% of respondents found *Discourse* to be a 'useful' or 'very useful' resource and that 74.1% of respondents stated that the Subject Centre itself had had 'some' or 'significant impact' in their teaching. We will not be resting on these outcomes, however, and have been taking note of all the feedback we have received. In January we will be resetting the survey to generate a rolling system for feedback, so please do make your views known at: <https://www.survey.bris.ac.uk/heacademy/prs>.

As many of you indicated in the survey that a full e-version of *Discourse* would be useful, we are currently moving papers and reports from back copies of *Discourse* into a fully searchable system on the Subject Centre website. From the next issue you will be able to use *Discourse* alongside all the other

resources on our website to get the most from the wide range of pedagogical material published by the Subject Centre over the last six years. The paper version of *Discourse* will still be available, but we will be looking at ways to streamline and rationalise distribution to ensure that copies are not wasted. Watch out for news in the near future. We will also be making some additional supplementary materials, such as event reports, available on-line only, to reduce the use of paper. We begin this practice with this issue.

As always I have striven to provide a mix of disciplines, approaches and themes in this edition. There are some scholarly and interesting pieces on critical being (the third part of the series from the experiences of philosophy teaching at Crichton University Campus Dumfries), teaching historical philosophy and Quine. And there is a fascinating report on how Lancaster University delivered philosophy to schools using undergraduate teachers. We have also included reports on different teaching

approaches in theology and religious studies, and the impact of the Hind report on theology that looks at different international contexts.

I hope that this issue contains something of interest for everyone. All good wishes for the Christmas break.

David

News and Information

The Higher Education Academy

The Higher Education Academy's mission is to help institutions, discipline groups and all staff to provide the best possible learning experience for their students.

Its aims and objectives are:

1. To be an authoritative and independent voice on policies that influence student learning experiences;
2. To support institutions in their strategies for improving the student learning experience;
3. To lead, support and inform the professional development and recognition of staff in higher education;
4. To promote good practice in all aspects of support for the student learning experience;
5. To lead the development of research and evaluation to improve the quality of the student learning experience;
6. To be a responsive, efficient and accountable organisation.

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk>

The Subject Network

The Subject Network is a network of 24 subject centres based in higher education institutions throughout the UK. It is funded by the four HE funding bodies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It aims to promote high quality learning and teaching through development and transfer of successful practice in all subject disciplines.

The Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies

The Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies is based at the University of Leeds and at a partner site at the University of Wales, Lampeter and covers the disciplines of Philosophy, Philosophy of Science, History of Science (including the History of Medicine and Technology), Theology, and Religious Studies.

Mission statement

To support and promote Philosophical, Theological and Religious Studies higher education in the UK, and to build on its culture of dialogue and reflection.

Strategic Aims

- To work in collaboration with PRS colleagues and students in order to be effective advocates for our disciplines in the development of national and regional policies.
- To fund and take part in projects and events that support the development and recognition of good teaching practice in PRS.
- To participate in relevant research developments.
- To provide a repository of relevant knowledge and expertise within our subject communities.
- To maintain a well managed, flexible and properly structured subject centre staffed by appropriately qualified people with academic and creative strengths.

Visit the website for the Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies of the Higher Education Academy:

<http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk>

Departmental Visits, Workshops and Contacts

Departmental Visits

We have now visited almost all of the departments in our subject communities. We have contacted all the departments (either via your departmental Subject Centre representative or your Head of Department) and if we have not yet set up a face to face meeting then please do not hesitate to contact us at the address below to arrange one. The aim of the visits is to gather information about existing effective practice and to find out what the most pressing issues for your department and for individual lecturers and tutors are, so that we can better direct our resources and efforts to serve the PRS community in all learning, teaching and assessment matters.

Departmental Workshops

We also offer a full programme of workshops. These are designed to help us help you with issues raised in our first visits and to see how things have changed in your learning and teaching environment. We aim to provide workshops and support advice on any learning and teaching issue that has a subject-specific dimension. These workshops can be tailored to your departmental needs and time and can cover topics such as plagiarism, assessment and tutor training. Please contact us to discuss how we might help you with a workshop for your department, free of charge.

Contacts

Our list of departmental contacts continues to grow, but there is still a small minority of departments that have not registered a representative. If you would like to be a representative for your department, please contact us at:

Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies

Department of Theology and Religious Studies

University of Leeds

Leeds LS2 9JT

Tel: 0113 343 4184

enquiries@prs.heacademy.ac.uk

**Calls for nominations for awards
and calls for papers**

Nominations Open for the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) Individual Awards (£10k)

The NTFS Individual Awards are administered by the Higher Education Academy and aim to:

- raise the profile of learning and teaching
- recognise and celebrate individuals who make an outstanding impact on the student learning experience
- provide a national focus for institutional teaching and learning excellence schemes.

Under the individual strand of the scheme 50 awards of £10,000 are made to staff to be used for personal development in learning and teaching. Since 2005, four candidates from PRS disciplines have been made National Teaching Fellows: Dr Deirdre Burke, (senior lecturer in religious studies, Wolverhampton), Dr Graeme Gooday (senior lecturer in history and philosophy of science, Leeds), George MacDonald Ross, (Director of the Subject Centre for PRS and senior lecturer in history of philosophy, Leeds) and Dr Chris Megone, (senior lecturer in philosophy and Director of the Interdisciplinary Ethics Applied (IDEA) Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching).

Each institution may put forward up to three members of staff to be considered, who must submit a portfolio of documentation demonstrating their commitment to three criteria:

- **Individual excellence:** evidence of promoting and enhancing the student learning experience. For example by: arousing curiosity to stimulate and inspire learning, organising and presenting resources cogently and imaginatively, recognising and supporting diversity of student learning needs, drawing upon the results of relevant research, scholarship and professional practice, engaging with and contributing to the established literature or the nominee's own evidence base.
- **Raising the profile of excellence:** evidence of supporting colleagues and influencing support for student learning in (and, if appropriate, beyond) the nominee's institution, through demonstrating impact and engagement beyond the nominee's

immediate academic or professional role. For example by: contributing to the development of colleagues in promoting student learning, contributing to departmental/faculty/institutional/national initiatives to facilitate student learning, contributing to and/or supporting meaningful and positive change with respect to pedagogic practice, policy and/or procedure.

- **Developing excellence:** the nominee's commitment to her/his ongoing professional development with regard to teaching and learning and/or learning support. For example by: ongoing review and enhancement of individual practice, engaging in professional development activities, engagement in the review and enhancement of individual practice, contributing to improvements in the student learning experience.

The NTFS individual strand is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (DELNI). As such, all higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland, and further education colleges which have 100 or more 'full-time equivalent' students on higher education programmes directly funded by HEFCE, are eligible for the Scheme. A full list of eligible institutions, along with an application pack, can be found at:

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/professional/ntfs/individual>

Nominations for the NTFS (Individual) 2008 are now open. The deadline for receipt of electronic copies of the core nomination documents is **12:00 noon on Wednesday 12th March 2008.**

e-Learning in Dialogue: Innovative Teaching and Learning in Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies

University of York, May 14th-15th 2008

Call for Papers

The Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies (PRS) is organising an international two-day conference, 'e-Learning in Dialogue: Innovative Teaching and Learning in Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies'. The conference will discuss ways to apply, embed and enhance e-learning in our disciplines.

In particular, dialogue has been frequently discussed as a major challenge for e-learning in the humanities (and especially in philosophy, HPS, theology and religious studies). This conference will attempt to challenge this view, by presenting papers and workshops on current methods of embedding dialogue through the use of technology in teaching and learning, and showcasing innovative developments in this area.

Academics in the relevant disciplines with an interest in the enrichment of teaching practice through innovations in technology-enabled teaching and learning are invited to submit proposals for papers or workshops by **January 31st 2008**.

Suggested areas for discussion

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- The role and value of dialogical forms of teaching and learning in PRS.
- The meaning of 'dialogue' in teaching and learning in PRS. What is the optimum number of learners involved in an effective dialogue? What are the prerequisites for an effective and successful PRS teaching and learning dialogue? What are the limitations of such a dialogue?
- State-of-the-art technological innovations in e-teaching and e-learning: how can dialogical forms of teaching and learning

be applied using these innovations?

- Power, freedom and dialogue in e-learning. What do we mean by ‘e-learning in dialogue’ and ‘dialogical e-learning’, in terms of forms and methodologies of pedagogy and adoption of appropriate learning and teaching technology? What are the aims and intended outcomes of ‘e-learning in dialogue’ and ‘dialogical e-learning’?
- The use of (personalised) VLEs and how they can facilitate and enhance online dialogue.
- The role of Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technologies and methodologies in terms of optimising ‘e-learning in dialogue’.
- Methods of embedding Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technologies in course design and delivery.

You are invited to submit an outline of your paper or workshop (maximum 300 words) for consideration. Papers should last no longer than 20 minutes, with discussion time to follow. Workshops should be designed to last approximately 1 hour.

It is envisaged that the papers and workshop presentations from the conference will be published in a volume of proceedings, in electronic format and in print where appropriate.

The conference will include presentations and lectures from leading figures in e-learning in the humanities (from the UK and other European countries), who will present both traditional and pioneering approaches to e-learning.

In addition to discipline-specific sessions, there will be a more broadly focused humanities session, designed in collaboration with the Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology. There will also be specialised workshops providing a hands-on approach to e-learning and allowing participants to confront the challenges of transferring a traditional approach to dialogue in the humanities to a VLE platform and other forms of e-learning.

Confirmed speakers/workshop organisers so far include:

- Professor Luciano Floridi (Oxford)
- Professor Dory Scaltsas (Edinburgh)
- Professor Richard Andrews (York)
- Professor Livio Rossetti (Peruggia, Italy)

- Dr Deirdre Burke (Wolverhampton)
- Dr Gary Bunt (Lampeter, Wales)
- Dr. Annamaria Carusi (Oxford)
- Dr Steven J. Green (Leeds)
- Dr David Hunter (Ulster)
- Mr George MacDonald Ross (Leeds)
- Dr Jo Smedley and Dr Sharon Waller (HEA-JISC Collaboration Team)

More information can be found on our website, at:

http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/elearning/elearning_in_dialogue.html

To discuss potential proposals, find out more about the conference or other e-learning activities, or to register, please contact:

Dr. Constantinos Athanasopoulos, FHEA
e-Learning Project Officer
Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies
Phone: 0113 343 7080
Email: costas@prs.heacademy.ac.uk
Skype and Messenger: Constantinos Athanasopoulos

Please also visit:

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/survey/e-learning_prs_academics
to let us know your views on e-learning. The results of the survey will be discussed at the conference.

Registration deadline: March 31st, 2008. Discounted rates available for post-graduates and part-time academics.

Spoon Feeding or Critical Thinking? A-Level to First Year Progression in Religious Studies & Theology

Conference: 3rd-4th July 2008, St Anne's College, University of Oxford

Call for Papers

Keynote Speaker: Andrew Wright, Professor of Religious and Theological Education, King's College London

The purpose of this conference is to bring together academics, school teachers, exam boards and policy-makers to consider ways to improve the transition from Religious Studies A-Level (and Scottish Highers) to first year degree courses in Theology and Religious Studies in the UK.

Proposals are invited for papers/workshops/presentations/discussion groups related to one or more of the following:

- The transition from A-Levels/Highers to first year degree level
- The first year experience
- Student/teacher expectations
- New developments in A-Levels and Highers
- Foundation Degrees
- Assessment and feedback
- Policy and curriculum development
- Resources

Please submit your proposal via email to Dr Simon Smith (simon@prs.heacademy.ac.uk) and include your name, email address and institution along with a 150-200 word description of your proposal. Please mention your preferred format (e.g. workshop, PowerPoint presentation, etc). **The deadline for proposals is 31st January 2008.**

This conference is convened by the Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies, and supported by the Association of University Departments of Theology and Religious Studies (AUDTRS).

For more details or to register, please visit:

<http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/progression/index.html>

Reports

Event Reports

In order to have more space available for scholarly articles and external reports from projects, event reports are now available on-line.

Aesthetics teaching panel

A learning and teaching panel discussion was held at Devonshire Hall, University of Leeds on 21st June 2007 as part of the conference ‘Mimesis, Metaphysics and Make Believe’ held in honour of Kendall Walton. The aim of the session was to explore aspects of learning and teaching for teachers of aesthetics, highlighting specific issues that arise in aesthetics that differ from other areas of philosophy teaching. Twenty people attended and contributed to the discussion after the main speakers’ presentations. The panel was chaired by David Mossley. The main speakers were:

- Ed Winters, West Dean College, Sussex
- Derek Matravers, Open University and Cambridge University
- Kathleen Stock, Sussex University

The full report is available at:

<http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/PrsDiscourseArticles/12>

History and Philosophy of Science Teaching Panel

A learning and teaching panel discussion was held at the University of Leeds on 22nd June 2007 as part of the annual meeting of the Leeds-UCL History and Philosophy of Science Group. The topic of the panel was ‘Can we stop teaching Kuhn yet?’ and generated some lively debate ranging over the nature of the curriculum for HPS and methods of delivery. Around thirty people attended the event and contributed to the discussion. The panel was chaired by David Mossley.

The full report is available at:

<http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/PrsDiscourseArticles/13>

Hands-On Philosophy:

Learners as Teachers

John Foster

Department of Philosophy, Lancaster University

I. Introduction

This report describes and evaluates a small-scale project entitled *Hands-on Philosophy* funded by the Higher Education Academy's Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies in 2006-07. The aims of the project were to involve 2nd and 3rd year philosophy undergraduates as teaching assistants in the introduction of philosophy topics to school students, and to investigate the perceived benefits of this work for their own studies.

Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies,

Vol. 7, No. 1, Autumn 2007, pp. 19 - 32

© Copyright Subject Centre for PRS, 2007

2. Background

Since 2004 the Department of Philosophy at Lancaster University, where the project was based, has run a programme of outreach and on-campus study events for school students from Years 5/6 to Sixth Form. These activities have been organised principally through the (former) National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth and the regional network of LEA coordinators for G&T and Aim-higher schemes. Events have explored key philosophical issues through teaching, discussion and group activities, and have introduced classic philosophical figures and writings as appropriate. This outreach programme has been developed by an Honorary Fellow of the department acting as tutor-organiser, with teaching assistance from a number of philosophy post-graduates and undergraduates over the period. Further details can be found at <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/ippp/schools/index.htm>.

HEA project funding was sought in order to guarantee nil or reduced costs to individual schools willing to be involved in a further round of the programme, and to fund the necessary additional tutor-organiser time, so that the benefits to participating undergraduates could be specifically researched. A one-year award of £5,000 was made in October 2006.

3. Project Activities During the Year

Following confirmation of funding, a leaflet about the department's outreach programme including an invitation to participate in this project was circulated by post to some 250 schools in Cumbria, Lancashire and the northern part of Greater Manchester. Schools circulated were 11-18 secondaries in the whole of this area and (experimentally) primary schools in the Lancaster area.

From responses to this mailshot and other contacts, a programme was put together comprising sessions at a total of four primary and two secondary schools. These were located in Cheshire (1), Cumbria (1), Lancashire (3) and Rochdale (1). A number of other schools responded but could not be included in the programme owing to resource constraints—those selected were largely on a first-come, first-served basis.

In four of these schools, two or three sessions were arranged, spread over a period of weeks in each case. In the other two schools, a full morning session (Primary) and a full study-day of four one-hour sessions (Secondary) were delivered. Pupils were drawn from Years 5 and 6 at primary, and Years 10 and 12 at secondary level. Work with the primary children included enquiries into the ideas of courage, fairness and personal identity. With secondary pupils, topics in political philosophy (the state of nature and the rule of law) and in philosophy of knowledge and science (based on the theme of climate change) were covered.

A total of eleven undergraduates, six second-year and five third-year, took part in these sessions as teaching assistants. All were philosophy majors or combined majors.

A standard pattern rapidly emerged for the teaching sessions themselves, with the tutor-organiser introducing the topic and steering the lesson and the undergraduates working with smaller groups of pupils to explore aspects of the topic and conduct related games and exercises. None of the undergraduates taking part felt confident enough in the event to take the lead role in front of a whole class (although one of the postgraduates also assisting was emboldened to do so), and it was decided not to press this aspect of the original plan.

Arrangements for debriefing and feedback after the teaching sessions are described in Section 4 below.

As well as teaching sessions, the project programme included a training dimension for the undergraduate students involved as TAs. This comprised:

- a whole-day event facilitated by Barry Hymer, a locally-based national trainer in Philosophy for Children (P4C) accredited by SAPERE (the co-ordinating body for this approach in the UK)¹;
- four evening ‘Philosophy Gym’ sessions led by the tutor-organiser (who himself underwent first-level P4C training in preparation for the project), preparing students for working on specific topics and sessions in the programme once these had been identified.

¹ See: <http://www.sapere.net/>

In recognition of the time commitment required for preparation, attending training sessions, teaching and providing written feedback afterwards, participants were paid £50 per session taught.

4. Procedures for Feedback and Evaluation

Feedback on the teaching experience for undergraduate students was obtained informally in group and one-to-one discussions after each session. After each course of sessions in a particular school, the students involved were also asked to complete a standard email questionnaire inviting them to reflect on their experience. Respondents were asked:

- In what ways did having studied philosophy as an undergraduate help with understanding the problems the students had with the topic?
- Were there ways in which taking part in the teaching programme / associated training sessions has helped you in thinking about philosophy topics you are studying?
- Did you get any new philosophical ideas or insights from the students?
- On the basis of your own experience so far, what do you think students of the age groups with which you were involved can get out of philosophy sessions?
- Did you find the training day / philosophy gym sessions helpful / interesting / relevant to the actual classroom work?
- What would you say are the main differences between the ways in which you think about philosophical issues and the ways in which the students with whom you were working thought about them?

Some students were involved in work with more than one school, and in some cases repeat questionnaires were returned, though this was not made a requirement because of then-imminent university exams.

Email feedback was also requested from the schools involved after completion of each course of sessions. In this case the questions asked included:

- Did you feel that the topics were handled in ways that made them accessible to the students?
- In relation to the age and ability range, was the content
 - too demanding
 - not demanding enough
 - about right?
- Did you see any later results from the sessions in learning terms?
- Would you repeat the ‘philosophy in the classroom’ experiment?

Finally, members of the Philosophy Department staff who had taught the undergraduates involved during the year were asked towards the end of the Summer Term for any observations on the effects of involvement for the students’ studies, in terms of understanding of philosophical topics, ability to articulate philosophical issues, contributions to seminars and philosophical confidence generally. (Responses here were not shared with the students though all were aware that comments were being sought and had consented to this happening.)

Feedback from schools, students and staff is discussed below in Sections 5,6 and 7 respectively.

5. The Schools’ Perspective

Feedback from the schools involved in the project was generally extremely positive. Sessions were felt to have been pitched appropriately and accessibly in most cases, with good use of stimulus materials at whole-class level and effective work in smaller groups to explore the chosen topics. The latter point reflects well on the undergraduates, whose role it was to conduct this small-group work. Indeed the only slightly qualified comments received from the schools referred to the tutor-organiser’s introductory material, which for a couple of sessions with a rather restless group of Year 10s was felt to be rather too demanding.

Schools indicated in response to the email questions that pupils had enjoyed the sessions and shown learning gain from them in terms both of subsequent reflection and enhanced ability to probe more deeply into topics studied in the standard curriculum. Without excep-

tion, participating schools said that they would like to repeat, and in some cases extend, the programme in following years, if the opportunity became available.

It is clear that the project has raised the profile and reputation of philosophy as a subject of interest to school students, not just in the participating schools themselves but amongst the significant number of others who became aware that the programme was being run and that this might be a real option for extension work.

6. The Undergraduates' Perspective

The main project aim as described in the agreed brief was to test the assumption that undergraduates engaging with the introduction of philosophy to school students in this way would find their own philosophical skills and understanding strengthened in the process. The reaction of the philosophy students involved, in particular their views on how participation in the work had related to their philosophical studies, is therefore at the core of this report.

Key points from participants' reflections on their experience are included as an appendix.

From a scrutiny of these responses, it emerges that participants identified two distinct though related strands of benefit to their studies. The first of these strands might be said to run with the grain of the standard undergraduate philosophy curriculum, whereas the second lies at something of a tangent to it.

In the first place, participants recorded that helping school students to find their way through philosophical topics encountered as both unfamiliar and quite challenging had required them actively and critically to revisit their own prior acquaintance with these topics:

I definitely had to refer back to what I had learnt to find good examples.

This process:

requires that you really know what the main points are.

Its benefits for the purposes of undergraduate study were explicitly

recognised:

I had to make my own thought a lot clearer...which helped me to be clearer in seminars and essays.

This appreciation of the value of clarifying and sharpening one's focus on a topic accords with the strong sense of philosophy as an analytical discipline for dealing with complexity which is evident in the responses. This comes across not just in the references to undergraduate work as a training in '*the analytical approach*', but also in the value which participants perceived introductory philosophy to have for the school students themselves. Thus it was seen to offer:

tools and skills for approaching any question they think about,

in particular practice in supplying and listening to reasons for what is said. It also brought these skills to bear in areas where the pupils had to recognise that:

there isn't always a right answer

—where from being '*too sure of their own opinions*' they were being encouraged to move to 'seeing that things aren't black-and-white'.

Helping their juniors to engage with all this was clearly welcomed by the participants (not just in their written comments, but in their evident enthusiasm for the work as it went on), as strengthening their own sense of the value of philosophy and appreciation of why they were studying it:

It allows you to take a step back from specific philosophical questions and remember why they matter.

The sharpening of their philosophical focus corresponds, too, to the benefits which members of the Philosophy Department staff perceived project involvement to have had (see Section 7 below). And it evidently goes with the grain of the undergraduate philosophy programme, which at Lancaster (as commonly elsewhere) presents itself as developing (along with 'an understanding of great and deep ideas') 'clear thinking...the capacity to locate and analyse problems and exercise judgement in their solution...and argue effectively for favoured

courses of action'.²

The second strand of benefit which undergraduate participants recognised was, however, interestingly different. A real pleasure in what might be called the rediscovery of philosophical innocence comes through in such comments as:

The children aren't weighed down by preconceived philosophical theories.

They came up with ideas I wouldn't have thought of because in trying to look further I often miss obvious points.

The children weren't overwhelmed—when you study philosophy there are so many counter-arguments!

This reaction is perhaps best summed up by the thoughtful and articulate second-year student who wrote, with almost audible relief :

it made me realise that philosophy doesn't need to be unfathomable.

What these remarks point to is an aspect of the experience of studying philosophy at undergraduate level which perhaps deserves more overt recognition by those designing or reviewing curricula. The discipline as offered to university students is typically so text-based, and teaching material moves so quickly from an exposition of the issues in a given area to tracing the arguments of the classic writers and their contemporary commentators, that any fresh first-hand encounter with philosophical problems can rapidly be submerged. It is this freshness of vision and response which participants in the project were so clearly relishing in the school students, and enjoying by proxy in working with them.

No doubt for the same kind of reason, the components of the 'Philosophy Gym' training sessions which participants found most stimulating were those which drew on the dialogical practices of small-group philosophical enquiry as developed by the Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach, in order to put the undergraduates into something approximating the situation of the pupils with whom they were

² Lancaster Philosophy Department website: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/philosophy/prospective/undergrad/careers.htm>

going to be working. (Questionnaire responses here have not been tabulated for reasons of lack of space, but included such comments as ‘very useful in helping me see how the children would be thinking...getting into the mindset of people who aren’t studying philosophy’.) These explicitly ‘Socratic’ techniques involve doing philosophy directly and ‘hands-on’ as each conceptual crux comes up in the shared exploration of an idea or theme prompted by an unannounced stimulus.³

Possible implications of these findings are considered in the ‘Conclusions to date’ at Section 9 below.

7. The Departmental Perspective

Although members of the salaried philosophy lecturing staff at Lancaster were not directly involved in the project, the department was collectively very supportive. Resources were made available in the form of an office base and administrative and clerical support for the tutor-organiser, and a financial contribution was made towards travel costs in excess of the funded budget.

Feedback to the department included a contribution by the tutor-organiser to the regular ‘Work-in-Progress’ seminar series organised for staff and postgraduates. Occasional email reports of project progress also kept it before the collective mind.

At the end of the academic year lecturing staff were asked for their observations on any gains from involvement in the project for those undergraduates concerned whom they had taught during the period. An impressionistic response was sought here, rather than a specific review of progress in assessment marks over the year, as it had been decided that the latter would have introduced an inappropriately formal element to the project for the students themselves.

This mini-survey of the nine lecturing staff was inadvertently left to be conducted in the period immediately following university exams when they had other preoccupations, so it is perhaps unsurprising that

³ See Lipman, M. *Thinking in Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Lipman, M., A.M. Sharp and F. S. Oscanyon, *Philosophy in the Classroom* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980)

it did not quite achieve a 100% response rate (seven out of the nine responded). Not all those staff members who had actually taught project students had noticed specific results from involvement which could be distinguished from the general trend of improvement to be expected over a year's study. Several, however, had—comments included:

My impression was that it made a real difference to the ability and willingness of the [four] students I taught to participate in seminars, and developed their philosophical confidence.

...[X] became a more active participant in seminars and his ability to talk intelligently about philosophy improved.

...bright and articulate, though whether there's any causality I couldn't say.

This last comment points up the obvious problem with impressionistic results of this kind—that there were a good number of other factors potentially in play. It would have been difficult in a project of this nature to have ruled these other factors out without arrangements which would have given involvement a very different feel for the students and might well have discouraged participation. In any case, numbers of both students and staff are too small for any claim that this was a statistically representative study. What probably can be said, however, is that taken in conjunction with the responses of the students themselves, these comments from their lecturers do suggest that the experience of teaching philosophy in schools made a distinctively beneficial contribution to the experience of studying it at university level.

8. The Institutional Perspective

Interest in the department's outreach work as background to the project had already been sparked at the wider university level following an invitation to the tutor-organiser to contribute an article on it to *FASS-Track*, the quarterly newsletter of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, in which the idea of the project itself was foreshadowed.⁴

More specific interest was expressed by the university panel (including external members from the universities of Glasgow and Keele) responsible for the Philosophy Department's Periodic Quality Review which took place during the year of the project. The report of this review panel welcomed the initiative, which it said:

promotes philosophy as a discipline and Lancaster University as a provider

in addition to the benefits for undergraduates which it also recognised. It may be presumed that this recognition contributed in at least a minor way to the vote of Full Confidence which the Department received from the review process.

A further indication of support has been the decision in July 2007 to award the Department a grant of £4,000 from the university's Alumni Programme to enable the work of the project to be continued into the current (2007-08) academic year—and hopefully, if further funds can be identified, extended beyond that. The award was made on the basis of preliminary results from the year's activity as now presented in this Report, and demonstrates how the initial award from the HEA has been used effectively as seed-corn funding.

9. Conclusions to Date from the Project

As already noted, this work was on too small a scale for it to be offered as a representative study. It is reasonable however to suppose that its results are usefully indicative, subject perhaps to their replication in the new academic year with a different cohort of students. Their preliminary implications may therefore at least be of interest to the wider subject community.

The first of these results is, indeed, only what might have been expected. The project seems to confirm, as far as it goes, the hypothesis with which it started out—that trying to understand philosophy from the perspective of school students and introduce them to it in a topic-focussed way under classroom conditions does give undergraduate

⁴ <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/faculty/news/newsletters/FASSNewsletterVol1Iss3.pdf>

students both more insight into the specific philosophical issues dealt with, and greater confidence in their own developing philosophical abilities more generally. This suggests that other university departments might well benefit from exploring the potential of involving students in outreach work along similar lines in parallel to their standard undergraduate programmes. One of our undertakings in exchange for HEA funding was to make sample teaching materials for this purpose available on request, and colleagues from elsewhere are warmly invited to contact the author of this report (tutor-organiser for the project) directly if they are interested.

Our second main result was less expected. This relates to the value so clearly found by undergraduates in rediscovering (or just discovering) first-hand philosophical thinking about central human issues through the ‘Socratic dialogue’ aspects of the work in schools. The benefits of philosophy in the school classroom, in this regard, are the benefits of its being philosophy *outside* the lecture-theatre and the textbook, where many who have taken up philosophy either at A-level or for the first time at university may never have had any opportunity to encounter it. While these benefits were here being reaped in the context of preparation for the project’s activities in schools, this is of course not a necessary requirement. It may be that even where outreach work is not a practicable option, the provision of ‘hands-on philosophy’ sessions drawing on the P4C model and experience (and, of course, extending it to make explicit connections with the formal philosophy which undergraduates are studying) could be a means of enriching the standard undergraduate curriculum in a direction which this project suggests that students would welcome.

It is certainly our intention to explore further how this might be done as part of the next phase of what will hopefully become a continuing programme at Lancaster.

John Foster
Honorary Research Fellow, Philosophy Department
Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YG
01524 592655
j.foster@lancaster.ac.uk

Appendix

Follow-up questions for Hands-on Philosophy sessions : points from undergraduates' feedback

1. In what ways did undergraduate Philosophy help you to help the children grapple with topics?

Helping them accept that there isn't always a right answer!

Being familiar with thought-experiments helped me find good simple examples.

I could help them relate their own ideas to the topic—this was the main problem they had.

I could put things in a different way for them.

I definitely had to refer back to what I had learnt to find good examples for them.

I really needed the analytical approach I had learnt in philosophy.

2. Did taking part in the programme help you think about philosophy topics you are studying?

It allows you to take a step back from specific philosophical questions and remember why they matter.

It made me realise that philosophy doesn't need to be unfathomable.

Having to explain sometimes quite complex issues requires that you really know what the main points are.

I had to make my own thought a lot clearer for the children to understand, which helped me be clearer in seminars and essays.

Freeing up thinking in school education related directly to my dissertation topic.

3. Did you get any new philosophical ideas or insights from the students?

It was interesting to be made to see the issues from their perspective.

Sometimes the children said unexpected things which gave me new insights.

The ability to explore something without any previous philosophical ideas provokes very perceptive responses.

They came up with ideas I wouldn't have thought of because in trying to look further I often miss obvious problems.

Because they didn't know how complex the issues were, they helped me to see positive aspects in points I had thought of as null or useless.

4. What do you think school students can get out of philosophy sessions like this?

Tools and skills for approaching any question they think about.

The experience of thinking outside the box.

It taught them about listening to each others ideas.

It gets them used to having to provide reasons for their thoughts.

Seeing that things aren't black-and-white.

They will start to think analytically in ways many other lessons don't demand.

5. What were the main differences between your philosophical thinking and that of the school students?

I am more aware of the different situations in which concepts are brought to bear.

The children aren't weighed down by preconceived philosophical theories and mindsets.

The children weren't overwhelmed—when you study philosophy there are so many counter-arguments!

They always tried to explain themselves in ways that made direct sense to them, instead of using theories without examples.

They were often too sure of their own opinions.

Theology and/or Religious Studies?

A response from graduate students

Angela Quartermaine

Project manager and religious studies post-graduate,
University of Oxford

This report was written in conjunction with colleagues who took part in this project: Sarah Lincoln (Researcher), Jacob Waldenmaier (Researcher: Oxford University), Alan Smith (Research Assistant: Liverpool Hope University), Timothy Bridges (Research Assistant: University of Edinburgh), Dafydd Mills Daniel (Research Assistant: University of Leeds). This project was funded by the Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies.

I. Introduction

There is a dynamic debate surrounding the academic study of theology and/or religious studies, to which graduates from ten universities have now contributed, through this project. By questioning course options, the reasons for choosing particular courses and the relationship between faith and academic pursuits, these graduates have provided an interesting insight into how and why certain students chose theology and/or religious studies.

For the purposes of this project, we employed two surveying techniques: an Internet based survey and localised peer discussion groups. The main areas under discussion were the presumptions made about theology and religious studies, and what students understand about the relationship between these subjects. It is hoped that this survey will provide some insights into how the teaching of these subjects has affected student opinion and thus inspire similar surveys to be conducted by students in the future.

A variety of universities took part in the Internet survey, which provided us with a wide range of useful responses. The peer discussion groups took place at four universities: Oxford, Edinburgh, Leeds and Liverpool Hope. At these universities, graduate students were given the opportunity to discuss the issues in more detail, which provided us with some excellent insights into the central debates.

2. Online Survey

One hundred and thirty graduate students responded to the online survey after details were sent twice to eleven universities (see Appendix 1). The majority were one-year Masters students or in the early stages of their PhD, which was good for the purposes of the survey since they were likely to have more teaching and interaction with lecturers than other students. Although the sample size was small, and by no means representative of all graduate students studying theology or RS, the majority of respondents produced detailed responses, which were useful for the purposes of this survey. We picked a range of older and newer universities, to get a broad range of views.

The survey itself was sent twice: initially during exam time and again in the winter term. Although we received more response from our initial survey request (during exam time we received 95 responses), the range of answers was sufficiently varied to provide an interesting insight into the debate. The initial survey, conducted at the end of the academic year, aimed to collate data from graduate students who had already settled into their studies, and therefore able to reflect back on their initial assumptions on their choice of subject. The second survey, conducted at the beginning of the academic year, was primarily intended for students who had just begun their studies and thus would have a fresh view on their course selection. However, this may have led to the reduced number of respondents because students could not easily reflect on their current studies.

In designing the survey we sought to reach a balance between making it long enough to sufficiently cover the issues, without making it so long that people were put off completing it. Consequently we included many open-ended questions, which we were pleased to find most students did complete, perhaps showing a general interest in the topic. As an online survey, students were more likely to fill it in if they had easy access to the Internet.

We also deliberately chose not to provide definitions of ‘theology’ or ‘religious studies’ or even ‘religion’ in a broader sense, so that students could interpret these words in their own way. Few students noticed our lack of definitions, but those who did, made some pertinent comments. For example:

It seems to me that a large part of the problem lies with base definitions: ‘theology’ is usually (probably unconsciously) defined strictly as Christian theology and not applied to other religions such as Judaism, Islam or the many Hindu religions—let alone Wicca, Asatru or some of the ‘new’ religions. Then again, what is a ‘religion’? Many people I know define ‘religion’ as an organised structure with a hierarchy, a formal liturgy, etc. I define ‘religion’ simply as a belief system. So we’re talking about different things from the start. (*Bristol University, PhD student*)

2 (a) Respondents

The male/female ratio of respondents was almost equal, but approximately half of all respondents described themselves as theologians. 20.6% described themselves as studying RS, 16% as studying both theology and RS, and 16.8% categorised their course as ‘other’.¹ This most likely reflects the fact that the majority of respondents were from universities which are more theology-oriented than RS-oriented. Due to the wide range of topics and subjects available to students, it was also felt necessary to specifically ask for the title of course.

2. (b) The relationship between faith and study

Having established some basic information about our respondents, we first considered the theory that the basic difference between theology and RS is a matter of faith: namely, that theology is an ‘insider-oriented’ study, whilst RS requires the student to set aside her faith position and take more of an ‘outsider’ stance. Consequently, we asked respondents what motivated them to study their course, before investigating the relationship of faith and studies in more depth. We found that 10.5% of those who categorised their courses as RS gave faith as one of their motivations to study, whilst 60% of those studying theology did and 40% of those who describe their subject as ‘both’.

To say that one’s faith is important to one’s studies is clearly ambiguous and may mean a number of things, so we asked students to briefly provide details about their faith. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the theologians were almost exclusively Christian (from a range of denominations), although there were also some agnostics, two Hindus and a ‘spiritualist’. One student added that they interpreted their ‘Quakerism as a life philosophy’. RS students tended to have a much wider span of beliefs, with about half calling themselves agnostic. There were some Christians, a few atheists and others categorised themselves as spiritualist, pagan/new age, one Buddhist and one Sikh.

The question of whether their faith was influenced by their studies provoked a range of responses, which varied from weakening

¹ The range of subjects included: philosophy of religion, psychology, biblical studies, practical theology, history and religious studies, ministry, and oriental studies.

it, to 'not at all', to 'deepening and nurturing' their faith. One respondent even reported having been led from being an adamant atheist towards agnosticism, 'allowing for the possibility of the unknown to exist'. Some stated that their studies lead to a more ambiguous personal faith, whilst others reported a better ability in articulating their faith as a result of their studies. One RS student commented that it was important for them to stay as impartial as possible and thus did not follow any particular faith for fear of its influence in their work. Another questioned the meaning of the word 'faith' and commented that without a definition, it was difficult to answer the question accurately.

2. (c) Opinions on the relationship between theology and RS

The survey then asked more direct questions about the student's personal opinions concerning the subjects themselves. As much as possible, we tried to ask the student to comment, giving the option for open-ended sentences. Our starter sentences beginning, 'I would NOT study X or Y because ...' were intentionally provocative, but actually led to more rounded answers. There was a noticeable diversion of opinion over what theology and RS actually were, and the differences and similarities between the subjects.

28.3% stated that theology was God-centred, 17% claimed that it was Christian based, and 15% stated that it was the study of a specific set of beliefs from one religion, typically Christianity. Interestingly two students said that it was the study of the human experience of the world and another said that theology simply justified a particular faith system, specifically Christianity. Other opinions included the study of one's own faith (7%), and the study of doctrine (6%). 5% said that it was the study of Judeo-Christian thought; only 1 person said that it was Judeo-Christian-Islam, and 5% said that one could study the theology of any religion.

Theology is not necessarily the study of a particular religion to which the academic believes in or belongs to. However, theology presumes a confessional belongingness to a certain faith, which an understanding of this particular faith or any other faith 'filters' through. (*Edinburgh University PhD student*)

Opinions about RS were much more varied and ranged from one student declaring that the subject was ‘confusing’; to another stating that it is ‘the study of particular beliefs, practices and cultural traditions and surrounding philosophy that has been categorised as part of a ‘religion’. 28.3% stated that it was the study of multiple religions, perhaps in a comparative manner, and 16% claimed that it was the (alleged) attempt to study religion(s) from an objective or impartial viewpoint. 11.3% argued that it was not really a subject in its own right, but a subject where one could learn about many different approaches, including anthropology, history and sociology. One student thought ‘it looks good fun,’ whilst another commented:

[RS is] the study of those beliefs and the circumstances that bring about those [religious] beliefs that motivate individuals and groups as far as their ritual, devotional, social and political actions are concerned. The study of religion ... is essentially the study of humanity both in historical and contemporary contexts. (*Lancaster University Masters student*)

Generally students claimed that theology and RS complement each other and are closely related. 69% of respondents thought that the disciplines ‘can and should’ co-exist in academic institutions, whilst only 5 people stated that they should be kept completely separate. One student went as far as saying that they could co-exist in the university but that they should have separate centres, tutors and lectures. Taking a more moderate stance, 25.7% of the students surveyed agreed with the statement ‘they are compatible but in a very limited capacity’.

This section of the survey also included statements concerning the dependence of one discipline upon the other. Of the few who affirmed that ‘theology can live without religious studies, but not vice versa,’ most were (predictably) theology students, however some religious studies students also agreed. This may very well be an acknowledgement that, historically, theology pre-existed religious studies and is still capable of existing as an independent course of study. Theology was said by one student to be ‘a worthy specialisation’, whilst another said that ‘RS without theology soon becomes dry and misses the ‘insider’ perspective’.

Those who thought more positively about RS stated that it provides ‘a service’ which theology could not—namely, that one could

study many religions. Another said that there is an academic ‘snobbery’ against RS, so:

more and more contemporary scholarship ... [which is] labelled ‘theology’ is becoming very much influenced by RS and the approaches that are taken in RS.’ (*Edinburgh University PhD student*)

Next the survey questioned the basic structuring of a faculty or department. The three options were that theology and religious studies should be taught together, separately, or together ‘when appropriate’. A slight majority of respondents agreed that a department should combine theology and religious studies when appropriate. The two remaining options were fairly evenly divided. However, most of those who said they should be taught separately were theology students, whereas those who thought that theology and religious studies faculties should be combined were mostly religious studies students. Although, interestingly, one theology respondent questioned the purpose of a purely Christianity-focused theology department:

should universities reserve a place for the study of a particular faith when that place now seems less justified given the dwindling numbers of Christians in the West?’ (*Oxford University PhD student*)

Students were also asked about whether courses should teach theology and religious studies together, separately, or separately ‘with overlaps mentioned when useful or appropriate.’ A sizeable majority (62%) accepted the latter option. Few theology students thought that the two disciplines should be taught in a joint course, but even fewer students (4%) thought that theology and religious studies should be taught totally separately.

The most popular response (65%) to this question was that ‘differences in methodology/approach should be made clearer.’ This affirmation may suggest a need for such explanation prior to any attempt to define or to draw a distinction between theology and religious studies. Indeed, the students’ response to another question confirms such speculation: surprisingly, given the apparent interest and the strength of opinion on issues in this topic, 43% of respondents (both theology and RS students) declared that their lecturers/tutors ‘have not discussed the relationship’. Fewer students said that their lecturers/tutors portray theology and religious studies as ‘different but not incompatible’ (33%),

and even fewer said that faculty members had recommended scholars from both theology and religious studies (a large number of these responses came from RS students).

3. Peer Discussion Groups

Discussion groups were organised at four universities: Edinburgh, Liverpool Hope, Oxford and Leeds. These groups were led by research assistants who were students at the universities, to maximize the ‘insider’ viewpoint. To encourage discussion, the research assistants were also given the freedom to conduct the survey as they saw suitable for their university. Since each university teaches theology and religious studies in different ways, it was felt that the student liaison would have the greatest insight into the methods employed at their respective universities. Some basic pointers and ideas were provided to each researcher, but it was ultimately left to them to utilise these materials, Internet questions and additional research, to achieve the best results from their peers. The researchers then wrote their own sections for the purposes of this report, which are reproduced below with minimal editing.

3. (a) Edinburgh Discussion Group, facilitated by Timothy Bridges

The Edinburgh discussion group consisted of four postgraduate students, three in the field of religious studies (RS) and one in the field of Church history/historical theology. To set the tone of the discussion the facilitator read from the course descriptions of each discipline from the University Catalogue:

Religious studies

Research in religious studies at the University of Edinburgh is non-confessional. It is conducted from the viewpoint that the category ‘religion’ corresponds to human activities influencing and being influenced by other human beliefs and practices. Students from various religious traditions or none are welcome, in keeping with the ethos of the School of Divinity.

Theological studies

... this subject area comprehends a broad range of themes in Christian theology and ethics. These include the traditional fields of practical theology, ethics, doctrine, historical and philosophical theology. In seeking to inter-relate these areas of study, the subject area stresses the connectedness of belief, practice and context.

Section 1: Agree or disagree? (and why)

The purpose of this section was to initiate discussion and to provide the participants with six strongly worded statements with which they could either agree or disagree. These statements were simply random paraphrased samplings of prevalent ideas from the field of RS and theological studies (TS). They were intentionally worded in such a way to promote a robust response.

1) Religious studies should have no greater connection to theology than to anthropology or sociology.

There was wide agreement to this statement. Some of the participants granted that there is a traditional association between RS and TS, but that such a close relationship was not necessary or even valid.

2) There should be a strict wall of division between the disciplines of theology and religious studies.

When the idea of separation was worded in absolute terms such as this, there was qualified disagreement. Three students believed that putting this kind of absolute barrier between the two disciplines was unnecessary and unrealistic. The fourth participant, a RS student, suggested that such a barrier is necessary because 'theology creates meaning' to such a degree that the aims of RS may be jeopardized without that barrier.

3) The study of religion is not a religious act.

When faced with this question the first response from a RS student was 'it is not a religious act; it is an academic act.' At that point the discussion became more philosophical in tone as the nature of a 'religious act' was examined. There was a suggestion that even an academic act

could be considered a religious act. This brought up issues of ‘advocacy of religion.’ One RS student argued that because RS does not engage in advocacy, then the study of religion is not the same kind of religious act as would be done by a religious adherent.

4) The study of theology is not a religious act.

To keep the discussion balanced, the same statement was made about theology, with similar discussion.

5) ‘Truth’ is more of a concern for theological studies than for religious studies.

This statement gave rise to the distinction between ‘truth’, ‘Truth’ and ‘truths.’ One RS participant commented that, ‘I have many true statements in my dissertation, but many of them do not agree with one another.’

6) ‘Religious studies’ is never concerned with advocating religion while ‘theological Studies’ is only concerned with advocating religion.

The general response to this question was that RS ‘should’ not be concerned with advocating religion, but it often is construed that way. This gave rise to the question of ‘belief’ in the study of theology and religion. It was asked if ‘belief’ was a necessary component of TS. One RS student commented that ‘there are areas of theology that RS cannot access.’

Section 2: Motivation for study

Section two was an attempt to discern the various kinds of motivations for entering the fields of RS and TS.

1) What led you to choose your particular field of study?

All of the participants responded in regard to their own personal curiosity in the subject matter. The TS student said that the ultimate motivation was the desire to prepare ministers in his future employment as a seminary professor. A RS student said that the breadth of the potential areas of study made him think he would not ‘get bored’ with the subject. This student also expressed a strong personal desire to study how people behaved in regard to religion.

2) *In general, in your discipline, do colleagues have a personal commitment to a particular religion/faith?*

The RS students commented that there is certainly a ‘range within our department.’ The TS student agreed that there was certainly a range of ‘commitment’ among those in the realm of theology. When asked if a commitment to a particular faith/religion was frowned upon in the broader realm of RS, the RS students replied, ‘It may be looked at with suspicion,’ and ‘it is seen as potentially a danger.’ Another RS student said that most people in RS have a ‘secular faith’ that is accepted.

3) *Who will potentially benefit from your work?*

This question was designed to examine motivation for study in terms of ‘benefit’ or the ‘greater good.’ The TS student said that any pursuit of truth would benefit humanity at large because ‘all truth is God’s truth.’ One RS student understood their work to be primarily a benefit to the discipline of RS. Another RS student stated that his mental posture in regard to this question was ‘benefit to society.’

Section 3: Fulfillment in study (Did it provide what you were seeking?)

After investigating the preexisting motivations for study, the discussion then turned to what the student perceived as ‘being fulfilled’ in their chosen field of study.

1) *What is your level of satisfaction in your field of study relative to your motivations for entering it? Put another way, did it deliver what you were hoping for?*

The first response came from a RS student who said that the experience has been ‘satisfactory but frustrating’ because there is a great tendency for one’s study to be just a rehashing of old debates. All participants entered their field with hopes of making a real contribution, but fight against the temptation to merely become absorbed in existing categories. However, in general, the participants felt satisfied in their field of study and maintain academic stimulation in their research.

2) *If you feel comfortable, share how your particular area of study has strengthened/hindered your commitment to a faith or religion.*

‘That is very complex,’ was the first response from a RS student. Another student stated: ‘I would say that I do not have a particular religion or spirituality... [at this point]. I certainly have an appreciation for the spiritualities of the people I am engaged with in my studies.’

Section 4: Relationship between the disciplines

The final section drew from the previous hour of discussion to investigate more thoroughly the relationship between the two disciplines.

1) Why do you suppose the RS department is housed in the School of Divinity?

At first the students attempted to answer this question in terms of historical development which was not the precise aim of the question. Thus, the question was changed to ‘Do you think it is appropriate for the two disciplines to be housed in one building/department? An RS student suggested that it would be better served in a ‘Cultural Studies’ department (if that existed). A TS student said that there seems to be a peaceful co-existence between the two disciplines and that separation is unnecessary.

2) What potential hindrance could one discipline be to the other?

The general consensus was that if one discipline were placed in a position of exerting power over the other, this would obviously be a hindrance to the discipline.

3) What potential benefit could one discipline be to the other?

There was a belief that the two disciplines could work together to engage in public debate and actively promote understanding.

4) If you were forced to combine the two disciplines into one course, how would you do it?

The final question centered on the hypothetical merging of the two disciplines. The participants asserted that such a combination would lead to the detriment of the two disciplines. ‘Too much would be lost’ said one RS student. Another RS student stated that there could certainly be a course where problems within different theologies are examined from a RS point of view.

Conclusion

After a vigorous discussion several patterns emerged. First, within the realm of religious studies there is a commitment to objectivity over and above advocacy of a religion. While it was admitted that it is possible to study theology without advocating it, the nature of theology many times suggests this advocacy. Second, RS students were generally more motivated by academic issues or personal interest than by a personal spiritual experience. Third, there was a belief among RS students that a strong connection to a particular faith would be a potentially detrimental factor in the study of RS.

3. (b) Liverpool Hope Discussion Group, facilitated by Alan Smith

Focus groups

Two focus groups were arranged at Liverpool Hope University, with 5 postgraduate students invited to join the coordinator at each group. All these students could be described as mature students: that is aged between 35 and 60.

Summary of discussions

Both groups discussed the difficulties with defining ‘theology’ and ‘religious studies’ (RS) and concluded that the ‘philosophy of religion’ could be used as a tool for critiquing both theology & RS. There was a general consensus that both disciplines could benefit, if they were studied together, but students also recognised that specialisation would enable greater in-depth understanding.

Almost all students were happy with the manner in which their lecturers/tutors related the two disciplines; although it appears that emerging understanding rather than direct explanation is what takes place in practice. The value of lecturers/tutors with both academic and practical understanding of the faith/religion and who thereby communicate both aspects of their subject is felt to be of more value than providing explanations.

Details of findings

Each group began with a discussion of the terms—both groups chose to identify theology with the nature of god(s) or of the divine in a faith tradition, and RS with the experience of the phenomenon of religion and the implications of these experiences for society. Some students considered RS as a general subject area embracing theology; i.e. theology could be considered a more in-depth focused subset of RS, embracing the implications and interpretation of doctrines in practice.

Both groups considered theology from the viewpoint of ‘faith seeking understanding’, with one group concluding that this implied that the atheist would only (at best) achieve a limited academic understanding of the subject. However, the atheist would be unable to fully understand religion, because they denied the reality of that which was being studied. The other group felt that this viewpoint was outdated and that atheists bring new and valuable perspectives to the subject.

It was generally felt that philosophy provided a helpful means of critiquing and challenging the assumptions of theology & RS through trusted academic methods of analysis, questioning and critical reasoning. It was generally felt by both groups that since theology is a subset of RS that it is vital that students of theology do study, and will benefit from a study of, RS. Typical comments were: ‘RS adds beauty’ and enables the student to ‘better understand their theology’; ‘they are complementary subjects’ with ‘theology being more theoretically based and RS more practically based’; ‘theology cannot be done in the abstract but must be done with a knowledge of religious doctrines.’

It was felt by some students that RS students who understand the reality of religious experience are better equipped to understand theology. To a degree, one could argue that it is not possible to study theology without a practical experience of religion(s). Some students argued that although on the surface the two subject areas can and must be studied together, there are also implications that must be considered regarding the amount of time available to the student and the depth to which combined studies can go. Thus, in order to become more focused within an academic discipline the two subjects will at some point become separated.

It was the experience of most students that their tutors provided an acceptable level of understanding of the relationship between the two subject areas. One student from Nigeria described this as an

evolving experience, starting with RS in the home and moving through early primary school and into high school where the doctrines of religion were inculcated. Then on entering university and/or seminary, he became more focused on theology as a subject which critiqued and interpreted the meaning and value of the doctrines. One student said this ‘challenged our beliefs and our understanding of our religion.’ Another said, ‘RS leads to theology as you engage with the issues.’ Another student, who is now in his 4th year of PhD research at Liverpool Hope, thought the distinction between theology and RS unnecessary.

Although there was some discussion about how tutors should discuss the relationship between theology & RS, this was not felt to be the central issue—of more concern was the availability of lecturers and tutors in the field of theology & RS, who could speak as practitioners, rather than observers, of the tradition they represented. This was felt important because the lecturer/tutor would then have both the specialisation and practical understanding to communicate both its RS value and its theological value.

3. (c) Oxford University Discussion Group, facilitated by Jacob Waldenmaier

The discussion between 6 postgraduate students at the University of Oxford focused on insider/outsider issues in religious studies and theology. The group reached a compromised position that there are some facets of religion that can indeed only be understood by insiders, but also others which outsiders could understand quite as well. It was uncertain how this agreement would influence the structure of a department of theology or religious studies, particularly concerning whether the outsider or insider alignment should be emphasised or privileged. The discussion seemed to demonstrate that the insider/outsider dilemma is the core issue beneath the ‘theology and religious studies or theology vs. religious studies’ questions.

Discussion: the insider/outsider dilemma in academic study

The group began with discussing the aspiration of outsiders to understand religions, with one student commenting that such attempts are inevitably hampered by the unbridgeable phenomenological empa-

thetic gap in knowing, for example, ‘what it is to think and be a Christian’. Concerning this, he noted that he had read ostensibly ‘scholarly’ material on some aspects of Christianity that was highly incorrect or misguided. Another student acknowledged this, adding that she considered it arrogant that a particular Buddhologist believed he understood Buddhism better than Buddhists. She affirmed that ‘there are many questions one can ask about religion that can be properly answered without adopting the religion.’

The discussion then moved onto a definition of theology as ‘the study of God’. Students commented that this definition inherently assumes that the object of the study is there to be studied. However, one commented that it is possible for outsiders to comprehend insider thought by looking solely on the human side of, for example, a theological treatise. Thus theology that constructively attempts to answer questions about God cannot be performed by outsiders, and such a discipline must be allowed to function on its own terms.

One student affirmed that ‘the depth of religious studies comes from the lives of those committed to the religions’—thus suggesting a dependence of religious studies upon insider theology. This heavily prioritises the insider perspective for scholars of religion.

Discussion: the field of ‘religious studies’

On the issue of religious studies as a discipline, one student expressed concern over its vague objectives and undefined topic. It is ‘interdisciplinary,’ and so may easily lack direction—or perhaps lose it in the process of research. Another found comparative religion to be somewhat superficial and topical. However an RS student responded,

The comparative perspective is more relevant in this world; more people are interested [because] ... comparative religion helps them understand what is going on in the world.

While it was established that theology is crucial for religious studies, another student added that religious studies is also quite important for theologians; for British Christians living in a multicultural nation like the UK, it is incumbent on them to know something about Islam and Hinduism. But the theologian is under no obligation to accommodate or incorporate those perspectives into his own framework. A theologian might even learn about other religions for theological motives like

social responsibility and missions. A theologian, like anyone else, will inevitably understand other religions in light of her own perspective.

A theology student added that one can be fairly accurate in one's view, though he cannot be perfectly neutral. Many scholars have clear ideological assumptions prior to doing religious studies; outsiders are not any more neutral than insiders. A RS student remarked, 'it is noble to strive for [objective understanding]; otherwise, why be in academia? However we should never think that we have a perfect conception of [a religion].' This seemed a summary consensus among the group on the question of understanding in religious studies.

Discussion: the insider/outsider dilemma in departmental and faculty objectives

With respect to the integration of theology and religious studies, one student observed that we seem to be moving toward labeling things in these terms, which is surprising since defining the subjects themselves is virtually impossible. With respect to RS, he questioned why religious studies departments show many kinds of religious iconography together, as if suggesting that all the religions are working together toward some goal together. This assembly of religions often becomes actualized as a pluralistic theology masquerading as a religious studies program. Hence, he questioned the value of these labels, and whether they suggest that we're doing something purely for the sake of society. He argued that while it is entirely appropriate to understand each other for the sake of society, theology should be allowed to operate on its own terms and within its own system.

Building on his premise that outsiders are incapable of fully understanding a religion, this student's ideal successful religious studies department would reflect insider privilege. It would consist of 'lots of theologians talking to each other ... because they know what their religions are.' Religious studies departments should aim for the highest expression of their religions rather than the lowest common denominator and thus include thoughtful insider thinkers who are very much aware of alternative views, without feeling obligated to water down their own. It is irresponsible to reduce all religions down, for example, to ethical codes. There are many different spheres, and they connect at various points, but they are not reducible in the way that pluralists hope.

An RS student commented on the theologian's dismay that religious studies tends to force neutrality and unity among religions: she stated that there is magnificent diversity, and we should feel inspired to explore that diversity—which can be done through many religious studies courses. Another student responded that this is actually where religious studies is enormously helpful; it actually prevents us from oversimplifying and from thinking in terms of 'big blocks,' because it gives students the opportunity to study, and thus appreciate, more than one religion.

As the discussion progressed, some interesting comments were made: one student stated that insider thinking should be intensified, by focusing more on truth rather than belief. In response, an RS student commented that it is not our responsibility to determine truth or falsehood, but to offer arguments without being dogmatic (for example acceptance of the Trinity should include critical thinking).

Interpretation and elaboration: insider-outsider theory

The group discussion seemed to suggest that the kind of information (and perhaps the kind of 'truth') sought in the study of religions is quite different from the kind sought in theology.

What may be at the root of this difficulty is the concept of 'religion.' Calling something 'religious' or associating something with a 'religion' tends to locate it in a special, unique, and often distant field of inquiry, and thereby can prevent it from making contact with the thoughts of someone who happens to be an outsider to that belief system. It presumes a sharp distinction between insider and outsider, and tends to look at religions reductively.

Alternatively, some phenomenological approaches often fight distance by attempting to 'believe in order to understand,' thereby inviting many religious ideas into their own faith paradigm and softening the distinction between outsider and insider. The result of this is very regularly a kind of theological pluralism.

The discussion concluded that if we desire an amicable relationship between theology and religious studies, thoughtful insiders are essential elements of theology and religious studies faculties; they are most capable of recognising differences and similarities between their systems and others, yet they are not expected to compromise their insider status by softening the systematic integrity of their own views.

Although we worked with the presumption that theology entails the (insider) attempt to study the (assumedly) existing God, the association of theology as study conducted by the 'insider' is not exclusive; there are also theologians who are outsiders, and scholars of religion who are insiders. Atheists are even insiders to their own perspectives, since they are as vulnerable to scrutiny by outsiders as are insider theologians. It seems then that everybody is inescapably both insider to some and outsider to others. Every studied philosophical system espoused by anyone, including atheistic philosophy, is an insider position. No view is exempt from insider status.

Departmental arrangements

There was a clear preference for insider privilege in this discussion among all involved. However this was not met without difficulty; it is a challenge for religious studies and theology departments to be inclusive without making an unspoken but nonetheless conspicuous truth claim like those associated with theological pluralism. This might suggest that departments of theology and religious studies should be separate, despite George Pattison's assertion that religious studies *needs* theology—otherwise, it dissolves into all the other disciplines.

The recurring problems with the concept of 'religion' and, accordingly, a discipline called 'religious studies' or 'study of religions' entails that religious studies should indeed dissolve into the other disciplines. One possibility could be for the department covering theology and religious studies to be absorbed into another department such as philosophy or a 'Department of Interdisciplinary and Comparative Studies/Humanities' rather than 'religious studies.'

An 'Interdisciplinary and Comparative Studies' department would honour the insiders' privilege to define themselves and acknowledges that fact that scholar's should not label people or label a person's belief system as a 'religion'. For example, Buddhists often do not think of Buddhism as 'a religion,' and there are many devout Christians who deny that what they believe and do is 'religious;' for some of them, 'Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship with God.' Scholars cannot claim the authority to label people; we owe those whose beliefs and practices we study this dignity of self-identification. Perhaps 'religion' is a contrived, Western label that contemporary scholarship should abandon, rather than utilise incorrectly.

3. (d) Leeds University Discussion Group, facilitated by Dafydd Mills Daniel

Our meeting consisted of four students, two ‘theologians’ and two ‘religious studies’ students, although one RS student was unsure what this category meant.

Despite the students’ advanced level of study, our meeting met with a tentative start, hinting at a certain lack of clarity concerning the difference (at least practical, if not theoretical) between theology and religious studies. The RS student who was the most wary of her classification felt that a background in the study of theology and/or religious studies would have helped her be clearer about the way to define ‘theology’ and ‘religious studies’. However, due to the nature of the different ways of studying each discipline, at different institutions, at different times, it was felt that a university background in the study would not necessarily help one reach an (definitive) explanation. It was clear that those who ventured definitions for theology and/or religious studies did so, on the basis of reading they had done, or a feeling they had for what might be a helpful definition through their study of particular areas associated with either discipline. Departmental discussion of theology/religious studies seemed to have played little or no part in the conclusions they had arrived at.

It was apparent that it was felt easier to characterise ‘theology’, rather than ‘religious studies’, and that it was the religious studies students who were the most willing to voice their understandings of theology. A popular view was that theology is ‘faith seeking understanding’. Although one student commented that it was not impossible for those who did not share that faith to study theology, it was necessary that the student had a sympathetic engagement with the object(s) of theology. A more limited understanding of theology was that it was predominantly the study of the Christian religion. Our uncertain RS student voiced this view, and did so as a concern, because she felt that such a limited discipline became almost artificial: it is not an accurate reflection of society, nor perceptively engaged with the religious debates that now surround the traditional tenets of religious faith (e.g. the various ways of understanding the nature and will of God). At the least, she felt that theology, as the study of God (taken from a literal interpretation of the word itself), meant that religions, and/or religious

impulses, without God are excluded. In response, our other RS student contended that theology can incorporate the study of non-theistic religions by addressing their faith structures, and that all religions have theology, and thus that you can study the theology of any religion. It is merely 'an historical accident' that the study of Christian theology takes place in secular universities, rather than religious arenas.

One of our theologians argued that religious studies is an exploration of 'religious traditions as movements within a society', placed within their 'political context', with an 'assessment of belief systems'. While theology was more associated simply with a study of the 'belief systems' themselves. The suggestion that religious studies had been seen as comparative religion was raised, but it was agreed that religious studies does not need to study more than one religion to be religious studies, and nor does it simply have to study non-Christian movements.

As the discussion continued, we questioned whether or not one definition for religious studies was that, in fact, it lacked any clear definition. Since no single methodology dominated the subject, the thing that made RS distinctive was in fact the subject's variety. One RS student argued that religious studies is an 'interdisciplinary methodology based on particular academic expertise', and is consequently 'defined by the subject not the methodology', making it akin to cultural or film studies. It was admitted, however, that one of the areas of expertise brought to bear in religious studies could be theology, and that theology, like religious studies, did itself take into account different academic disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, history, and so on.

The idea that theology is the historical study of religion, as opposed to religious studies as an examination of 'how religion functions here and now', was not popular. In the end, the agreement seemed to be that religious studies set aside both truth and definition claims. Thus RS is the study of 'religion', without any particular view or end in mind, making it analogous to sociology in certain respects. Whilst theology does not have to be studied from a faithful perspective, it is at least a willful engagement with ideas and arguments viewed from a particular perspective (mainly the doctrinal).

Turning to the place of theology and religious studies in the 'Academy', everyone seemed to agree that separation was undesirable, and, at any rate, impossible. One RS student suggested that faith/ideological backgrounds will interfere with any study of religion, and that

religious studies belongs, in some sense, somewhere near to theology, almost, the implication seemed to be, so that this possibility for conflict is kept in view. She felt very strongly that theological themes, such as interfaith dialogue and confessional theology, have no place in religious studies, or even perhaps in a secular academic institution. She also found that many people assumed she studied theology, simply because she was a student within a specific university department—which was a source of great annoyance. One theologian argued in response that personal beliefs and agendas, on behalf of staff and students, were unavoidable in any discipline, and that this was why a range of academics and approaches was necessary in any university study. For example, in political science, Marxist lecturers in the UK are capable of discussing Marxism, despite the fact that their society, institution and perhaps even audience, may disagree with their personal viewpoint. However, this makes it no less important an area to study, nor does it affect their ability to teach it, and nor, by teaching what they believe, are they a means of influencing and interfering with the general academic study of the subject.

While it was suggested that academic rigour should make it possible for someone to teach even what they do not believe, the idea remained that theology inevitably, and necessarily, assumes certain things about its students. Theology would seem to endorse a certain worldview, into which its students, even if not believers, wish to become initiated. One RS student felt that theology assesses the truth or falsity of particular religious ideas, assessing their credibility as intellectual data: thus a distinction between theology and religious studies was essential so that religious studies could remain one of the social sciences.

One of our theologians felt that the study of theology in secular institutions, alongside religious studies, was important for the believer, if not the discipline itself. Thus, despite the RS student's reservations about vocational and confessional theology in secular institutions, it is helpful to would-be ministers to study in such an environment. It was clear that the RS student was concerned about being associated with theology, and thus saw the distinction between the two disciplines more clearly, and saw it as crucial to her studies.

The majority of attendees felt that it was not within the remit of the academic study of either discipline to directly influence movements in religious thought. However, it was unclear whether this was a view

that would differ if theology was considered from the perspective of a vocational study, and it was noted that this might be a difference between the way the study of theology and religious studies is viewed in Britain and America. Thus, we concluded that depending on the university, department and preferred subject definitions, theology and RS was studied and understood in very different ways and highly dependent on how one chose to interpret them.

4. Conclusions

From both the online survey, and the peer discussion groups, certain central issues arose:

1. Definitions of ‘theology’, ‘religious studies’ and ‘religion’, are crucial to student interpretation of these terms.
2. The chosen university and course does affect how students interpret these terms, and how students comprehend the relationship between the subjects.
3. The relationship between the subjects seemed to focus on the ‘insider/outsider’ debate—perhaps due to the use of this concept in the online survey.

Although both surveys only reached a small proportion of graduate students in the UK, the responses we received were detailed and provided us with a great deal of information about student opinion. As this project demonstrated, there is interest in this topic; thus the surveys could be expanded in the future, and conducted in more universities—again by graduate students—to get a broader view of the situation.

The online survey provided information from 10 universities (it was sent to 11). Gathering responses was difficult because it relied on staff passing the email onto students, and then for students to read the email and fill in the survey. We found that students who were genuinely interested in the topic responded to the initial email, and thus gave us very detailed responses.

Within the survey itself, we attempted to leave open-ended questions, so that students could choose how to respond. We were unsure

about the appropriateness of definitions as they could provide some additional responses, perhaps fueling a more heated debate. However, the noticeable lack of definitions seemed to provide interesting responses in itself and gave students the opportunity to discuss the topics as they saw fit.

The peer discussion groups provided more information and gave students the opportunity to discuss the issues between themselves, within their own chosen framework. These groups demonstrated clear differences between the universities, and the discussions all led to interesting conclusions. We found that only students who were interested in the subject went to the discussion groups, but that they often had clear viewpoints and again provided detailed responses to the questions asked. Since the respondents appear to be self-selecting according to their own interest in the topic, we are inevitably excluding the views of a significant proportion of all graduate students from our sample—thus we do not claim our study to be representative of all graduate students, but rather to give insight into the debate from the students' perspective.

4. (a) Definitions

Through the online survey, we found that most students interpreted theology as a course that privileged the 'insider' viewpoint. Although non-believers can study it, they will not be able to fully understand the 'confessional' elements of the subject. Interestingly, 28.3% stated that theology was God-centred, 17% claimed that it was Christian based, and 15% stated that it was the study of a specific set of beliefs from one religion, typically Christianity. Only one student thought that the theology of any subject could be studied.

The peer discussion groups demonstrated the differences between university teaching structures and opinions. For example, at Edinburgh, students began by using the university's definition, which made discussion slightly easier, but not as versatile because it did not necessarily reflect student opinion. This was in direct comparison to Leeds students, who decided to define theology themselves during the discussion. They admitted that they were unsure whether they could provide a clear or complete definition, and concluded that it was 'faith seeking understanding'.

In both survey types, students found religious studies much harder to define. In the online survey, 28.3% stated that RS was the study of multiple religions, perhaps in a comparative manner, and 16% claimed that it was the (alleged) attempt to study religion(s) from an objective or impartial viewpoint. 11.3% argued that it was not really a subject in its own right, but a subject where one could learn about many approaches, including anthropology, history and sociology. Many students questioned the attempted objectivity in religious studies, with some commenting that this is impossible.

This problem was reflected by the peer discussion groups, with Leeds students stating that it was perhaps the lack of a clear definition which defined 'religious studies'. At Liverpool Hope, students felt that they had an emerging understanding of the subject, rather than any direct explanation.

4. (b) The relationship between theology and religious studies

Student views on the relationship between theology and religious studies seemed highly dependent on their academic backdrop, course and university choice. Whilst reading through the views expressed, the writers became increasingly wary of how their own views may influence the conclusions reached—thus the project manager and another researcher decided to redo elements of the paper once they had left university. Although we all began as 'insiders' of the university system, the 'outsider' perspective became increasingly important when trying to assess our conclusions from a fair and objective viewpoint. Perhaps this could be seen as an analogy of the debate—both the insider and outsider viewpoints of 'religion(s)' need to be respected and understood, to better understand 'religion' as a whole.

From the online survey, we found that students generally thought that theology and RS complement each other and are closely related. 69% of respondents thought that the disciplines 'can and should' co-exist in academic institutions, whilst only 5 people stated that they should be kept completely separate. 25.7% of the students surveyed agreed with the statement 'They are compatible but in a very limited capacity'.

As for the basic structuring of a faculty or department, the three options were that theology and religious studies should be taught

together, separately, or together ‘when appropriate’. A slight majority of respondents agreed that a department should combine theology and religious studies when appropriate.

With respect to the teaching of these subjects, many students (65%) responded that ‘differences in methodology/approach should be made clearer.’ This may suggest a need for such explanation prior to any attempt to define or to draw a distinction between theology and religious studies. Indeed, the students’ response to another question confirms such speculation: surprisingly, given the apparent interest and the strength of opinion on issues in this topic, 43% of respondents (both theology and RS students) declared that their lecturers/tutors ‘have not discussed the relationship’.

The peer discussion groups provided a more detailed insight into the central debate.

At Edinburgh, students felt that the subjects could co-exist, but that the faculty name may need changing to ‘cultural studies’—although this could mean that those doing vocational courses require a separate faculty.

At Liverpool Hope, students thought that the philosophy of religion could be used to structure a critique of the subjects. They concluded that theology should be considered a subset of religious studies—although theology provides the more detailed understandings of religion(s), the methodologies employed in religious studies can bring all religions together for discussion.

In direct contrast, Oxford students thought that the attempted objectivity or neutrality of RS (presumably advocated by RS scholars) was impossible—everyone comes from a particular viewpoint. They argued that RS heavily relied on the details provided by theologians, thus it may be better to have religion-specific departments. Since no definition of ‘religious studies’ could be reached, they suggested that a department entitled *Interdisciplinary and Comparative Studies*, could be used for those students who wished to study more than one religion, but this then brings into question the location of those students who want to employ RS methodologies for the study of one religion.

At Leeds, students considered universities secular institutions and thus the study of religion from an ‘insider’ perspective was ‘an historical accident’; religion from the ‘inside’ should only be discussed in religious arenas. Although the insider viewpoint is an object of study,

it is not a critical element in one's study. Thus it is important to attempt objectivity when studying, because the university is supposed to be a secular arena.

From both surveys, we can see that definitions and academic backdrop play vital roles in student interpretation of the debate. In general, students have not been engaged in the debate by lecturers, but rather from their own personal interest and choices. Although the theology and/or RS debate seemed to focus on the insider/outsider debate, many students felt that religious convictions were not essential to one's personal study, but important as an object of study. Some students expressed a desire to learn about a specific religion from a religious practitioner, the 'insider privilege'. However, many recognised the importance of religious studies (or an equivalent department) in providing an (attempted) objective arena for discussion and debate. Although this project was limited by the number of responses, it demonstrates the importance of gauging graduate views and it should demonstrate the impact of the university teaching on the understanding of theology and/or religious studies.

Appendices

Appendix I

Below is the breakdown of the combined number of responses from two Internet survey requests sent to eleven universities; students from ten universities provided responses.

Number of Respondents	University
48	Edinburgh
32	Oxford
14	Durham
10	Leeds
8	Lancaster
7	Cambridge
4	Liverpool Hope
3	Birmingham
2	SOAS
2	Bristol
130	Total

Gender: Female: 45.2%, Male: 54.8%

Subject: Theology: 46.9%, RS: 26%, Both theology and RS: 16.2%, Other: 16.9%

The range of subjects categorised as other included: philosophy of religion, psychology, biblical studies, practical theology, history and religious studies, ministry and oriental studies.

Appendix 2 – selected quotations from respondents

‘It is possible for those not belonging to the religion in question to study that religion’s theology; it often seems strange to do so since studying theology ... often requires one to take the stance of a believer attempting to elucidate his faith.’

Oxford University Masters student

‘Anyone can study theology, but they won’t understand its true goal unless they are willing to engage with the God whom they are studying’

Liverpool Hope University Ministry student

‘Study and understanding should not be considered equivalent’

Cambridge University Masters student

‘If possible, I would like to suggest further comparative studies on the relation between RS and theology in the world academia (e.g. UK and USA, or Japan/Korea or Africa and Europe).’

Edinburgh University Masters student

‘It seems that RS students are often more aware of theological issues because RS is more broad while theological students often look down on RS as it is not as rigidly confined to the ‘important doctrines’ but tries to take into account settings, interactions, philosophies underlying and influencing the working out of the theology.’

Edinburgh University Masters student

‘The comparison between RS and theology in this survey is flawed. A more appropriate terminology throughout should have compared RS to ‘theological studies’ or ‘religion’ to ‘theology’.’

Lancaster University Masters student

‘The perspectives from outside the faiths are important and stop the disciplines from getting stagnant, but it must also be recognised that the perspective people come from shapes their thought in a very real way.’

Durham University Masters student

‘People always ask me whether I am going to become a vicar simply because I am always studying theology. Unfortunately there is a

perceived association between faith and the study of theology that I do not think exists with RS. This is not so—I have no religious belief at all!

Edinburgh University Masters student

‘I reject completely the position ... that a prior commitment to a particular faith tradition is needed if one is to claim to be doing theology in that tradition, that is, that without the prior faith commitment ... one is ‘merely’ doing RS’.

Lancaster University Masters student

The *Discourse* Interview

5. Graeme Gooday

University of Leeds

Interviewed by: David Mossley

Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies
Higher Education Academy

Thankyou for agreeing to talk to *Discourse*, Graeme. Please could you tell us a little about your own history—how you got into the history of science, and your academic career?

Originally I wanted to be a scientist, and went to study natural sciences at Cambridge University, in 1983, with a view that I would become a physicist. I soon discovered that the way in which science was taught was really not to my liking. I'd been used to a much more student-centred, technology-focused approach to learning science, and discovered that Cambridge were still very much operating in a traditional mode of learning and teaching, particularly in physics; so when the chance came along to try something different, in my second year, I tried

Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies,

Vol. 7, No. 1, Autumn 2007, pp. 63 - 80

© Copyright Subject Centre for PRS, 2007

history and philosophy of science.

Suddenly, vistas opened up to me—I knew this was a subject that I actually cared about, and I liked learning, and had things to say. I took the chance therefore in my third year of my degree to pursue history and philosophy of science alone, and that was very exciting. I don't think I was the world's best third year student, it took a long time for me to adjust from being a scientist to being a scholar of history, and I think by the time I'd done that, I'd learned exactly how much of a distance there was between learning in the arts and learning in the sciences.

I did well enough to get to do a PhD, at the University of Kent at Canterbury, in the wonderfully titled subject History, Philosophy and Social Relations of Science; and from that point onwards my career has not looked back. I've been employed as a historian of science and/or technology ever since my PhD finished.

My thesis had been about the development of physics teaching laboratories in Britain in the 1860s and 1870s, being interested, as I was, in the strange phenomenon of the laboratory. As an undergraduate laboratory student in the sciences, quite what laboratory training was supposed to do was entirely unclear to me, and the level to which students simply made up the results which they were supposed to find or faked them made me wonder why on earth we'd actually invested so much in them. So my thesis had in effect been a sort of catharsis, finding out what had led to the strange regime of making students repeat measurements of things which were supposed to be well defined numbers—although I couldn't find evidence they were—and expecting students to acquire skills which ironically were presupposed as already existing in the students, in the operation of experiments. The laboratory was a very paradoxical place, so I explored the origins of that whole culture—of measurement based learning in physics.

After that, my first post was a three year British Academy post-doctoral fellowship which I took up at the University of Kent in Canterbury. I wanted to extend the insights of my thesis, and my post-doctoral work initially was about how the learning laboratories in electrical engineering and biology were also problematic. In biology I looked at the ways in which it was really difficult for people to learn to see the laboratory as a place where nature resided. Nature very clearly for many Victorians was not something that you find in a laboratory, it

was the very last place you'd find it, and for electrical engineering it was interesting to see how there was a very strong sense in which engineering could only be learned outdoors. On the engineering side, just as with biologists, it was felt that laboratories could only capture a very tiny and skewed aspect of the world, so it was interesting for me to discover how the origins of laboratory learning in natural sciences and technology were very much about how a particular role could be found for the laboratories, and how very particular kinds of learning could complement what already existed out there, either with nature study, or with large scale engineering works.

I discovered in the process that I really wanted to do the history of technology, and I then spent two years at the University of Oxford on a British Academy and Royal Society post-doctoral fellowship that was dedicated to the history of science and technology. It was a five year fellowship and I spent my first two years on it. While I was there, I did some extra work on the history of electrical engineering, particularly developing my work with Robert Fox, who was my close collaborator on a book that emerged from that period.¹ We both began looking at the history of physics at Oxford. Oxford University, despite its eminence, seemed to be convinced that in terms of physics it was very much the backwater in the 19th century, comparing poorly to the Cavendish laboratory in Cambridge. So the myth said, physics only really got going at Oxford in World War II, but what Robert and I decided to do was to look at this more carefully.

I'd done a PhD chapter on Oxford physics, and Robert had examined the University of Oxford's own history, a multi-volume affair, and had learned from that a great deal about what had been going on in Oxford physics in the period 1839-1939. So particularly in the light of what had emerged from that, we agreed to look at Oxford physics, and its distinctive college based culture of learning, more closely. There was much more physics happening in that period than people had thought, and much of it was actually happening in the colleges, not in the central university facilities. Much was done by college tutors, and much wasn't even called physics, it was actually called mechanics or physical chemistry. Radioactivity was studied by

¹ Robert Fox, and Graeme Gooday (editors), *Physics in Oxford, 1839-1939 : Laboratories, Learning, and College Life*, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005).

the chemist, Frederick Soddy, not by the physicists at Oxford. It seemed that much of what would be called physics elsewhere was just not called so in Oxford.

We learned to understand that particular cultures of learning were local to a particular institution and this filled up a very large book, in fact, which showed in detail that Oxford had not been a backwater. Understanding the particular cultures of learning at institutions made us realise that physics was much more vigorous at Oxford than had been thought, and particularly that trying to understand the history of physics and physics education was not best done through, say, for example, the default template of the Cavendish laboratory in Cambridge, which my previous learning had done.

This was much more student centred learning, much more delocalised learning, much learning not undertaken with the somewhat *parvenu* name of physics. In the late 19th century physics was very much not the subject we take it to be now. It might have been at Cambridge but not at Oxford, where in many ways it is still seen as either natural philosophy, or a branch of mathematics or a branch of chemistry. That taught me a lot about how to think of an education more sensitively, about how individual organisations formulated what their project was in distinctly localised ways and also how the process of learning is really very difficult to separate out from research in certain institutions, in Oxford particularly. In Cambridge, by contrast, it's worth bearing in mind that the history teaches that students had been kept out of research, but at Oxford the two were much more unified. Looking at it that way you can see some interesting insights into the integration of research and teaching today, I think, David.

Yes, indeed.

So through my work on the history of technology, I ended up becoming a lecturer at the University of Leeds.

So, talking about the nature of learning within a university, how do you see a university? Because obviously there are different formations, different parts of a university that go into the process of learning that's involved here. You spoke about laboratory learning and the strange phenomena that that produces, so how do you

conceptualise a university as such?

Well, I have to say there is no one single conception of a university that I can subscribe to. I can only think of them in the particular. In the Oxford case, and at each university I've been to, my sense is that they have very different historical traditions to draw upon, and forms of excellence to uphold, different kinds of audiences, different kinds of buildings, locales, so I'm going to be very much the historian and be a particularist. I just can't find anything in common to universities except that in some sense they are all naturally engaged in higher education and research, but what I can simply say is that if they are good universities, if I can be prescriptive rather than descriptive, they have to bring their research and their teaching into line, or to have some integration between them. That is what a good university would be. I've been at universities as a student where research was the main activity and teaching suffered accordingly, but I've been an external examiner at one place where little research went on and it's clear that the teaching suffered accordingly. So my conviction, personally, is that we ought to have teaching and research integrated.

I think you also need to think of universities as stakeholder institutions with many stakeholders, students being central to that discussion, not merely as customers. What bothers me slightly is that students increasingly are encouraged to think of themselves as paying customers, whereas in fact they're not. We still have to maintain a sense of the teacher student relationship.

I think it was John Stuart Mill who pointed out that you can't, or shouldn't, treat education as a matter of *laissez faire*, because one doesn't know the value of education until after one's had it, by which time it's too late to make choices about it. I think there's a very delicate balance to be maintained in universities between what we think is good for students, and what students would like to do. Negotiating that is possibly one of the bigger challenges that we face, but it's one which good universities handle well. A university is in some ways like the BBC, it'll take you to places you might not have expected you wanted to go, and helps you to become a more rounded and interesting person, better able to cope with the world both inside university and beyond. I think good teachers can inspire students to follow their lead into interesting and valuable areas of scholarship, and not just indulge in what is

easiest, or what might appear to be most fun.

So, talking about good teachers, and obviously teaching itself is very important to you, which educator would you say has had the most influence on you and why?

That's a bit tricky—my primary experience in education has been of bad teachers! So my dedication to enhanced pedagogy has largely come from learning from the mistakes of those who taught very badly, with the wrong sorts of assumptions and with inappropriate practice, and I'm determined that my students shouldn't have to go through what I went through as a student.

In terms of that commitment to good teaching, you've recently been awarded three prizes. Could you say a little bit about those?

The three awards, in sequence, just in summary, were first the History of Science Society's Hazen Prize for Educational Excellence, awarded in November 2006, and in January 2007 came the University of Leeds teaching fellowship, and then in June 2007, I was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship. Now the work I did to get these fellowships, all of which I should say other people nominated me for, or asked me to apply for, derived from a period I spent from 2000 to 2003, working in what was then called the Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies Learning and Teaching Support Network Centre at the University of Leeds, now called the Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies.

I was the Associate Director for History and Philosophy of Science for roughly three years, and organised quite a lot of workshops, mostly on teaching history of science, but also some on teaching history of medicine, and one on teaching philosophy of science. They brought together higher education practitioners to talk about educational difficulties in higher education in ways that really hadn't been done before. Previously there had been very sporadic discussions occasionally, mostly either about very particular, narrow topics, or about school level education. In discussion with other university teachers, including Andrew Warwick (Imperial College), many of us agreed that in teaching students who are not historical philosophers but who are doing science degrees, or other degrees, we spend much of the time just

trying to get students to understand what we're giving them in history of science. So for the first time university teachers of the history of technology and medicine and/or philosophy of science got together to talk about how to help teachers appreciate that pedagogical challenge. I suppose I drew heavily from my own experience as an undergraduate undergoing the conversion from being a scientist to an historian, so for me actually identifying the problem was remarkably straightforward, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that people thought my insights were quite novel and original. I think what emerged from these workshops is that there was a common sense that something had been achieved by pooling expertise together. My role was basically that of starting a discussion going with a document, where I raised some concerns, and I chaired the meetings, but the collective approach of the meetings, of everyone bringing their own insights to bear, was much the most productive feature of it, and I'm very happy to be associated with those.

I did those for four years, and then I moved on to work closely with the British Society for History of Science. I've been a member of its Education Section committee since 2000, but I then found myself getting much more closely involved with the new Outreach and Education Committee set up in 2005, which I've since come to cherish. That has been involved with a lot of interesting initiatives, not just following through the debates on education and history of science in higher education, but also looking at some ways that higher education could support secondary and even primary school teachers in history of science. They do outreach activities too, bringing history of science to a wider population, by organising events. Some of the teams I've worked with have done interesting projects, one of which for example is getting students to produce 'object autobiographies', an interesting exercise showing how museum curators and teachers bring objects to life. They have also done role play activities, which went down very well. One being launched this year was the reconstruction of an investigation into the plague in York in 1645, with the public being involved in the discussion of the causes of it.

All these activities seem to have added up to quite a good portfolio, and combined with the success I seem to have had in Leeds with developing the teaching of the history of science and technology and particularly also now in the history of philosophy and ethics of technol-

ogy, I've also been lucky to have students think that my teaching was good, so I was put in for the Hazen prize in 2005 and was lucky enough to get it in 2006. I went all the way to Vancouver to collect it, and it was a very prestigious event. The HSS is largely an American organisation and certainly in North America, particularly the USA, teaching is taken very seriously indeed. There are many institutions with very high levels of resources to support teaching and academics who devote their entire life to teaching, so for a Brit to succeed in that competitive marketplace is actually quite amazing. I was stunned to receive that award.

Indeed, many congratulations.

Thank you. And then what followed from that was a chain reaction, I was advised very strongly to apply for a University of Leeds university fellowship, oddly going in the wrong direction, from international to local—funny how these things work out. I would never have thought of putting in for an internal university teaching fellowship, until that point, but I was advised that an international award was probably quite sufficient recognition, so I submitted for that and was successful. I was one of two people who were then nominated, as winner of a University of Leeds teaching fellowship, to be put in for a National Teaching Fellowship. That took some time to develop, as I had to get evidence from colleagues around the country who were able to say nice things about my workshops, and from my students and colleagues of previous years who had watched me teach and who I'd supported in their learning how to teach. I got the National Teaching Fellowship in September.

The prizes I've got from each of these awards have been very helpful as they've provided me with a supply of money which has been used so far to hire in post-graduates to do tasks to develop better educational resources in the history of science and technology. The university teaching fellowship, for example, is being used to develop some on-line tutorials called, most likely, 'electricity on-line', which will have students going through online self-guided tutorials to understand the history of electricity, going from the most elementary stage of those who are just casually interested and/or just at school still, who can use Google or other search engines to find things out, and critically evaluate what they find on the web, all the way through to advanced

level research skills. It might be formulated in the training programme of a Masters or PhD student.

I haven't yet fully decided what to do with the National Teaching Fellowship money, that's £10,000, the UTF being £15,000, but it'll probably be more of the same, developing more on-line resources. Post-graduate students are, in this department, extremely experienced at teaching history and philosophy of science because we hire them to teach our first year undergraduates, so it's great to be able to draw upon their abilities to teach and understand first year students, and their sense of what will be interesting to them. As one approaches middle age one increasingly realises one does not understand how first year undergraduates work any more, and we just increasingly forget what it must be like to encounter history and philosophy of science for the first time. So using post-graduates means we are able to recapture that sense of strangeness and otherness, if I can use that phrase?

What Joe Cain calls encountering the borderland, the boundary?

Yes, it's certainly a boundary, but one that you can take people over, and one of the great things is seeing how many people enjoy crossing borders. Many people cross the border very willingly, and one just has to hope that we don't end up converting too many scientists into historians of science by making history of science too interesting!

So, along that same theme, what sort of skills and abilities or capacities would you look for in a student who would be likely to succeed in the history of science?

One, I think, is the ability to stand back from science and look at it critically, not taking it for granted as the permanent answer to all questions. I think the intelligent science student will already be aware that science changes, and is fallible, and is sometimes contradictory, so being able to understand how science got that way, how science changes, requires you to be able to stand outside it. Many students who have had a bit of training in the humanities are good at that, but there are some students who really resist it, they just want to learn what's in the text books and be pragmatic about getting into research, and they may be less capable of doing history of science.

The next most important attribute I think is empathy. The histo-

rian's role is to understand how people in the past thought, without thinking they were irrational or incompetent in some way, and trying to reconstruct what they did and why they did it, and how they may have changed their minds about things. For example as a historian of science you want to be able to understand how a particular theory which had been absolutely taken for granted was gradually rejected, and in fact you can start to see how things that we might regard as being quite bizarre now would have been perfectly comprehensible in the past. For example, the faith in the divine creation of the universe, faith that the Earth is at the centre of the universe, or the belief that there are four elements, earth, air, fire and water. Various things that were thought fundamentally true, for many people in distant past times, are no longer so, and students who are good at the subject are able particularly well to balance this great conflict of views of how to interpret the natural world. Some students panic when they see that there is no consensus, or the experts don't agree, but the best students realise this is normal, in science. Because of this, history of science gives a good training to students at a professional level of science, because there are going to be debates and disagreements amongst professionals. It's great for a student to be given a history of science education which brings out their ability to think about those issues of science which are not discussed in the science curriculum. The skills we cultivate, therefore, complement the kind of skills that they get in the science curriculum and are useful for them professionally as well.

So how good is contemporary history and philosophy of science education in actually developing those skills? How good are we at cultivating these skills of empathy and being able to step outside and evaluate other people's positions?

Well, it's difficult to make a general judgement about this. My experience has two relevant forms to consider. One is being an external examiner at three other institutions. It's become clear to me, looking at the work of students, many of whom are scientists, that they've come a very long way from where science students are, by the time I see their papers. They've learned to think a lot. Certainly many of them show signs that they are still utterly convinced of the truth and power of science, but many of them are able to be much more sophisticated and

critical and reflective about it and that's encouraging. The other thing I suppose could be that the very fact that history and philosophy of science has survived for decades now in a very competitive marketplace. There are very few areas of scholarship where the history and philosophy of something would be a self-sustaining area of autonomous scholarship, so we've had to do our job very well in order to maintain our existence, and I think many people now realise that what we do is valuable. Looking back at the two cultures debate due to C P Snow,² there was a rough sense that science and the arts tended to be bridged with HPS, or that it was the best way perhaps to do that; and insofar as we've been bridging that gap ever since, making people in the arts understand the sciences, and vice versa, we've done our job pretty well, I think. We certainly get a lot of interest now, much more so than 20 years ago, from the media about what we do, and no longer, for example, is it so obvious that it's scientists that we ask about the history, historians of science and philosophers of science are increasingly consulted. If you listen to Radio 4 in the mornings, you quite often get a historian of science being asked to comment on the world, and they are thought to have some interesting insights.

So, you say that there is a changing role in public debate and discussion of science that uses history and philosophy of science more appropriately now. Could you say a bit more about how that's changing, and the future direction of the involvement of graduates in the history and philosophy of science in public discussions about science?

Well I guess the most obvious thing is that we're getting two areas of interest—the ethics of science, and the science of communication. People who do the history and philosophy of science are often quite good at pinpointing the value issues that arise in any area of science, and more specifically what the different options are, what arguments have been put forward in the past, and what other arguments have not been explored but are there in the literature of philosophy and scientists from different periods or different countries, and are enabling those to

² C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959).

inform the debate. So certainly I see a lot of people who work in our area being able to help in discussion about the ethics of science and what scientists should do. This is only a question that's come up in the last decade or two. I think the response from the public has been, 'who can guide us?' and I think we can help them.

The other area of public discussion has been the science of communication. A lot of debate has gone on in the last 15 years about how to get the public to engage with science. Initially the problem was seen to be the public understanding of science, the idea being that if only the public knew more about science, they would understand it and stop criticising it. But more recently the problem has been that since the end of the Cold War, now that the investment in science is no longer justified by having to defend the state against invasion or bombing, or against holocaust, people question what the purpose of science actually is. Scientists, certainly, have been a little uneasy at having to live in a world where the funding is no longer taken for granted and I think science communication in its current form has helped because no longer can one assume in this new paradigm that the public are simply ignorant of science—the issue is often one of trust. There's a moral dimension to the relationship between what is claimed is knowledge and what you might call the epistemological relationship. I think science communication, as I'm currently teaching it right now, raises all the complex and interesting ways in which the scientists can engage with the public, and why the public might respond in various ways. From this, one can develop a model about how scientists and the public can engage much more productively without the cross-purposes or the antagonism or distrust that has been characteristic of previous decades.

How do you see the relationship between history of science and philosophy of science changing? Because it has changed in the last 10 years.

Yes, it's changed in various ways. One thing to put into context is that the history and the philosophy of science were of course thought to be quite well integrated in the early years of the field, in the 1950s, and we assumed that one couldn't do history of science without the clarifying methodological insights of philosophy of science, and that philosophy of science was completely pointless without some empirical input from

the history of science. One really had to know about what science had thrown up as case studies to consider. But increasingly philosophers and historians have gone their own separate ways, with philosophers of science wanting to maintain a much more rationalist framework and historians of science moving more into areas of scholarship influenced by anthropology, literary theory and sociology. However, there has been an attempt recently to bridge that gap, and I think it's clear that historians of science are rediscovering once again that philosophers of science can help them think about much of the conceptual apparatus of science and the debates that there are about science at a pretty high level of analysis, and the philosophers of science have managed to learn about how to deal with the historical case studies that they often will use to substantiate their point. Certainly the recent relationship between UCL and Leeds in HPS has been most productive and very genial...

See the report on the website³...

That's right, and it's clear that many people have much to discuss, there are many people around that regard themselves still as being both historians and philosophers of science, or at least are historically minded philosophers of science or philosophically minded historians of science. I would probably see myself as a philosophically minded historian of science and technology, still engaged in philosophical debates of various sorts, and still think there's much to be gained by historians of science and technology working with philosophers so long as they can actually establish the common territory carefully and not expect there to be a complete alliance in every single issue.

Ok, so, Graeme, you're obviously well-engaged in contemporary pedagogy, and engaging with the debate, and your awards are clearly a demonstration of the recognition that you've gained through working in contemporary pedagogy, so could you say a bit about how you've seen teaching change, over your career as a teacher? How has the approach to teaching changed, and how have the attitudes of your colleagues changed, and indeed your own attitudes?

³ <http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/PrsDiscourseArticles/13>

Well, several major changes have taken place. I think that one of them is that as far as I'm concerned I'm a much more student-centred teacher, and much more inclined to cultivate debate amongst students. I think I went into the classroom initially with a great radical fervour, convinced that there were certain particularly right ways to do history of science, and I'm no longer convinced that that is either appropriate or even effective pedagogically, because I think that one of the most disempowering things for students is to be told how they should think. Instead I've developed a technique of forcing students to engage in debate by always showing them at least two aspects to a story, and as far as I can never allowing them to know what my views are, and I think that's quite different to how I was taught as an undergraduate. I remember quite vividly being taught quite prescriptively about things to write, and that there were things that you shouldn't say, that undergraduates were not meant to have their own views about things, just to summarise other people's.

I think another major change that's happened is that the history of physics has disappeared really, as a subject. People are no longer impressed by the history of physics, it does not capture one's attention at all. I was raised with the idea that history of physics was the canonical discipline, and that's no longer the case. I find I have to use history of technology increasingly to show how the history of physics does matter in some interesting sorts of ways. The students themselves are very different, they're less impressed by science, they're much more impressed by technology, so one often has to teach them history of science through history of technology to get them to pay attention.

Also I think the fact that the students are paying fees now means that you are aware they are expecting a much more well-defined interaction with you, they are expecting certain kinds of resources. One has to be much better at producing documentation, lecture notes, and everyone I think has to understand how students learn. There's much more of a sense now that teachers have to be conscious of what it is that motivates students, and what things they do best.

Web resources are something I've come to in the last two or three years, and I've found that when students are encouraged to go out and search the web, they are much more effective at finding out interesting things. They enjoy it much more, and it drives them to produce creative critical thinking much more than if you just sent them off to read a book

or two. Learning has become much less book-centred, but I guess one has to accept this as part of the way all students of each generation do new things in new ways, and if one is to make learning of history of science democratic, it's going to have to become much more web based, because so many students out there do not have access to libraries. That's why I'm increasingly dedicated to developing web resources, and directing students to good web resources, and warning them conversely of course about the dangers of web resources, because some are extremely poor, misleading and confused.

Those who were teaching history of science in the 1970s are aware that the game is utterly different now, perhaps because the numbers are much greater. The pressure's much greater— we're no longer able to teach history of science as if it intrinsically mattered, we have to teach history of science and philosophy of science as if they had some benefit beyond just disciplining the mind. They're not just liberal studies any more, they serve a purpose, and again, to use a phrase that Joe Cain uses, students have become 'critical consumers' of science, and that notion is one that's very recent, and wins favour with many people that teach nowadays. One way is of pinning down to students particularly what difference learning history and philosophy of science actually makes to them, and how they can be better citizens accordingly.

The benefits to civic society. So what do you think are the most pressing factors that are driving that change? Is it policy, is it the marketisation of higher education?

Well, it's the marketisation that is the thing. I'm not sure if anyone has a very clear policy about what to do with history of science. We're much more conscious now that we have to follow the markets rather than trying to dictate them, and we live in a world where educational work has to be sensitive to both student demand and financial viability. Those two things of course are connected, and what you have to do is establish a research culture that means that your performance as researchers will enable you to perform with a reasonable level of autonomy from your institution. If you research well and you bring in research grants you'll be given enough freedom to teach what you want, and if you don't do well in research then it's a lot harder to find

the freedom to do what you want. Some institutions have closed down the history of science or the philosophy departments completely, because they weren't doing well in research ratings.

The other thing to consider is simply that students are now more and more concerned with vocational matters, and having an enjoyable time at university. They are paying for their education, and they see it perhaps not quite yet as American students do, as an investment, but they see now they want to get particular kinds of benefit out of it, so we've had to adapt the way we teach a little bit to engage with those agendas, and present ourselves as doing things which are vocationally useful, and indeed highly enjoyable. Not every student who ever receives history and philosophy of science will think 'oh what fun', but very few will think of it first as having vocational benefits. Most of those who take it do realise that it can be great fun, very rewarding to learn and highly beneficial. History and philosophy of science was recorded some years ago at this university as having one of the highest employment rates. Students have a broad range of understanding of the arts and sciences and seem to do fairly well in the educational market, which shows I think that we have been able to adapt well to the changing circumstances, but I look forward to the day when we can sit down and have a policy about its teaching. The only thing I can think of as a policy that we might be considered to have is, at least in this department, to keep the history and the philosophy of science together, and to cover the history of science, technology and medicine, because science is certainly less prominent than it used to be, and students are invited to learn all those different areas of the subject coherently on the curriculum. We just have to accept that some courses will get dropped and others will become more popular as students' interests change and as we have to consider new partnerships with other departments. The key point in the two cultures debate that I considered earlier is actually that we often teach other departments' students. We find that some departments are very friendly towards us—the biology department here at Leeds is particularly enthusiastic about having us teach their students—but other departments have become less so, partly on financial grounds, and also because they simply want more of their students to be specialising in their own field. It's a real challenge to us that some departments in this country really feel that history and philosophy of science can only be a distraction—that it can't enhance learning. This

is in really great contrast to the USA, where every engineering and science student is obliged to take some arts or liberal element in their curriculum. It's not a matter of choice—the very basis of American education is that students must be broadly educated, and it would be inconceivable for students to go through their educational career just doing engineering or just doing science. I think we have a lot to learn from the USA in that regard, and I hope we can make that come into place here. I still think that we suffer in this country a little bit from the suspicion that education is a slightly unfortunate activity that has to be got out of the way as fast as possible, whereas in the USA people see education in much broader terms, seeing it as an investment in a broad-skilling culture as well, in a way that simply can't be given to you by your birth or your school. The USA has the most successful history of science community of any nation—it has departments in most universities, or a teacher of it of some sort—because everyone agrees that scientists need history of science, or something like it.

So if you were looking back at your career as an educator, a teacher, what would you say was your greatest achievement to date?

(laughter) Well in one sense getting three history of science prizes for education in one year, that was something I'd never thought I would do, it was incredible.

In terms of my personal achievements, I guess it's being able to keep students stimulated. Their interests have changed radically, but to keep finding that every year I can go to teach and see that students' faces switch on and brighten up when I raise certain topics, and get them to feel confident and able to think for themselves, is very rewarding. The most enjoyable thing about teaching history and philosophy of science is that it can enable students to see the subject of science, or history more generally, or human culture even, writ large, in ways that they hadn't imagined before. If you can help them adjust to this, the new vistas that they have, and make them feel confident about what they know, and how to use their critical faculties appropriately, you've done them a huge favour.

I think on that basis history and philosophy of science can educate students into things that are more rewarding than a lot of other

subjects, and doing the teaching of it, and knowing the students benefit that much, is what I think is a great achievement. It's easy to make history of science dull, but it can be done well, and if done properly it is an achievement I want to claim. You can send out into the world mature, rounded learners who are confident and adaptable and can succeed in all sorts of careers. And several of my students have now gone on to careers in history of science, and I've been able to encourage them to take their fields of interest beyond my own narrow area, so I think I've been able to bring some benefit to the world. I think when I die there'll be someone out there who will remember me and think kindly of me, and that gives me a sense of achievement.

Thank you very much.

Teaching philosophy historically:

The Case of Personal Identity

David Evans

School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy,
Queen's University Belfast

I.

I want to consider how best to teach the history of philosophy. Since such teaching standardly takes place within the larger context of teaching philosophy, naturally there arise issues concerning the relation between philosophy and its history. But I shall focus here on the pedagogy itself. Interesting though the metaphilosophical issues are, I think that there is a contribution from actual teaching experience which may bring significant gains to the larger debate.

Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies,

Vol. 7, No. 1, Autumn 2007, pp. 81 - 94

© Copyright Subject Centre for PRS, 2007

My case study concerns philosophical teaching on *personal identity*. This topic features in many introductory courses. It is a very natural topic to present to students beginning philosophy; they are easily interested in it, and the issues raised in metaphysics, philosophy of mind and ethics are extensive and fruitful. In later, higher-level courses personal identity is normally a much more peripheral topic, perhaps featuring as a topic within a larger course on ontology or philosophy of mind. There is also the further possibility that the teacher will revisit the topic of personal identity in a more explicitly historical context. That is the theme which I want to explore in this case study.

How do students who approach personal identity in a problem-based and non-historical manner come to understand the topic, by contrast with those who encounter it historically? As regards the latter group I shall concentrate on two periods of philosophical history—the seventeenth century, when John Locke raised pertinent issues to which Butler, Reid and Hume responded and which still resonate in contemporary debate, and the fourth century BCE when Plato sought to cast light on the simultaneous unity and diversity within a social organisation or a state, by exploring what he argued is a parallel situation within the individual person.

Elsewhere I have argued that where teaching introductory philosophy is concerned, the problem-based approach is preferable.¹ Of course, the historical approach is valid and indeed necessary if the focus of interest is explicitly the philosophy of Locke or Plato. However my thesis is that if we consider the mass of philosophy students, generalising over special factors in their programme, problems rather than history will provide a more effective mode of entry for their philosophical education.

Cultural considerations have a bearing on the way in which an area of philosophy or particular topics within it may best be approached. As it happens, personal identity provides an excellent example. In recent times notable contributions to current philosophical debate on the topic have come from African philosophers such as Segun Gbadegesin and Kwame Gyekye, writing on the Yoruba and the

¹ David Evans, 'Teaching Introductory Philosophy: Problems or Traditions?', in D.Evans & I.Kuçuradi (eds.), *Teaching Philosophy on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century* (Ankara, 1998), pp.207-20.

Akan concepts of a person.² In this work philosophical discussion is enriched by culture-specific ideas which have not figured in the earlier philosophical tradition. These ideas do indeed come from a tradition, but it is not one in the mainstream of philosophy. The modern step has been to bring such concepts into philosophical use; and that could not happen if the terms of the debate were constrained by the history of philosophy.

Two major themes are likely to enter modern philosophical discussion of personal identity. The first concerns the *identity* of the person; the second the *unity* of the person. I shall consider each theme, first as to how it can be taught in a contemporary and non-historical context, secondly as to how it ought to be approached through the history of philosophy. My aim is to exhibit the difference between the two approaches and their results, so that we can get a clearer sense of their respective strengths and merits.

2.

Questions about personal identity ask what it is that sets a particular individual person apart from everything else—from other individual persons and from all else in the non-personal realm. Genetic science is clearly of very limited help here. It seems that in terms of genomic constitution every human being is 99.9% identical to every other one, the last 0.1% contributing the personal individuality.³ We humans are even 97% identical to nematode worms, I am told. Well, each of us has a head, which is the front of the creature, and a foot or tail, which is the creature's other end. But these facts about genetics do not really tell us much about the identity of an individual person.

² S.Gbadegesin, *African philosophy. Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), esp. pp.27-59; K.Gyekye *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

³ I exaggerate, but to good rhetorical effect. It now seems (scientific and journalistic reports, November 2006) that genetically every human being is 99.7% identical to every other and 97% identical to a chimpanzee. Clearly the 'identity' involved here has little to do with personal identity.

For further insight we need to go to psychology and consider such factors as habits of character and the contents of minds. For even the identity of physically identical twins does not count significantly as *personal* identity. Separated as they are in space over a lengthy period of time, their psychologies are bound to diverge, so that in terms of their mentality there is no semblance of identity. But there is a difficulty with mental characteristics; they seem to lack the capacity for individuation which is possessed by physical characteristics. Suppose that we were to have psychologically identical twins; their thoughts and desires are precisely matched both in general terms and in particular detail. The question is whether such minds could indeed be *twins*, that is *two*. To be sure the bodies and brains in which they are tokened are two. But since what interests us is the minds themselves, it seems to follow from the identity of psychological content between our twins that they are completely indistinguishable.

Considerations of identity at a time favour bodies rather than minds as the fundamental units. But when we go on to consider identity over time—that is, persistence and survival, possibly through great changes—matters become more complicated. Suppose, as in the famous thought experiments,⁴ two conscious human beings undergo a process such that the mind (thoughts, memories, personality) which was formerly associated with one of the bodies is now associated with the other, while a reverse change has occurred with the other mind and body. Such stories can be told in various ways. Some of them support the conclusion that what we have here is a radical mental and personal dislocation of two human beings; this version assumes that the body is the location of personal identity. However a more normal construal of these fantasies is to see them as presenting a situation in which two persons exchange bodies. There is strong mental continuity between the experiences of the inhabitants of what is first one body and then a completely different one; and this can convince us that the identity of the person has crossed between the two bodies rather than remaining with each original body through its radically changed mental nature.

⁴ From a vast literature I select B. Williams, *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp.1-81; J.Perry, *Personal Identity* (University of California Press, 1975); D.Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford University Press, 1984); S.Shoemaker, *Identity, Cause and Mind* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

Thought experiments in this genre have been used to support the proposal that the identity of a person is not tied even to existence as a human being.⁵ Just as the identity of a person might persist, through mental links, between the bodies of a prince and a cobbler, so it could also survive transmission from human biological existence to that of an extraterrestrial alien or even to a non-biological intelligence created by artificial technology. By such steps in argument there opens up the interesting possibility of linking a resurgent dualism in the theory of personal identity, with the natural inclination of many students to embrace an anti-speciesist, animal-friendly view of the value of life.

In introductory philosophy teaching, attention is concentrated primarily on the nature of a person and on the range of what is to count as a person. So questions of the nature of the mind and the body, their relative importance and the relations between the two, are highly salient, and so also are issues concerning the status, as regards personhood, of defective humans, higher animals, aliens and gods. Onto reflections on these issues, which have immediate appeal to students starting philosophy, we graft more abstract and sophisticated thoughts about identity. Identity is a peculiar and puzzling relation, but plausibly it has the characteristics of being absolute, or all-or-nothing, and also transitive. If something which we specify as 'A' is claimed to be identical to something specified as 'B', then there can be no distinction whatsoever in the characteristics that are true of A and B. Thus for the city of Dakar and the capital of Sénégal to be the same, nothing can be true of the one which does not equally hold true of the other; and similarly for the personal identity that there is between the present author and the Professor of Logic & Metaphysics, Queen's University Belfast. Difference to any extent, however small, means total difference. Transitivity requires that if A is the same as B and B the same as C, then A is the same as C; any failure of identity between A and C entails that there is similarly a failure between at least one of the pairs AB and BC.

Absoluteness and transitivity are closely connected features of the logic of identity. Technical as they may seem, these thoughts add spice to the puzzles about personal identity that we can serve up to our

⁵ See T.Nagel, 'What is it like to be a bat?', repr. in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge, 1979, pp. 165-80; F.Jackson, 'What Mary didn't know', *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1986), pp. 291-5.

students as they begin philosophy. Two brief examples illustrate this point. If we suppose that physical continuity is the basis of ongoing personal identity, we have to confront the fact that the physical constituents of a person are replaced over time. Just as identical twins are not identical because their bodies are made up of different parts, so if we replace all or most of the parts of something with new parts, however similar, the result is a different object. It is normally accepted that a gradual and piecemeal replacement of parts does not upset an object's ongoing identity. However if we insist on the absolute and transitive character of the identity relation, even a slight change of parts disables identity. No object can persist the same as itself if its material constitution changes to any degree.⁶

This result makes severe difficulties for any physicalist conception of personal identity. But the same considerations also damage the alternative psychological account. For it is memory which provides the most plausible mental link between the stages of a person over time. Yet not only do memories fade, thereby weakening the transitivity of the connection which is required for identity. Even very recent memories lack the content of the earlier memories of yet earlier mental states; and so the memory criterion also fails to deliver absolute, all-or-nothing identity.⁷

3

This is the kind of material which, I believe, should fill a sound introductory course in philosophy. How well does such an approach match a historical treatment of these topics? The philosopher whose work it

⁶ This line of thought was raised in philosophy and its pedagogy by Chrysippus; see A.A.Long & D.N.Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1987) vol.1, pp.171-2, 175-6, and vol.2, p.177. It carries on into the medieval tradition, in the writings of William of Shyreswoode, and was famously developed by Thomas Hobbes, *De Corpore* II 11 (transl. W.Molesworth, vol.1, pp.135-8). As a technical issue it persists in current metaphysics. For a good summary of views, and a trenchant account of his own position, see M.B.Burke, 'Dion and Theon: an Essentialist Solution to an Ancient Puzzle', *Journal of Philosophy* 94 (1994), pp. 129-39

⁷ For this topic, see the bibliography in n.4 above and also D.Lewis, 'Survival and Identity', repr. in *Philosophical Papers*, vol.1 (Oxford, 1983), pp.55-77.

most obviously recalls is John Locke, with his famous thought experiments involving mental connections and continuity between two completely different bodies.⁸ Locke is convinced that if I have memory connections and strong similarity of character with someone who lived many centuries ago and so died long before I was born, I am the same person as that earlier human; and conversely if there is an absence of this kind of mental connection between different stages of one human life, then the later person and the earlier person are not identical. Locke acknowledged that these claims are paradoxical and are open to abuse when called in support of amnesiac drunken behaviour, for example; yet he cites our attitudes to the responsibility—or rather, lack of responsibility—of the insane, to reinforce his elevation of the importance of mental over physical connectedness. Like many modern commentators on these issues, Locke's concerns are both analytical and normative. He wants to clarify our conceptual tools but also, on the basis of that increased insight, to improve our practical attitudes.⁹

So far this puts Locke firmly in line with the philosophical approach which is embedded in the course for introductory students. But of course this commentary has omitted material that lies at the heart of Locke's concerns. His famous chapter in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (II 27) is about our idea of identity. He starts by distinguishing what we may call *basic* and *sortal* identity. One form of question is: what is it for something to be or remain the same? A plausible answer is that it consists of exactly the same constituent atoms. The strategy, in both question and answer, is to construe identity without reference to any further qualification; and it can reappear, with similar plausibility, in enquiries about simple spiritual substances, such as souls.

Locke does not rule out this intellectual concern with basic identity. But he uses it as a foil for the aspect of our idea of identity which interests him—namely the identity which comes into play when we couple it with other ideas. According to this conception, to be the same is to be the same so-and-so; for example, if we ask whether this person is the same as that one, the grammar of the sentence indicates

⁸ *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II xxvii, with comments by E.J.Lowe, *Locke on Human Understanding* (Routledge, 1995), pp.93-118.

⁹ For the normative dimension, see D.Parfit (*op. cit.*), pp.321-47.

that our question is whether the one is the same person as the other. In more recent discussion this notion of identity has been called ‘relative identity’.¹⁰ Locke uses it to show, first, that whether A is the same living creature as B is a different question from whether it is the same amount of matter and, secondly, that whether C is the same person as D is a different question from whether it is the same living creature.

In all of this Locke’s primary interest is in identity as such. He is concerned to distinguish absolute from relative identity, arguing that both form part of what we mean when we speak of things being the same or different. Personal identity provides an interesting and challenging case where the full resources of a properly conceived theory of identity can sustain a particular set of views about the nature of a person. But the particular claims about persons are intended to support the more general theory of identity, not vice versa.

Locke’s work in this area was widely influential. His discussion of personal identity was taken up, over the following century, by Joseph Butler, David Hume and Thomas Reid (among others).¹¹ They had various motives for interest in the human self, ranging from theological to epistemological, and they by no means endorsed Locke’s position on the subject. However in all cases their discussions gained sharpness and focus as a result of Locke’s analysis of identity. A historical examination of philosophical theories of personal identity would cover all this ground, as well as Kantian discussion of the ontological status of the human subject. This is valuable pedagogy; but it is clearly separated by some distance from the problem-focused course material which I went through earlier. The approaches are distinct, and their distinctness needs to be acknowledged.

4.

A second aspect of personal identity which can properly find a place in introductory courses concerns intra-personal conflict of motivation. We sometimes do things which we know to be wrong. But how can this

¹⁰ P.T.Geach, ‘Identity’, repr. in *Logic Matters* (Blackwell, 1972), pp.238-47; E.J.Lowe (*op. cit.*) pp.96-7.

¹¹ J.Perry (*op. cit.*), pp.99-118, 159-76.

occur, if the realisation that some action is good gives us the strongest possible reason to do that? We can refine this problem in the face of various deflationary strategies which focus on the concepts of knowledge and goodness. Whatever refinement is made in these areas, there is a residual issue about human actions and their bases in understanding and will. This is fertile ground for engaging the philosophical attention of new students.¹²

Of course, it too has its origins in the history of philosophy—specifically in the Socratic paradoxes about the relation between knowledge and action and in the reactions of Plato and Aristotle to Socrates' views. But again I draw a distinction between a problem-oriented treatment of these issues and one that attends primarily to the historical record. Consider first what is most appropriate for introducing new philosophy students to this area. My experience tells me that it is the tension between wanting to do something and knowing that it is wrong (or wanting to not do it and knowing that it is right). Students may not at first feel any problem here; and this is probably because they take a heteronomous view of morality. For these students, morality is external to their desires; so either they are bound by it despite their desires or their desires will trump its inconvenient dictates. Either way they see no significant problem.

Progress with students will be made if they can come to see two things: first, that what is to be counted as good requires intellectual and emotional endorsement on the part of the human subject; secondly, that if we are to focus our desires effectively, an understanding of several potentially remote factors may be required. For example, should a 30-year-old person make an undertaking to donate organs or tissues in a death situation which putatively lies 40-50 years ahead? An effective, sustainable answer to such a question will depend both on the agent's emotional engagement with a temporally remote phase of his existence and on an understanding of something that is far away from immediately present experience. Having awakened in the student a sense of his full moral autonomy, we can proceed to explore cases where there

¹² For good introductions to the topic, see W.Charlton, *Weakness of Will* (Blackwell, 1988); A.O.Rorty, 'Akrasia and Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7' in A.O.Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (University of California Press, 1980), pp.267-84.

appears to be an internal conflict of motivation. Here very useful support can be provided by Plato's account of the three parts of the soul. In *Republic* book 4 Plato uses—indeed, introduces—the principle of non-contradiction to support the general conclusion that where a person is both attracted to and repelled by some option, it cannot be precisely the same part of the person that simultaneously feels both effects. On this basis he distinguishes three parts—reason, which calculates what is good, desire, which pursues pleasure, and spirit, which embraces honour.¹³

The divided soul can make a strong appeal to students, particularly if they are familiar with the ideas of Freud and other psychoanalysts.¹⁴ In teaching about personal identity we can best use Plato's discussion as a springboard in two directions. First, it focuses attention on what precisely is involved in prephilosophical thought about moral conflict. Is it plausible to make reason and desire the elements in that conflict? Is it not rather the case that both elements are needed on each side? For it seems that neither reason without desire nor desire without reason is sufficient to generate action. If that thought is right, we can explore whether either element has an intrinsic tendency to be dominant. One answer leads to the intellectualism of Socrates, the other to the emotionalism of David Hume; and between them the two answers define what Michael Smith has called 'the moral problem'.¹⁵ We are also well placed to discuss the philosophical conundrum of *akrasia*—weakness of will, which Aristotle derived from these very discussions in the pages of his predecessor Plato.

A second line of enquiry that Plato's ideas can readily suggest to students concerns the reflexivity of thoughts and desires. In addition to simply wanting or not wanting something, a person can want to want or not to want—or not want to want or not to want—that thing.¹⁶ Plato distinguishes his third part of the soul—spirit—by contrasting its emo-

¹³ *Rep.* 439-41. For recent discussion, see M. Burnyeat, 'The truth of tripartition', *Aristotelian Society Proceedings* (2006), 1-23.

¹⁴ See R. Wollheim & J. Hopkins, *Philosophical Essays on Freud* (Cambridge: 1982), especially the essays by David Pears and Donald Davidson, pp.264-305.

¹⁵ M. Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Blackwell, 1994), pp.11-12.

¹⁶ H. Frankfurt, 'Freedom of Will and the Concept of a Person', *Journal of Philosophy* 71 (1971), 5-20.

tional reaction to something with a contrary simple desire for that thing. As a plausible alternative analysis, it might be claimed that the person wants something, on the one hand, but also wants not to want that very same thing. There is no contradiction between these attitudes; so Plato's argument for the fragmentation of the person cannot proceed. But we can still press the issue with regard to *wanting not to want or not wanting to want* something. What does such a subject actually want? If the person is fundamentally unitary, there must be an answer to this question. Similar problems arise when we consider the reflexivity of knowledge or belief. Socrates claimed that he was wiser than everyone else just because he, like them, was generally ignorant; he at least knew that he knew nothing, while they did not even know that.¹⁷ One can be ignorant or mistaken as to what one knows or does not know.

These are some of the themes and problems that arise when we pursue the idea of fragmenting the unit that is a person. Plato argues the case for fragmentation, based on the contradictory interests of the parts of the soul which he distinguishes. As we develop these ideas in introductory philosophy teaching, we may well emphasise, against Plato's analysis, that each person really is a unit; but we should also explore the problems that arise for those who want to maintain this when faced with difficulties over weakness of will and also when we consider how intellectual and emotional attitudes can be directed upon themselves. Whereas in the earlier Lockean material we concentrated on some particular candidate for being the basic bearer of personal identity, we now show the problems that lie in supposing that any one of these elements can be a genuine unit.

5.

What then of the historical basis for this line of philosophical enquiry? One crucial element in Plato's account which we have so far ignored entirely is the political dimension. His account of the individual person is strictly parallel to an analysis of the distinct elements in a whole

¹⁷ Plato *Apology* 21d; see C.D.C.Reeve, *Socrates in the Apology* (Hackett, 1989), pp.33-7.

society.¹⁸ The overall strategy in his *Republic* is to discover the nature of the good life by examining how things go well on the grand scale of an entire state. The strategy depends on the thesis that exactly the same moral concepts are instantiated in an individual person and in a whole social organisation; both of these can be just or wise, and so an understanding of the nature of these qualities in either entity can be carried over without remainder to the other.¹⁹ This is a stronger and more paradoxical claim that might be supposed. It is not that appropriate social conditions facilitate the emergence of individuals of certain types. Rather the idea is that the very same quality is present in society and in the individual person.

This idea has important consequences not only for moral psychology but also for political theory. In the *Republic* Plato uses the separation of classes in the state to develop a taxonomy of constitutions; and this classification is taken up, with extensive modifications and refinements, in the political theorising of Aristotle, Polybius and Cicero.²⁰ At the base of the theorising in these later thinkers there lies Plato's idea that humans are essentially social creatures, so that an account even of an isolated individual person which leaves out the political dimension must be deficient. Plato took this idea to the extreme of regarding a state as a super-individual and an individual as a mini-state; but this should not obscure the fact without Plato's theorising we would not have anything like our present justification for regarding political theory as a part of moral philosophy; and without that moral dimension, politics would likely not even be a part of philosophy.²¹

Aristotle was a major inheritor of this important element in Plato's work. He also puzzled over the problems for the unity of the person that were bequeathed by Plato's theory of the tripartite soul,

¹⁸ *Republic* 368d-9a ; the difficulties in this approach are well exposed by Aristotle, especially in *Politics* B3.

¹⁹ *Republic* 441c-d.

²⁰ Plato *Republic* 544; Aristotle *Politics* Γ7-8. For *Polybius*, Cicero and other later political thinkers in classical antiquity, see F.W.Walbank, *Polybius* (Berkeley, 1972, pp.130-7); A.Lintott, 'The theory of the mixed constitution at Rome', in J.Barnes & M.Griffin (eds.), *Philosophia Togata II* (Oxford, 1997), pp.70-85.

²¹ This crucial element in the tradition comes from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* K10, esp. 1179b31-80a14.

examining them in the different contexts of moral theory and natural psychology. Although his responses were rather different in these two contexts, in both cases he saw the need to give an account which both recognised the distinctness of different psychic functions and also reflected the unity of a being which possesses these distinct functions.²² Here is an example from his natural psychology. Sensation is clearly a distinct function from thought, since some animals exercise the first but not the second. Therefore that complexity has to be recognised in our analysis even of those animals, such as human beings, which exercise both functions. At the same time the account for these latter creatures must reflect the connection between the exercise of the two functions. In the present case this condition will be satisfied, roughly speaking, if we acknowledge the conceptual character of human sensation: we see our sense-data as cats or tables, in a way that cats do not and cannot.²³

Thus Plato's discussion of the tripartite soul in *Republic* 4 connects with a number of topics and philosophers which do not—and, I would maintain, should not—get mentioned or discussed in a general introductory course on personal identity. But in a course which directs attention precisely on Plato as a figure in the history of philosophy, with his own identity and progeny, the topics which I have just indicated are entirely appropriate.

6.

Let me draw some strands together. I have outlined certain topics and arguments which I would insert into an effective course, for students coming to philosophy for the first time, on the general theme of personal identity and the nature of persons. These topics are grounded in certain seminal discussions by philosophers who feature in the long tradition of our vocation—in this particular case, John Locke and Plato. Without their contributions these particular themes might well not have entered philosophy; at least they would have done so in very different form.

²² *De Anima* B3, 414b20-32, and for the connection to politics see *Politics* Γ1, 1275a33-b5. See also A.C.Lloyd, 'Genus, Species and Ordered Series in Aristotle', *Phronesis* 7 (1962), 67-90.

²³ *De Anima* Γ1, 425a24-7.

However we need to exercise pedagogical care as we construct the students' menus and meals. My examination of the two cases has shown that the best teaching will follow rather different routes depending on whether the course focuses on the issues, as they are most likely to interest a beginning student, or on the material in its historical context, including its immediate influence. This does not mean that one type of teaching is to be privileged over the other. That is a separate issue, which I have not addressed here. My present point—and the lesson which I draw from my case studies—is that we need to be sensitive to the distinction between the two types of teaching and their aims. I believe that those who devise and deliver philosophy courses are not always as alert to the distinction as they might be. If so, this paper will have covered useful ground.²⁴

²⁴ This paper was first presented to a conference, supported by UNESCO and FISP, in Dakar, Sénégal, in January 2006. I should like to acknowledge the help of Sémou Pathé Guèye, Marcel Dascal and William McBride, on that occasion and others, in fruitful discussion of these ideas.

The Critical Being of the Liberal Arts Student:

Assessing Evidence of ‘Critical Being’ in Student Experiences of the Crichton Campus’ Philosophy-based Core Courses

Stuart Hanscomb

Philosophy, Communication, and Core Courses,
University of Glasgow, Crichton Campus, Dumfries

This paper was written in conjunction with Angela McClanahan, Archaeology, Anthropology and Tourism, University of Glasgow, Crichton Campus, Dumfries. Angela McClanahan was also the principle researcher on this project.¹

You know you are not bad for wanting things done in a different way (Interviewee S5).

I: Introduction

In the two previous papers in this series for *Discourse*² we have described both Crichton's liberal arts orientation, and the integrating role of the Core courses within its curriculum. It was explained how a superficial pick and mix of subjects is avoided by a curriculum design in which all students are required to take four philosophy-based Core courses. These have three broad academic aims: meta-understanding of the nature of specific disciplines and discipline areas; explicit focus on critical thinking and other generic academic skills; and education in (essentially philosophical) issues that are relevant to most or all disciplines (e.g. ethics and textual analysis).³

The paper that appeared in the previous edition of this journal explored some, so far unarticulated and/or undeveloped, links between these courses and personal development (or, more specifically, what Ronald Barnett calls 'critical being'⁴). Following Barnett, critical being was unpacked in terms of *theoretical knowledge* ('the contextualization of knowledge', 'reasoned thinking' and 'meta-awareness of academic knowledge and specific disciplines'); action ('critical thinking skills', 'communication', 'learning to learn', and 'awareness of what higher education means and what it can offer'); and self ('the habit of reflection and self-monitoring', 'autonomy', 'passion and ownership' and 'the contingency of values'). In a nutshell, for Barnett these 'domains' are inherently interlinked, such that any attempt on behalf of higher education to promote personal development needs to do justice to all three. One (fundamental) reason for this is that key to such development is the requirement for the individual to take responsibility for, and ownership of, their experiences as a student. This, in turn, requires a contextualization of their subjects and learning experiences in terms of their lives as a whole

¹ My thanks also go to Ben Franks, Sean Johnston and Ralph Jessop for their comments on drafts of this paper. They go doubly to Ben Franks for his input into the Analysis and Conclusions section.

² Franks, B. 'Interdisciplinarity and Philosophy', *Discourse*: Vol. 6, No. 1, Autumn 2006; Hanscomb, S. 'Philosophy, Interdisciplinarity and Critical Being', *Discourse*: Vol. 6, No. 2, Spring 2007.

³ The course content of each of the Cores appears in Appendix 2.

⁴ Barnett, 1997.

(no matter how tentative their life projects might be at this juncture, especially for young students). For example, they should be encouraged to ask questions like, ‘Why am I in higher education (on this course, at this institution)?’ and ‘Why is this piece of learning important?’ And these are asked partly as means to answering such questions as ‘Am I clear about my personal goals and ambitions?’ and ‘Am I in charge of my life and my studies or am I just hoping it all will work out somehow?’⁵

It is relatively easy to show how the Cores do (and, vitally, could do more to) promote many of the components of critical being listed under ‘theoretical knowledge’ and ‘action’, but the most interesting—and perhaps most controversial—issue is the relation of the Cores to the ‘self’ domain. It was argued that, from the point of view of *what* is taught, they might indeed contribute in two ways. The first springs from what Barnett refers to as ‘freeing the individual from ideological delusion’. Our values are central to our identity, but they are also contingent. The Cores stress the centrality of values and ideology to both academic theories (including scientific theories), and to our lives; and underline their contingent status by placing them in a critical perspective. From here it is relatively straightforward to allow or encourage students to extend the ethical and epistemological critique of theory and values to their own ideas and values (we see this continually in the ethics course as, presumably, do all teachers of applied philosophy). The second is the more indirect stimulation of self-reflection via a student’s extending the intellectual habit of contextualisation to themselves as a wider concern. In other words, it primes them to contextualise their learning and general higher education experience in terms of their lives as a whole.

It was argued that the Cores’ suitability for developing critical being is demonstrated by their ability to avoid a potential conflict between PDP and the notion of authenticity. Authenticity, in certain important respects, must be self-generated rather than externally imposed. Among these respects, it is argued, is the act of taking a grip on oneself *in the first place*; of recognising *for oneself* that one needs to be reflective and autonomous. To attempt to teach this *directly* runs the serious risk of alienating the student, either from the idea of self-development, or from themselves through engaging with self-develop-

⁵ These latter two questions come from Stella Cottrell: see <http://palgrave.com/skills4study/pdp/about/index.asp>

ment inauthentically (i.e. as solely a set of skills to be learnt). Comments from two students in a recent focus group at Crichton set up to help investigate what Glasgow University calls ‘employability’ captures this concern. The students are asked to comment specifically on a ‘checklist’ to prompt reflexivity, and one responds with,

I don’t know. I think it’s something that builds up within you and I think ... everybody needs to come to come to this point [of] ... reflection at a different time. I’m not awfully keen on checklists ... I’ve been involved with too many in my career and I think that’s one of the good things about universities, that this is something that gradually grows within you at your own pace.

The other adds,

I think so as well. I think maybe even if at the end of your first year you were asked to reflect on ... what you’ve gained as a person ... At that point you might not be ready ... I think, as you say, it’s more ... personal.⁶

There are a number of ways in which requirements of the ‘self’ domain of ‘critical being’ can be transmitted indirectly, including examples set by staff, and by some of the great characters and thinkers students learn about. Our contention is though that courses like the Cores can, in the ways described, also have a pronounced and relatively *indirect* effect on the personal development of students.

Such is the conceptual groundwork for the relationship between Core courses and critical being. It remains to be seen to what extent, to date, these courses have influenced students’ perceptions of themselves as learners, as individuals, and as members of society.

II: Method, Approach and Analysis

Ways of investigating student experiences often take the form of pre-fabricated surveys, questionnaires, and self-directed end of course student

⁶ Harvey, Pattie and McFarlane-Dick, *Reflections on Employability: Current Strategies for Employability in Higher Education*, Interim Report, February 2007, p.56.

evaluations. While such approaches may be useful in gathering some kinds of baseline data for rapid evaluation—for example, questions about age groups who choose to take specific kinds of courses—some instructors are questioning whether such methods are equipped to build an adequate, nuanced picture of students' experiences of higher education.

Bryman⁷ outlines some of the main critiques of quantitative research, three of which are relevant in this context. First is the failure of quantitative techniques to distinguish the social from the natural world; in other words, the social lives and behaviour of humans is treated as a scientifically testable range of actions that can be repeated, leaving little room for particularity and agency. In the context of evaluating educational experience, such an approach might over-simplify student replies to survey questions, simply fitting her/him into a pre-designated category without explaining how or why s/he responded in the way s/he did. A second point underlines the flipside of this: the tools used to undertake quantitative research are highly structured, artificial instruments not normally encountered in daily life. This means that the respondent has a limited range of options in articulating their thoughts and actions. Thirdly, the well-recognised gap between what people say and what they actually *do* is inadequately exposed by surveys. This is, of course, also a problem for qualitative methods, but it is one that is mitigated by interviewers being in a position to encourage interviewees to develop their answers by, for instance, providing examples to illustrate their otherwise bald claims and opinions.

Bryman⁸ argues that the advantage of using qualitative research methods is that they allow the respondent to provide their own spontaneous, unique response to questions, allowing the subject to place emphasis on points or themes relating to issues they feel strongly about. As well as particular and nuanced responses concerning the issues identified above, in this study, important and relevant, but unsolicited matters concerning the Core courses and the Crichton curriculum in general were raised and are discussed in this paper.

The twelve subjects interviewed were all third and fourth year students who have taken all of the Core courses. Nine were female and three were male, and ages ranged from 19 to 73 (half were over 30).

⁷ 2001, p. 77.

⁸ Op cit, pp. 264-5

They were asked a series of questions relating to their experiences of the Core course that fall into four broad categories: their views on the purposes of higher education and how the Cores fit into this; their views on the relationship between the Cores and other subjects they study or have studied; their view of the relationship between Core courses and skills (critical thinking, communication, employability in general), and their view of how the Cores have affected their approach to life outside of formal learning environments (e.g. values, citizenship and their approach to current affairs). They were also asked how they thought the Cores could be improved.⁹

The nature of the semi-structured interview is such that the questioning process differs slightly with each interviewee. It is quite common for answers to overlap, and so depending on the direction of responses, questions can be differently ordered or omitted, and sub-questions probing unexpected avenues added.

Analysis of interview data involved transcriptions being both manually coded, and imported to the qualitative research analysis software QSR-N6, also known as 'Nud*st'. In both cases interviews were 'coded' into the taxonomies that have formed the basis of interpretations found in this article.

There are two clear limitations of this paper, the first being the number of students interviewed. Crichton is a small campus and even though these represent about a quarter of the liberal arts students available to us who have taken all of the Core courses, responses are less generalisable than would be the case with a larger study. The second is that such is the richness of data available from the interview transcripts that we have only chosen to comment on selected themes. A different kind of angle—one that discusses each course in turn for instance—would take the discussion in some different directions. These angles will form the basis of future in-house and, where pertinent, externally published, research.

III: Results

In terms of the central focus of this research, the relationship between Core courses and 'critical being', six clear themes emerged from the

⁹ For complete questionnaire, see Appendix 1.

data: increasing confidence and autonomy; appreciation of multiple points of view; depth of knowledge and analysis; breadth of knowledge; the issue of demonstrating skills and knowledge versus articulating the possession of such skills and knowledge, and how benefits similar to those we suppose derive from the Cores also derive from other subjects.

I. Increasing confidence and autonomy

a. Questioning authority ('the dominant')

A common response to questions concerning the meaning and value of the Cores and critical thinking was a political or social slant. For instance, when asked to define the term 'critical thinking' S2 responds: 'It means to me, questioning the dominant'; and when asked about the specific impact of the Cores she says:

it's probably had an impact on what I think critical thinking is, because ... it's probably shaped my idea to be critical politically. Culturally, historically, rhetorically, argumentatively.

In terms of the application of critical thinking skills S1 says:

I use the skills ... to query people in authority ... the local authority and things like that you know. If I'm not happy ... now I would chase them up more than I would have done in the past.

And S9 says:

... things like the current war in Iraq. Before I probably would have supported the government's view ... Now I think about it a bit more deeply and I think was it really necessary ... what evidence did you have? Like the arguments from authority is maybe not the real authority at all ... So just think about things like that more deeply and I'm very critical of the whole thing and suspicious of everything now that's ... coming in.

S12 comments:

thanks to A-R-T [Argument-Rhetoric-Theory] I am now an argumentative pain ... who will not take 'just because' as an answer;

and responding to a question concerning the impact of the Cores on responsible citizenship S6 observes:

... it's better to question things that are going on around you. I don't know if that means you'd be ... a better citizen ... it's not like they make me want to go and be a rebel or whatever ... I think for me it makes me question them more ...

b. Media

Another authority-related theme emerging from the interviews concerns the media. Again, discussing the relationship between the Cores and critical thinking, S7 says:

Before I started ... university ... I would just take it at face value and accept that that was what was going on in the world but ... Text and Communication kind of makes you think 'wait a minute that's that journalist's opinion or that person's opinion, it's not necessarily what's going on. You've got to do more thinking ...

Similarly, for S9:

... it's made me more aware of advertising. It's probably saving me money now! (laughs) Because I was probably an advertiser's dream before and I'm actually getting quite negative about it now.

And S10:

I didn't really have any opinions or view on how advertising and the media could coerce and influence ... It's sort of opened my eyes.

Referring to T&C and A-R-T S5 comments on how they help you deal with the news and ads: 'you get to make an analysis for yourself and it equips you to weigh if it's the truth or not ...'. S12 highlights ICS, that it 'in particular gave a platform from which to explore key aspects of today's climate and really get to the bare bones of an issue. And on the subject of the Core's effect on her perceptions of the media, S3 says,

I ... really was taken in by adverts and that sort of thing, but when I watch the news I think 'oh no', now I would think maybe there's something behind that in what they're actually saying, and now I

read two or three different papers and see how they ... all say something different.

c. Self confidence

Questioning authority indicates the self-confidence that comes from increased worldly knowledge and increased self-knowledge, and several of the interviewees commented explicitly on these factors. For example, S5, in response to the question 'have the Cores changed you in any other way?' says 'Not to have people take advantage of you basically 'cause you listen beyond what the person is saying and you get if they want to take advantage of you ...' Later she says how,

... one thing that they brought up was because we are minorities we end up not putting ourselves forward because we are scared of going there, yet there are open doors for everybody. So in a way we make ourselves not equal to everyone by being scared to get out there. But now because of things like ICS [Issues in Contemporary Society] and the subjects that came up I'm quite aware of what's there and I'm now comfortable enough to put myself out there. You can help others that are not aware of that fact.

S8 says, 'In [ICS] you get more of a chance to express what your personal values are and ... it helps you to re-assess them as well', and S2 says:

I can put my point across. I don't need to feel as if I'm being talked down to.

... I don't think in any walk of life now, whatever I do in the future, that I'm never gonna be given something that I don't question if I feel it needs to be questioned.

An allied point, relating to citizenship, concerns the confidence in one's democratic powers. For S3:

... before I thought if I did something then it's not going to make an ounce of difference, but I started to think that well if everybody thinks like that then it never will make a difference so now if when I do do something then at least I'm trying to make a difference.

2. Appreciation of multiple points of view

a. Multiple points of view influencing one's own point of view

S2 says with regard to the Cores:

I'm definitely more responsive to other people's points of view ... for all [that] .. it's given me the ability to put an argument across better, it's also given me the ability to accept that there are always other points of view and that I'm not always right (laughs).

About ICS S4 says that it:

hasn't necessarily changed any of my habits or my general political orientation ... but once again, it's ... opened up the fact that there are different views.

And about the same course S7 says that it:

has taught me a lot more about ethics and listening to other people's opinions and ... just being able to take other people's and adapt your own opinion.

Amplifying this theme, S1's interview (which is infused with references to multiple points of view) describes how this has given her a different perspective on her views. She says:

I can see a lot more viewpoints than I probably would have ... there are so many diverse interpretations, and even when you think you've got it right someone will come along and say 'well did you think about it this way?'

This has made her 'less sure if you like', but seemingly in a positive way. Earlier in the interview she went to lengths to explain how the Cores have made her more proactive in women's groups, local politics and her children's education.

b. Tolerance

Aside from the emphasis on how an appreciation of multiple points of view affecting one's own views, a more straightforward theme of tolerance was evident. S7, for example, says, 'I definitely have ... a lot more respect for other people and other people's opinions now'; S5 dis-

cusses how she's become more 'lenient' towards the views of others as a result of the Cores. 'Because of A-R-T' she says 'I've learnt that I have to listen to both sides.' And S6 says:

... usually I'd like to think I was open minded, I mean I suppose I was to a certain extent but it's helped me to [become] ... better because with things like fox hunting ... if I was so against something like that I just wouldn't listen to the opposing point of view. But even now if I don't think that I would change my mind I would still try and listen.

c. Relation to self-confidence

Falling somewhere between the implied confidence of a. (above) and the humility of b. is the effect of being exposed to multiple points of view on developing self-confidence. S5 says, 'you know you are not bad for wanting things to be done in a different way'; and S6 says:

It's also made me accept myself more ... with ICS when you ... find out about ... different opinions of things you can start to build your own opinions and ... I never used to think my opinion counted for anything. Whereas now I might think ... what I think has been thought through ... that it counts as a position.

3. Depth of knowledge and power of analysis

a. Depth

Responding to the question 'Do you think the Cores contribute to the [aims of] higher education?' S9 says:

I think they do ... I find myself looking at things ... more in depth ... for instance ICS, there are things that are in the news all the time that everybody's got an opinion about, myself included, but sometimes I don't actually know where that opinion has come from. ... T&C same thing ... looking a bit more deeply at what I'm reading in a newspaper thinking about if I'm writing something who it's for and what is the message ...

S5 says, 'Before the Core courses you just look at things like on the surface and never think of going deeper', and S6 explains, with specific reference to ICS and A-R-T, how the Cores help you to 'not just scrape the surface'.

b. ‘Building blocks’

Several of the interviewees describe the Cores in terms like the ‘building blocks’ of the university experience (S6), and as the ‘base for you to expand from’ (S1). S12 describes each of the Cores as a ‘set of tools with which I felt I could tackle the rest of my studies better prepared’, and after discussing the integrating effect of the Cores (‘I’ve got a sort of wider grasp’), S1 goes on to describe the Cores as a ‘grounding and the base for everything else that comes after’. Citing more specific examples, S3 and S5 discuss how ICS prepared them for ethics issues that arise in their Health and Social Studies courses¹⁰ (including research ethics). With regard to the development of study skills S3 says that A-R-T made me look at ... essays in a sort of mathematical way.’

c. Use of argument and analysis, including specific reference to their application to other courses

S10 enthuses about A-R-T, saying it was ‘very useful’, and referring to the logic and reasoning skills they learn as ‘universal tools’ and ‘transferable skills’. About the same course S7 says, ‘it makes you look at all your other courses in a different way’, and S1 tells us that she is now much more analytical than she was, and that, with specific reference to analysing texts, it has become ‘second nature’. This, she says, has infused all the subjects she has studied. Similarly, S2 explains with regard to non-Cores courses how the requirement for logical structure to her arguments now ‘jumps off the paper at me.’ She also makes a similar point (referring explicitly to Science: History and Culture (S:HC)) about the historical context of what she is studying. S7 similarly highlights the role of history in expanding her analytical perspective.

Like S1, S2 also feels that analytical skills are applicable to all the subjects she studies (‘they’ve impacted on every course’), and goes on to cite an example of their impact on her involvement in a wrangle over the building of motorcross track in her local community. She explains,

they ... rented this field and built it up into a wee club and then

¹⁰ Health and Social Studies is one of the degree designations at the Crichton Campus.

other people in the community started to complain about noise. So there became a battle which is still on going I have to say ... at the time it was in the papers every week and stuff. And I was doing A-R-T down here, so it became really ... useful in putting a proposal together for the track to be like, a part of the community. And also to send letters into the local newspapers, like putting our point forward. ... So it was really really useful. And I've since used it as well for the campaign and the likes of that are just invaluable in making a point ...

Later she adds,

But anyway I think that, as I say about the motorbike track, and I've put two or three letters into the local newspaper which I probably wouldn't have had as good a letter before I came here. And I was contacted because of one of my letters in the paper to do with the university campus closing down. And ... the community council contacted me and asked if I'd sit on their committee! (laughs)

So I thought well, at the end of the day I can go and see what it's like! So, at the end of the day, that's me, picked up, for the community council. ... that was a direct result of letters being in the paper. ... directly influenced by what I included in the letter, the way I structured the letter.... I just wouldn't have had the ability to do that before I'd been on the Core courses. I directed them to my audience, I was able to influence political things, cultural things, I was able to structure it, I was even able to include rhetoric in it, and, like, use emotive language (laughs).

S9 offers a similar kind of example,

if I'm doing a piece of written work and putting forward an argument or whatever. ... I recently ... put a complaint forward to a public service and I won my case. And that ... started before I had had A-R-T but it continued throughout it so I was ... checking that my arguments weren't emotional because it's easy to be emotional ...

4. Breadth of knowledge

On the importance of breadth of knowledge, S4 says,

one doesn't live in a cocoon throughout one's life, so it's better to

find ... what other things there are ... it's just a part of personal development. ... we're not just professional people, we're not just doctors or scientists or lawyers or whatever. We're human beings, so even if it doesn't relate directly to your professional choice, nonetheless, it's important.

S9's response to the question 'do you think the Cores contribute to the [aims of] higher education?' is 'I think they do ... if that is the objective, to broaden the mind'. The interviewer then enquires whether the Cores have made her a better learner and she speaks of the benefits of (making implicit reference to S:HC)

being more open minded ... when I'm researching stuff, looking far and wide, looking for different perspectives, not necessarily just concerned with the discipline that I'm writing the essay on but there'll be other things like history and sociology.

a. Exposure to other subjects

Regarding the role the Cores play in fairly straightforwardly exposing students to subjects they would not otherwise have chosen, S11 says

... they've been a big advantage because, rather than just going down one path and having, say, you only know about Environmental Studies',

and about S:HC S3 says it 'made me more interested in the history I took'.

Also concerning S:HC, S10 comments,

I did history ... and enjoy science ... as well ... so it was a combination of the two different disciplines and it was really quite interesting.

b. Challenge / disjunction

For some students the value of the Cores comes partly from the challenge it presents them with. For S8 for example:

To have a module like [A-R-T] at the end of second semester I had never done any philosophy at all so it's all really quite new which in a way was good to have that challenge

and S2 says how:

T&C and A-R-T [are] ... more difficult because you had to ... think, you had to be out of your comfort zone a bit.'

S4 indicates how via the Cores a shift in his perspective was, in a sense, forced on him:

I'm not philosophically inclined myself, but ... I found that they did raise a lot of interesting questions. Which were good to think about.

5. Demonstrating skills and knowledge versus articulating the possession of such skills and knowledge

Whilst apparent that students interviewed both knew about and made use of skills taught in the Cores course, it was also noted how the majority lacked the ability to identify or explain the notion of 'critical thinking'. For instance, when the interviewer asked, 'If you were to define the term 'critical thinking' what would you say?' S7 suggests, 'It's one of these terms you don't really think about ...' and S8 asks in return 'Am I supposed to know? Have I studied this in one of my ...' When asked to give an example, S10 fared better, saying,

... when you're trying to explain something to someone who doesn't understand the problem. You've got to think it out first and then explain it clearly and coherently so that they understand it as well. That could be critical thinking.

But this still reveals a disjunction between his understanding of argumentation and its value and his understanding of this piece of terminology (which is wider than just argumentation).

Similarly, students were vague in response to questions about whether or not the Cores had helped them become better learners. S10, for instance, responded, 'it depends on what you mean by 'better learner'?', and could offer nothing else.

6. How similar benefits come from other courses as well.

There is little doubt about the strength of the themes discussed in terms

of these interviewees responses to the Cores courses. However, several indicated that other courses affected them in similar ways. S4 says:

I think all courses ... if there's serious courses ... stimulate your interest and challenge your assumptions and your prejudice.

S8 says:

As you go through university you do realise that you have to think about things in depth. But I wouldn't say that one of the Core courses has helped me do that than any other course that I've done.

In response to the question 'do you think you've become more employable as a direct result of the Core courses?' S10 does not think you can 'narrow it to just the Core courses', and on the matter of whether he thinks he has become more responsible he says:

I wouldn't agree with that. I'd say, yes, I've become more responsible, but not necessarily because of the Core courses. I'd have to say it was because of the university experience in general.

IV: Other research into the Crichton curriculum

Before discussing these results it is worth making reference to some ongoing research into employability at the Crichton Campus. In Harvey *et al* (2007) the interim report includes an analysis and transcript of a focus group concerned with curriculum design, and there we can find several points emerging that support the findings reported above.

Students reported on how studying at the Crichton 'widens perspectives' and teaches them to 'challenge pretty well everything'. Regarding the Cores in particular the comments are highly favourable, with a stress on the 'questioning' and 'scepticism' (a 'wonderful word') they engender. In a way relevant to 'disjunction', one student imagined that the history of science would be 'boring', and yet found S:HC to be 'brilliant'. Perhaps most significantly for critical being, one reported,

I have gained an awful lot more than a wider knowledge of facts. ...

I had expected [to challenge and evaluate] to a certain extent but not really to the extent that it might alter my personality, my whole outlook on life.

One new point found in this research concerns how the Cores offer a rare opportunity to mix and work with people from different courses. One says,

because ... we do these Core modules you meet up with students from ... completely different courses. ... And that I think too helps with employability because you don't just ... narrowly look at your own field, you're aware of what other people are doing too.

There will be further comment on how to maximize the potential benefits of this under 'Areas for Development' in the 'Conclusions' section.

V: Analysis and Conclusions

I. To what extent is the predicted link between the Cores and critical being upheld?

As far as I am aware, none of the students at the Crichton have stood in front of tanks.¹¹ Several, though, walked 100 miles to the Main Campus in Glasgow to protest against the University's plans to pull out of undergraduate provision, and many more were involved in a sustained campaign against this policy, a campaign that lasted from January until August of this year (when the decision was reversed).¹² Students believed they could make a difference and they worked intelligently and harmoniously using the media, direct action, lobbying MSPs and many other methods to achieve it. The passion that ran through the campus for some of these months was not hysterical or vain, and in the vast majority of cases it did not seem as if it was done for non-integral reasons (it could, after all, look quite good on a CV).

¹¹ Barnett (1997) uses the students in Tiananmen Square as a paradigm of critical being.

¹² For more information go to http://www.geocities.com/glasgow_at_crichton/02.htm

Of course it is not the whole story, but the responses from interviewees in this study make it hard to doubt that the Core courses had some influence on student conduct (see especially under ‘Increasing confidence and autonomy’ and ‘self confidence’). In this case, it seems reasonable to suggest that ICS in particular, and to some extent T&C (notably its emphasis on news media), combined with the reasoning and presentation ‘skills’ aspects found in all four courses (and especially highlighted in A-R-T) have had a significant influence on student behaviour. What seems particularly important about this is precisely the holistic impact of the Cores. Students make it clear that other courses also teach them to think more deeply, reason more thoroughly, present more proficiently and so on, and this we would expect, but what this case suggests is that the Cores, as a unit, give them something extra.

The areas of critical being hypothesised to be influenced by the Core courses were: a) Contextual knowledge and meta-critique, b) The freeing of the individual from ideological delusions, c) Reasoning skills, and d) Stimulating self-reflection. What have we demonstrated? There is plenty of evidence that students have learnt to contextualise knowledge (e.g. references to multiple perspectives), and though evidence for meta-critiquing of other disciplines is ambiguous in terms of, say, looking for alternative paradigms, there are nevertheless examples under *Depth of knowledge and power of analysis* that make reference to S:HC (the course that best serves this end). More commonly though, the application of the Cores to specialist subjects in terms of meta-critique merges with an appreciation of them providing ‘tools’ or ‘building blocks’ (typically reasoned thinking and textual analysis).

As arguably illustrated by the student arm of the anti-closure campaign, the Cores’ effectiveness regarding ‘freeing the individual from ideological delusions’ is considerable and cause for optimism. Social and political awareness is clearly expressed, and more positively still, clearly linked to reasoned thinking and textual analysis.

Reasoning skills and students’ appreciation of these was likewise a prominent theme (see *Increasing confidence and autonomy* and *Depth of knowledge and power of analysis*). Aside from what is described in the results section, at several points in the interviews subjects use the language of philosophical argument and analysis as if

it were indeed 'second nature'. For example, S8, otherwise unimpressed by the Cores, acknowledges that she has used 'little things like 'it would be a sound argument to state that blah blah blah ... the basics of A-R-T I think are useful.' And S9 says 'I've learnt things like arguments from authority aren't necessarily valid'. Here we have a social science student happily (and accurately) using a term like 'valid' in the sense it is used in logic. Importantly, this habitual adoption of reasoning skills appears to play no small part in the development of self-confidence and personal identity (see further comments on the issue of confidence and autonomy below).

At the heart of the relationship between Core courses and critical being expressed in the previous paper was the contention that a combination of academic contextualisation, meta-critique, freeing from ideological delusions, and reasoning skills would stimulate substantial forms of self-reflection and transformation. Barnett says,

In critique, quite different views of an object or a topic might be proffered as alternative perspectives are taken on board. This is real cognitive and personal challenge, and it may open up the way to a transformation of the individual student.¹³

And,

We are in the presence of critical thinking when a student comes to recognize the essential contestability of all knowledge claims. When that state of mind has been reached, the student understands not just that what she encounters in books and elsewhere ... as contestable, but that her own ideas are contestable too.¹⁴

The results reported under *Appreciation of multiple points of view* in particular shows the extent to which the Cores have achieved this aim, and this we consider one of the most exciting findings of this study. It seems clear that an appreciation of the 'contestability of all knowledge claims' extends to the personal lives of these students. When they make reference to fox hunting and remark on how they have 'a lot more respect for other people and other people's opinions now' they are

¹³ Barnett, 1997: 19

¹⁴ Barnett, 1997: 71

talking about more than what goes on in the classroom.

Reflection borne of the ‘disjunction’¹⁵ caused by confrontation with unfamiliar and/or incommensurable points of view is also demonstrated by largely positive comments on how, for example, the compulsory nature of A-R-T meant ‘you had to be out of your comfort zone’ (see *Breadth of knowledge*).

The last, and most ambitious, hypothesis regarding the Cores’ critical self-reflection link is that the integration of disciplines and approaches promoted by the Cores extends to an integration of the self. Evidence here was not considered strong enough by either researcher to establish this as a theme, but, maybe portentously, one interviewee, replying to the question, ‘Have any of your personal values that you hold changed as a result of the Core courses?’ did say,

S:HC was a kinda funny one because I wasn’t quite sure what the purpose of that was at the start ... But what it did was give a kinda background. I don’t know it seems almost silly to say, but it almost made you make sense of your life, just things that have happened that you take as a given you don’t really think about where it came from or why it’s that way how things have developed you just accept it this is your kind’s time and place this is where you are in the world and you don’t question really what’s gone before because it’s like history. But again, it’s something that’s opened my eyes.

This is only one voice, and the meaning is not entirely clear, but there are suggestions that the Cores (notably S:HC) have the potential to at least play a part in an integrating effect on student personalities.

One other, highly important, aspect of personal development (and an implicit feature of critical being) features strongly in the results: their role in developing self-confidence. Tolerance and appreciation of multiple points of view are one upshot of Cores teaching regarding ‘freeing from ideological delusions’ (one that Barnett placed huge stress on), but another is the strengthening of personal identity and an individual’s sense of personal worth. As the quote under the title of this paper suggests, the remark ‘you know you are not bad for wanting things done in a different way’ captures a pronounced theme

¹⁵ The term used by Peter Jarvis (1992) to describe this personally and emotionally disruptive feature of the leaning processes.

that emerged from these interviews. (See under *Increasing confidence and autonomy*). Reasoned thinking and textual analysis are also shown to be linked to increasing confidence and autonomy—‘I use the skills’, says one, ‘to query people in authority’. This certainly makes sense (it is a clear application of reasoned thinking and it is explicitly encouraged in ICS), it is something that we would hope for, and it is something the active student body displayed during the campaign described earlier. The net indication, it seems, is that the Core courses are *significantly empowering*.

2. Areas for development and issues regarding current provision

In the previous paper in this series¹⁶ four areas for possible improvement were highlighted. These were:

- a) An explicit questioning of learning and education and in particular higher education. This is already touched on in ICS and A-R-T, but could be expanded and made increasingly self-referential.
- b) Integrating T&C with study skills: for example seeing essays as themselves a form of communication, narrative structure, bias, authority, originality etc.
- c) Introducing critical thinking specifically in terms of academic (and other) writing skills, complimenting the reasoned thinking that forms part of S:HC, ICS and A-R-T.
- d) Being more varied in our teaching methods (e.g. peer assessment, problem-based learning, conceptual diaries, withholding formative grades (though not comments)). Even if these turn out to be no more effective than traditional methods, if they are unusual or unexpected enough this might further encourage criticality (via disjunction) in the students.¹⁷

¹⁶ Hanscomb, 2007

¹⁷ Hanscomb, 2007, p. 181

The first and third of these have been confirmed by this study (and by the other relevant piece of Crichton student experience research¹⁸). Only very rarely did interviewees suggest anything like this when asked explicitly how they would ‘improve the Cores’, but elsewhere it became clear that they were shaky on the question of the aims of education, and on how to conceptualise learning (and thus know whether or not the Cores had made them ‘better learners’). The intention is for questions of education and learning to be added to the ICS curriculum from next year (2008-9), and ways of incorporating such topics into A-R-T are being tabled.

Similarly, students struggled to conceptualise ‘critical thinking’ adequately, even though they exhibited so many examples of it. For instance, when asked ‘If you were to define the term ‘critical thinking’ what would you say?’ S8 asks in return ‘Am I supposed to know? Have I studied this in one of my ...’ The answer is, ‘no you haven’t’, at least not explicitly in all its dimensions and meanings—and that is a failing. It is perhaps not such a *serious* failing because in many respects we are only largely talking about a matter of definition and categorisation here, but nevertheless a ‘knowing-how’ is often developed and honed as a result of ‘knowing-that’; and if you want to impress, say, a prospective employer, a clear articulation of what you are able to do (especially concerning critical thinking) is of course a significant advantage. All the Core courses and especially S:HC and A-R-T can relatively easily adjust to accommodate this need.

A good proportion of the interviewees said that their communication via essay writing had been improved by the Cores. This is encouraging. Regarding oral communication, the feeling was that, as they stand, the Cores have no special role in what they also see as definite improvements in this respect since being at university. This is unsurprising in light of the current assessment methods on these courses (two out of four include presentations, which is nothing outstanding considering many other Crichton courses also include them). This could of course be changed, but perhaps more pertinent would be theoretically supported *practical* classes on presentations and public speaking integrated into the curriculum (including issues of voice (tone, variation of volume, speed and pitch etc.), technical aids, the risks of information

¹⁸ Harvey et al, 2007.

overload, variations on content (which is already covered at the level of theory in A-R-T e.g. the place of *enthymeme* and examples in speeches)). This would be entirely commensurate with the communication studies elements of T&C and A-R-T.

3. Further questions and issues

Are such courses necessary for critical being?

The short answer to this question is of course ‘no’. Some students, indeed some people, will of course acquire criticality without formal education at tertiary level. The more appropriate question is: are the Cores the best way to make a significant difference to levels of criticality among the student population. If it is agreed that the broad content and approach of these courses is vital, the alternative is to incorporate them into established specialist curricula. There is, of course, a case for this, but arguably this approach raises more practical problems (staff motivation, staff competencies, incoherence of course content) than having them as separate (interlinked) courses.

Perhaps the major concern about our set-up is their compulsory status.¹⁹ To have them as non-compulsory, but strongly recommended by advisors, could work though. Also, if just the first one is compulsory (and even possibly its role as a study skills course exaggerated), the others could be sold on this experience (i.e. students’ experiences motivate them to take more, and their functioning as a coherent unit is advertised).

Core courses and philosophy curricula

Most university students do not study applied ethics and political philosophy, but at the Crichton, most have to. In cases where a student at another institution has studied applied ethics, two things to bear in mind are these: firstly, they may never take any more philosophy (e.g. it could be a subsidiary subject), and thus the potential effects at the level of critical being would presumably be diluted. Secondly, in my experience, few such courses include sections on topics like democracy and direct action. The Cores are deliberately and proudly interdisciplinary (as are its teachers), and the inclusion of rich and informed

¹⁹ This has though been whittled away over the past few years.

factual/historical information of the kind more typically at home in a politics or history departments—the very kind that is likely to tip learning towards self-development—is what it promotes.

Not by any means does all philosophy engender self-development, and even where it might, the way it is taught,²⁰ and the lack of cohesion in most undergraduate syllabuses, will tend to leave even your average philosophy student under-developed in this respect. The four Core courses aim to be cohesive, and they are generated by a team with shared ideals. Some of these aims are readily apparent, and, it seems, readily apparent to the students as well:

sound reasoning, a wide knowledge base, and a ‘democratic intellect’ for example. Others are more subtle, such as the tendency to find connections between disparate areas of study both within and out-with the Cores, but in both instances the aim is to instil an integrating approach to knowledge through a structure that is itself integrated. Receiving similar messages once a semester over the first four semesters seems a near-minimum effort required to achieve this effect. The interdisciplinary nature of many of the courses and degree designations at the Crichton (e.g. Humanities, Health and Social Studies) raises us above this near-minimum, and our study suggests that the overall impact is along the lines we are hoping for.

Teacher Education

An announcement from the Scottish Executive on 20th August 2007 assured Glasgow University’s continuing undergraduate presence at Dumfries’ Crichton Campus. Part of this assurance comes from extra funded places being provided by the Scottish Funding Council for teacher education²¹ provision. It is intended that these new degrees will

²⁰ For example, moral relativism backed up by, at best, cursory anthropology; Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophers given next to no intellectual, let alone historical, contextualisation; utilitarianism taught in the kind of historical and political vacuum that can turn it into a virtual straw man. We need to ask, not just what kind of intellectual example we are setting, but what kind of message are we sending regarding *how we are to think about anything at all, including ourselves*.

²¹ What used to be called ‘teacher training’.

have a 2 X 2 structure; two years of liberal arts education and two years of dedicated teacher education.

For several years now Crichton's liberal arts curriculum has attracted attention from the Department of Education; its form of integrated interdisciplinarity, offering as it does a mixture of breadth and depth that spans not just arts subjects, but sciences and social sciences as well, being considered an ideal higher educational experience for prospective primary teachers. The 'Core courses' have been singled out as having particular relevance to this end.

Future Research

This research project has unearthed rich data and there are a number of matters that require further investigation. These include a longitudinal study to assess the longer-term impacts of the Crichton Liberal Arts degree in general, but also the Cores in particular. This will include an assessment of individual Core courses and other combinations other than in a complete package.

The research subjects have all taken all of the Core courses as part of their Liberal Arts degree, in which all of them are compulsory. However, as the campus has grown, some new degrees, which are outwith the Liberal Arts degree, have been developed. These new degrees, in particular the undergraduate MA in Health Studies and the undergraduate MA in Environmental Sustainability have incorporated only a section of the Cores suite as compulsory features of their degree programme. Each of the new degrees has selected a different combination of Cores (in the case of the first new degree, T&C and S:H&C and in the case of the second, T&C and ICS).

Whilst there has been some discussion about the difficulties of disentangling Core courses which are supposed to operate as a cohesive whole, it does nonetheless allow research possibilities to assess in a comparative study the impact of different combinations of the Cores in producing critical being. Future research will be undertaken comparing student learning experiences to see whether a more minimal provision of Core courses, as against the current package of four, has a similar, improved or weaker impact on students' autonomy, confidence, analytic skills, reflectivity and breadth of knowledge. Whilst such research will be primarily undertaken for in-house analysis, if the data is considered to be externally valuable, further circulation will be sought.

References

- Barnett, R. *Higher Education: A Critical Business*. (Open University Press, 1997).
- Bryman, A. *Social Research Methods*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- Franks, B. (with Hanscomb, S. and Harper, S.) ‘Interdisciplinarity and Philosophy’, *Discourse*: Vol. 6, No. 1, Autumn 2006.
- Hanscomb, S. ‘Philosophy, Interdisciplinarity and ‘Critical Being’, *Discourse*: Vol. 6, No. 2, Spring 2007.
- Harvey, Pattie and McFarlane-Dick, *Reflections on Employability: Current Strategies for Employability in Higher Education*, Interim Report, February 2007, p.56. (Glasgow University, internal document)
- Jarvis, P., *Paradoxes of learning: On becoming an individual in society*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992).
- McClanahan, A. ‘I can use them for every area...’: Report on Student Experience of Glasgow University Crichton Campus Core courses. In-house report 2007.

Appendix I: Interview Questions

Preliminaries:

What is your degree designation? (If Humanities, main subject(s))
Which core courses have you taken?

1. What do you think are the purposes of higher education? (In what ways does/ought higher education transform people?)
2. How do you think the cores aim to contribute to this?
3. In your case, do you think that have the core courses contributed to these ends?
4. Do you think that the cores have enhanced your understanding of the other subjects you have studied?
5. Have the cores helped you understand the relationship between subjects studied (including subjects studied at school, and areas of academic interest outside of formal education)?
6. What do you understand by ‘critical thinking’?
7. Do you think that the cores have: a) Made you more aware of the

nature and value of critical thinking? b) Improved your critical thinking?

8. Do you think that the cores have made you a better learner?

9. Would you say that your communication skills have been improved by the core courses (in ways distinct from other courses)?

10. Do you think you have become more employable as a result of the core courses?

11. Have the cores changed your perspective on current affairs?

12. Do you think that you have become a more competent citizen as a result of the core courses?

13. Have any of your values changed as a result of the cores?

14. Do you think that the cores have changed you in any other ways?

15. Which core course did you enjoy most?

16. How do you think the cores could be improved?

Appendix 2: The Content of the Core Courses

The precise content of these courses can change slightly from year to year, but the lists below (taken from academic year 2006-7 (except in the case of ICS (2005-6))) are typical.

Text & Communication (T&C)

Linguistic and structural features of texts and their relation to meaning (inc. ideology)

Authorship and intertextuality

Problems with translated texts

News texts

Advertising texts

Literary texts (Kafka's Metamorphosis)

Science texts

Political texts (The Communist Manifesto and Swift's A Modest Proposal)

Film as text (Night of the Living Dead)

Science: History and Culture (S:HC)

Overview of the history of knowledge and science from pre-historic times to early 20th C., with particular focus on:

Aristotle

The Scientific Revolution

Science and Magic

Medicine as science

The Enlightenment (and anti-Enlightenment)

Darwin

Psychology as science

Issues for science in 20th-21st C., such as:

Public perception

Commercialism

The State

Warfare

Nuclear power

Anti-science movements

Science and feminism

Issues in Contemporary Society (ICS)

Questioning Life and Death

Moral theory

Organ donation and theories of consent

Euthanasia

The allocation of medical resources

Questioning Equality

Forms of Equality (inc. Singer, Rawls, Nozick and Honderich)

Positive discrimination

Moral relativism

Questioning Violence

Forms of democracy and why it matters

Apathy and disengagement

Direct action and civil disobedience

Just war theory / terrorism

Questioning Nature

Animals

The concept of nature

Environmental ethics

Argument-Rhetoric-Theory (A-R-T)

Informal logic (the nature of arguments; truth, validity, soundness; fallacies; argument reconstruction)

Rhetoric (Plato on rhetoric, Aristotle on rhetoric, modern theories)

Theories and meta-critiques of arguments and rationality (including pragmatism, dialectics and post-modernism)

Teaching Quinean Indeterminacy

Susana Nuccetelli

Associate Professor of Philosophy
St. Cloud State University, Minnesota, U.S.A.

I. Summary Description

For a class devoted to Quine's famous view on the indeterminacy of translation, I have developed a strategy that seems to work well. The session is focused on the reconstruction and evaluation of Quine's argument for his view—which, applied to theories, is sometimes called 'underdetermination.' It first identifies indeterminacy about facts and about theories, as encompassed in two different theses, each of which is discussed in turn. The class then proceeds to consider indeterminacy theses about meaning and semantic theories, which are motivated by the familiar 'gavagai' thought experiment of radical translation.

Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies,

Vol. 7, No. 1, Autumn 2007, pp. 125-133

© Copyright Subject Centre for PRS, 2007

After reconstructing and evaluating the Quinean argument based on this thought experiment, the class turns next to some exercises that have been devised to represent a number of contexts where indeterminacy may be thought to arise. Here the goal is to motivate students to identify Quinean theses in other areas of philosophy besides the controversies about meaning familiar from the philosophy of language. When appropriate, solutions to the exercises appear in the correction key. I have also included here a comprehensive bibliography, from which instructors may select readings suited to the abilities of their students.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that the course into which this class session is designed to fit must be an upper-division course in a branch of philosophy where indeterminacy is a crucial issue, such as philosophy of language or philosophy of science. Care has been taken to use language appropriate for an audience of undergraduates, while preserving the rigor of Quine's discussion.

II. Class Contents

The observable evidence of phenomena in the physical world sometimes appears compatible with a number of opposite accounts of those phenomena. For example, if Aristotle and Isaac Newton were both to observe an apple falling from a tree, Aristotle would explain it by saying that the apple fell because it was 'seeking its natural place.' According to Aristotelian physics, that is what bodies do, so we may account for their motion in this way. But Newton, of course, explained it by his *law of gravity*. Similarly, consider combustion. People regularly observe things burning, but medieval accounts tried to explain combustion by invoking an alleged element called 'phlogiston.' In the eighteenth century, however, Lavoisier proposed that the presence of the element oxygen was a necessary condition for combustion. Another phenomenon admitting of different explanations is that of heat, which was for a long time thought to consist in a body's release of 'caloric.' Today, of course, scientists take it as evidence of molecular motion.

In examples of these sorts, it may be argued that, although the evidence is the same,

1 Theories of the physical world are *indeterminate*.

Here ‘indeterminate’ is a way of saying that we cannot know which theory is true; thus (1) may be paraphrased as follows:

1’ Given two rival theories of the physical world, there are no *good reasons* for preferring one over the other.

Both (1) and (1’) are theses, not about facts, but about theories. Compare:

2 The physical world is indeterminate,

which is an indeterminacy thesis *about the world* equivalent to this one:

2’ There are no *facts* that could render a theory of the physical world true.

Consider rival conceptions of the universe. Ptolemy’s theory and Tyco Brahe’s were both false, since each was geocentric. Yet before the heliocentric view gathered consensus, scientists had a good reason to prefer the latter to the former: namely, that Ptolemy’s theory conflicted with the evidence shown by the telescope. This casts doubts on thesis (1). But suppose we accept (1) for theories of the universe. We would then think that there are no good reasons for preferring one over the other. Must we now accept (2)? No, because this does not follow from (1): even when there might be no good reason for preferring one such theory over the other, unknown to us, one of them might be true!

In any case, is there any reason to accept either (1) or (2)? An early argument for theses along these lines was that of W. V. Quine (American, 1908-2000),¹ who proposed it in the context of philosophical semantics, a branch of philosophy of language devoted to the study of the meaning and reference of linguistic expressions. Quine’s argument is based on his ‘radical translation’ thought experiment: imagine some linguists engaged in devising translation manuals for a language *entirely foreign* to them. Each linguist composes a translation manual on the basis of the linguistic behavior of native speakers. Now some such manuals may provide

¹. W. V. Quine, *Word and Object*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960).

conflicting interpretations of an expression. Suppose that in the presence of a rabbit, a native speaker utters

3 Gavagai.

Although some linguists might translate (3) as *rabbit*, others translate it as *rabbit part*, *undetached-rabbit part*, etc. Since this divergence could also affect interpretations of other expressions, Quine concludes that not only are translation manuals (i.e., theories of meaning) indeterminate, but so equally are the *facts about meaning*. Here is one of his theses:

4 There is no good reason for preferring one attribution of meaning over a rival attribution.

(4) is an indeterminacy thesis parallel to (1) above. If supported, it applies also to domestic interpretation among speakers of the same language. In addition, Quine takes his thought experiment to suggest a thesis analogous to (2) above—namely,

5 There are no meaning facts.

Let's now reconstruct Quine's argument for these theses. It reads:

6 1. For any expression of a natural language, the speaker's behavior may be compatible with different interpretations of what the expression means.

2. Meaning theories are indeterminate.

3. Meaning is indeterminate.

Here, conclusion 2 functions as a premise for conclusion 3, and is supposed to follow from premise 1. But does it? No, since more is needed to show that meaning theories are indeterminate. After all, there may be other reasons, apart from the evidence from the linguistic behavior of speakers, to prefer one meaning theory over another. And even if we accept (2), from this premise it follows only that we don't know which theory is true. The premise falls short of entitling us to draw a conclusion about *meaning facts*.

These considerations also suggest that Quine's argument uses 'indeterminate' in two different ways. In conclusion 2, the term is used in making the claim that, given any two rival attributions of meaning to the expressions of a language, there is no good reason to prefer one over the other. Yet in conclusion 3, 'indeterminate' is used in making the quite different claim that, given any two rival attributions of meaning to a linguistic expression, there *is no deciding fact* as to which one is true. When in the course of an argument an expression occurs with different meanings and this bears on the support they could bring to its conclusion, the argument fails—since it is then, in effect, a fallacy of equivocation.

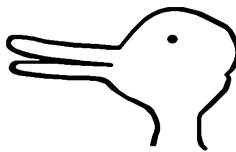
Let's now sum up. Our scrutiny of Quine's indeterminacy theses led us to consider his reasons for backing them up, and these clearly stem from the scenario of radical translation. Once the argument for such theses is reconstructed as (6) above, it becomes plain that it can offer little support for the view that meaning theories are indeterminate and no support at all for the view that meaning itself is indeterminate. Since arguments for the indeterminacy of physical theories and the physical world run along similar lines, more needs to be argued before we can accept such indeterminacy theses.

III. Exercises and Selected Answers

A. Each of the following arguments makes at least one indeterminist claim. Underline any such claim. (Tip: Take Quine's theses as a model)

1. *The laws of nature are indeterminate*, for suppose we accept the law that giraffes are mute and accordingly believe that the next giraffe we'll encounter will be mute, basing our prediction on the fact that all giraffes so far observed have not uttered any sound. This phenomenon could certainly be explained by the hypothesis that giraffes are mute. But it could also be explained by the hypothesis that they are very shy animals. Maybe those giraffes so far observed, perceiving humans nearby, abstained from producing any vocal sound!

2. *There are no morally right or wrong actions.* Consider the abortion debate. The evidence about what happens as a result of an abortion is exactly the same for the parties in both sides of this debate. Yet on the basis of that evidence, some people judge that abortion is morally permissible, others that it's wrong. Since similar cases arise for each moral issue, it seems that *there are no grounds for saying that an action is right or wrong.*
3. *No scientific theory represents 'the facts.'* This was demonstrated by Thomas Kuhn (American, 1922-1996).² He compared the situation faced by rival scientific theories to that faced by rival interpretations of figures such as:



Does this figure represent a duck or a rabbit? There is no method to decide, since depending on how you look at it, it may represent one or the other. Similarly, given *two competing scientific theories*, *'the facts' of nature could be as represented by one or by the other.*

4. Environmentalists often claim that global warming will reach dangerous levels sooner than most people think. *But there is no good reason to believe such a gloomy prediction.* For it rests on the view that the future will unfold according to the evidence we currently have from present and past phenomena observed in our environment. *Thus, global warming is a myth.*

B. Each of the arguments in (A) above contains some expressions that could be used in indeterminacy theses of two different kinds. Identify

². Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1962: 206).

those expressions and discuss those theses.

1. The expression is 'indeterminate.'
Thesis #1 = No claim about the laws of nature is true.
Thesis #2 = We are not justified in believing any such claim.
2. The expression is 'right or wrong' plus negation.
Thesis #1 = It is false that there are morally right or wrong actions.
Thesis #2 = There are no grounds for moral judgements.
3. The expression is 'represent the facts' plus negation:
Thesis #1 = Scientific theories cannot be true.
Thesis #2 = There is no good reason for taking a scientific theory to be true.
4. The expressions are 'no good reason' and 'myth':
Thesis #1 = The environmentalist's claim rests on no good reason.
Thesis #2 = The environmentalist's claim is false.

C. According to a common intuition about moral judgment, what an agent intends to achieve in taking a certain action can make a moral difference. Now the observable behavior of those who *intend* harms may be exactly the same as those who bring them about as foreseen, but unintended, unavoidable results of their actions while pursuing something good. What would the indeterminist say about the following cases? Discuss.

1. Imagine a runaway trolley that's sure to kill five workers on the track ahead (who do not see the approaching trolley because their backs are turned) unless the driver diverts the trolley onto a spur on which there is a lone worker (also with his back turned). If the driver sends the streetcar onto the spur, he does so with the intention of saving the five, though he also knows this will have the bad result that one will die. Yet, because this bad outcome is only foreseen and

not intended (the *intention* is only to save the five), and because the good outcome is proportionately great enough to outweigh the bad, therefore the driver's action is morally justified.³

2. Suppose that there are duties to oneself, and imagine a woman who, fulfilling a duty to develop her natural talents, vigorously pursues her career. Without being unfair to others, she succeeds in producing important work, yet because her advancement in her profession comes at the expense of other deserving strivers with whom she competes, some people's hopes are inevitably dashed—and their lives thereby made worse—by her success. But what she did is morally justified, for the collateral harm is not something she desired, and it is certainly not her fault. In doing something praiseworthy in itself, she has brought about a result she did not *intend*, even though she may have foreseen it.
3. In *R. v. Desmond* (1868)⁴, an English court held that the defendant, an Irish Fenian, was guilty of murder for the foreseeable deaths of some inmates killed when he dynamited a prison wall he mistakenly believed to be that of the exercise yard where his comrades would be waiting to escape. Those sympathetic to the Fenian's political beliefs thought that the court should have exempted him from blame. They argued that his action was justified on the basis of its intended result.

IV. Suggestions for Further Reading

Chihara, C. S., 'Quine's Indeterminacy.' Pp. 41-56 in *On Being and*

³. This thought experiment is inspired by Philippa Foot, 'The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect.' *The Oxford Review* 1967; 5: 5-15.

⁴. The case is reported by H.L.A. Hart in 'Intention and Punishment,' *The Oxford Review* 1967;4 Hilary:5-22.

- Saying: Essays for Richard Cartwright*, edited by J. J. Thomson. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).
- Chomsky, N., 'Quine's Empirical Assumptions.' Pp. 53-69 in *Words and Objections: Essays on the Work of W.V. Quine*, edited by Davidson, D. and J. Hintikka. (Dordrecht, Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1969).
- Collin, F. and Guldmann, F., *Meaning, Use and Truth: Introducing Philosophy of Language*. (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005).
- Davidson, D. and Hintikka, J., *Words and Objections: Essays on the Work of W. V. Quine*. (Dordrecht, Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1969).
- Hacking, I., *Why Does Language Matter to Philosophy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
- Quine, W. V., 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism.' *Philosophical Review* 60 (1951): 20-43. Reprinted pp. 20-46 in *From a Logical Point of View*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).
- Quine, W. V., *Word and Object*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960.
- Quine, W. V., *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).
- Quine, W. V., *Theories and Things*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).
- Quine, W. V., *Quiddities: An Intermittently Philosophical Dictionary*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987a).
- Quine, W. V., 'The Indeterminacy of Translation Again.' *Journal of Philosophy* 84, 1 (1987b): 5-10.
- Quine, W. V., 'Two Dogmas in Retrospect.' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21 (1990): 265-74.
- Ramberg, B. Donald, *Davidson's Philosophy of Language: An Introduction*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
- Richard, M., 'Inscrutability.' Pp. 197-210 in *Meaning and Reference*, edited by A. Kazmi. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1998).
- Shahan, R. and Swoyer, C. , (eds.) *Essays on the Philosophy of W. V. Quine*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979).

Portfolio, Partnership and Pedagogy in Practical Theology

Martin Groves and Phillip Tovey

Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University and the Diocese of Oxford and Ripon College, Cuddesdon

Introduction

This paper has the reasonably modest aspiration of reflecting on the experience that a faith community (the Anglican Diocese of Oxford) and an institution of higher education (Oxford Brookes University) have of teaching practical theology over the last decade. There has been much change over that period of time in our institutions and in our teaching of theology. For the purpose of providing background and context, an account is given of some of those changes in this paper. The main focus of the paper is its reflection on the significance

Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies,

Vol. 7, No. 1, Autumn 2007, pp. 135 - 152

© Copyright Subject Centre for PRS, 2007

of two prominent aspects of our current practice; namely partnership and portfolio based pedagogy. It will be suggested in this paper that our partnership and portfolio based teaching, learning and assessment strategies are not just arrangements of convenience but significant and vital elements in our teaching of practical theology at the present time.

One key issue that lies behind much of the debate about the nature of theology and the location of its discourses is, of course, secularisation. We find it necessary to spend so much time reflecting on the nature of theology and its place in relation to higher education, mainly because of the marginalisation of the churches and the secularisation of the academy. First the marginalisation, then the problematisation and most recently the demonisation of religion has created a problem for theology in general, and it has created a particular problem for practical theology in the academy. In this paper we reflect on our experience of partnership as an appropriate constructive response to the current problem of the location of practical theology (see also, Groves 2004, Ford 1999). We have no reason to suppose that our experience of partnership is particularly unique or distinctive, though we believe that should not stop us from subjecting it to critical scrutiny.

The way in which we have developed portfolio based pedagogy for the teaching, learning and assessment of practical theology is, we suspect, more distinctive and may well require further elaboration for those who are not familiar with the use of portfolios in other educational contexts. After seven years experience we are of the view that a portfolio based approach to learning, teaching and assessment is a particularly appropriate pedagogical tool for use in practical theology, one which is well suited to serve the needs of partnerships between faith communities and secular universities. This paper seeks to initiate exploration of this claim and begin interrogation of the appropriateness of portfolio based pedagogy for the teaching of practical theology in a partnership between church and academy.

Portfolio in the Diocese of Oxford

In 1996 the Diocese of Oxford had a major consultation looking at the future of its training provision. At the time there was a traditional lecture and essay based course for Reader training, a similar course for

training Non Stipendiary Ministers (NSM), various local programmes for lay training and an Ordained Local Ministers (OLM) scheme that wanted to share some of the training with the NSM course and have other standalone elements. Assessment was mostly of written work, and that mostly essays.

The consultation resulted in a proposal to undertake a major revision of the Diocesan training programme, which would combine most of these strands together under a portfolio based assessment scheme. The aim was still to train people for ministry but now this was to incorporate a wide variety of ministries, both lay and ordained, licensed and authorised, into one scheme. The interested layperson was always to be welcomed and form part of the vision for the overall programme.

Aspects of ministry were divided up into units (rather than modules) called Gifts and Competencies. These were developed by a job functional analysis, which asked what knowledge and skills were required for a particular job within the organisation. While in some ways of doing this the emphasis has been on skills to the detriment of knowledge, the Diocese kept both knowledge and skills together, i.e. the practitioner needs to be able to do things and know why they need to be done. In all over 40 Gifts and Competencies were developed, various combinations being deemed appropriate for different ministries.

Assessment is conducted by the production of a portfolio for each Gift and Competency. These can include essays but also reflective writing and examples of practical work, e.g. sermons, worship services developed, and cases studies of pastoral work. The philosophy of portfolio encourages the learner (and the assessor) to be open to a wide variety of evidence. A mentor is provided to help the learner put together a portfolio, and to guide the learner about the relevance of the evidence that is being submitted and its sufficiency to complete the Gift and Competency.

It is perhaps worth saying that all of the people in the training programme are adults, many over 40, and few have been involved in higher education. Also while training people for 'professional' ministry, no one on our programme will be paid for their work in the church. Previous training had been linked to Oxford University, but to get a Certificate in Biblical and Theological Studies people had to sit

an exam. Very few were willing to do this and the accreditation was thus a very secondary feature of previous programmes.

In constructing the new portfolio based training programme we sought to value people's prior learning and experience in contrast to more traditional trainings which sometimes seem to diminish or negate students' previous learning in work and life. The inclusion of prior learning either by including evidence in a portfolio for a Gift and Competency or by a more formal Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) route has been another key value in the programme (Tovey, 2002). This has led to the thrust of the programme being to complete portfolios against particular outcomes and not necessarily to attend courses.

Some ten years ago all of this was brought together in a successful validation of a BA and MA in Ministry by Portfolio by Oxford Brookes University. At first this was with the Education Department and then, following the merger of Westminster College with Oxford Brookes University, a relationship began with Theology and Religious Studies at the Westminster Institute of Oxford Brookes University. The MA has since been revalidated and the BA has become a Foundation Degree.

The reactions from the learners were at first were quite mixed. Some people found it hard to get out of a lecture and essay mentality. Others became quite creative in building portfolios. Soon there were 100 learners in the programme and 50 people were trained to be mentors. These are all volunteers who take on mentoring 2 or 3 people at a time. A number of people were trained to be placement supervisors in the parish context.

Part of our educational philosophy was to move to a reflective practitioner model based on the work of Schon (1983, 1991), and experiential learning based on the models of Boud (1985), Kolb (1984), Brookfield (1987) and Mezirow (1991). The aim has been to integrate classroom knowledge and practical ministry constantly putting together the knowledge and skills, not least in a portfolio of evidence for assessment.

The portfolios vary in the evidence included, but perhaps not quite as much as the rhetoric sounds. While in theory a wide variety of evidence is allowed, many people put in more standard element of essays and written pieces of work from the parish (with feedback from

supervisors). Those who have been very creative have generated challenges in assessment. One person completed all portfolios electronically by generating web pages. Another completed a spirituality portfolio by painting an icon and taping a reflection on it. Due to health reasons one person completed her last three portfolios all on tape. A number of people have included mind maps. One person never wrote an essay for all her portfolios but submitted reflections, diagrams, presentations. Pictures have been included, and some people have presented documents more like a business proposal.

The introduction of assessment by portfolio and in particular the assessment of a diverse range of evidence required careful thought and staff development. This has been done by the Diocese through workshops both in consultation with the university but also by in-house training. Bringing together mentors, who first mark the portfolios, and having group exercises of marking, has produced a growing culture of understanding the qualities required for a good portfolio. These are defined in the course handbook as including evidence that is sufficient, current, authentic and valid. Sufficiency has been a point of great debate and the programme probably asks for less evidence than at first. Currency of evidence has kept to a 5-year rule. Authenticity requires that the work is the work of the learner and not someone else. Validity asks if the evidence presented actually fulfils the required outcome.

One key part of the portfolio is the introduction. In this students are encouraged to describe their learning in completing the unit, including their own development through courses, practical work and the whole learning process. Learners are also encouraged to look forward to potential areas for future development. The inclusion of this page of writing is critical in the integration of theory and practice in a context of personal self-evaluation. We have used portfolios to enable students to develop their self-understanding as reflective practitioners and to identify key issues in their formation for ministry. This is perhaps now better evidenced than any previous system the Diocese has previously run.

One of the most complex areas for the development of the programme has been to establish what constitutes an appropriate volume of evidence in relationship to the credit rating of the portfolio units. At first our validated program included units of 5 and 10 credits. This was very helpful from a 'training for ministry' perspective as it as possible to include a wide range of subjects in, say, a Certificate. However it

soon became clear that a 5-credit portfolio was not sufficient to enable students to critically evidence the gifts and competencies required for ministry. It was unrealistic to expect students to produce very slim portfolios and much more satisfactory to work with larger units. In due course the change to Foundation Degree led to all units being 15 credits as that was the standard size given by the university. Even after that adjustment, size of portfolios was a critical issue. Some people produce very large portfolios and others relatively slim ones. In part the nature of student centred portfolio pedagogy is to allow some variation, however in dialogue with the external examiner a clearer definition of word length of evidence has been written into the course handbooks, and mentors trained to work with these guidelines.

The switch to a Foundation Degree has been a positive move. While not changing the educational approach the Foundation Degree emphasis on work-based learning, and vocational education has fitted with the ministry training needs of the Diocese. A new development was the inclusion of Ripon College Cuddesdon in the program. They wanted an accredited course in which ministry skills were seen as integral to the course rather than one where theoretical knowledge is assessed and accredited but practical ministry is unaccredited. There is now the development of a further partner just about to join in the consortium.

Practical Theology at Westminster College

There is a sense in which Oxford Brookes' involvement with the teaching of practical theology considerably predates the 1999 validation of the Diocesan training programme. In 2000 Westminster College Oxford, a Methodist College of Higher Education, merged with and became absorbed within Oxford Brookes, a secular new university. As a result of the merger Oxford Brookes became heir to the Westminster College programmes in theology. Westminster College had pioneered developments in practical theology with the development of a CNAA validated MA in Applied Theology by distance learning. This degree had been developed in the 1980s and by the early '90s it had acquired a strong national and international reputation, recruiting students from around the world. It might be imagined that as a Church College of

Higher Education, Westminster had no need to offer any fundamental apology for teaching practical theology. Nevertheless in those days it was an increasingly cold climate for religion (even in Church Colleges) and it is significant to reflect on the precise location and character of the Westminster Masters in Applied Theology. It is possible to note three points of accommodation, which indicate the already problematised situation of practical theology in the academy. Its *level*, its *mode* and its *curriculum* all represented a certain differentiation between the world of practical theology and the world of the secular academy. Even in the context of a Church College of Higher Education, practical theology at Westminster was from the outset conducted at arm's length from the ordinary business of the secular academy.

In respect of its *level* practical theology was taught at Westminster only at Masters level, a site of academic activity appropriately specialised and separated from the mainstream bulk of undergraduate studies; a site, as it were, for consenting adults. The *mode* was distance learning. Indeed it is generally recognised that Westminster led the way in the development of distance learning theology at that time. Distance learners were (in the nature of the case) part time students only rarely physically present in the academy. These were students somehow different from other students. Notwithstanding its evident success in the 1980s and '90s, both the level and mode of teaching practical theology at Westminster were sufficiently differentiated to enable it to be held at arm's length from the ordinary world of the secular academy. The third point of accommodation concerned the curriculum. Here the relationship with secularism was not so much differentiation but rather the opposite, accommodation in its more normal sense. The model of practical theology pioneered by the Westminster College Masters was the fairly simple and straightforward training of faith practitioners in the skills and methods of the social sciences so that they could apply those methods in the analysis of their professional context. Now there is a lot to be said for the application of social science methods within the disciplines of practical theology, but it does represent an essentially deconstructive and individualistic approach to practical theology—one that requires very little compromise from the secular academy.

This description of the pioneering work in modern practical theology at the former Westminster College should not be taken in a

negative way. Indeed the original MA in Applied Theology demonstrated its strength and vitality by successfully undergoing many revisions and revalidations including an Oxford University iteration as MTh in Applied Theology. Since merger with Oxford Brookes University it has become the MA in Practical and Contextual Theology (MA PaCT). The Westminster Institute MA PaCT is recognisably the same degree as the original Westminster College MA and is currently enjoying a surge of popularity. The point being made here is not that there was anything wrong with any of the Westminster Masters' degrees in applied or practical theology, only that in considering the matter of teaching practical theology in higher education there are certain significances to be noted in respect of the level, mode and curriculum adopted by these early modern expressions of practical theology in the academy.

The Significance of Partnership and Portfolio in the teaching of Practical Theology in Higher Education

When in 1999 Westminster College became part of Oxford Brookes University, some people wrongly imagined that the translation from a Church College to a full bodied university would privilege academic, scholarly and theoretical theological endeavour at the expense of practical projects and partnerships with the churches and faith communities. As has been noted from the account that has been given of practical theology in the recent history of Oxford Diocese, this turned out not to be the case. On the contrary, upon the merger with Brookes the Westminster theologians acquired an active and direct interest in the newly validated partnership between the university and the training programme of the Diocese. What they hadn't realised was that the universities, particularly the new universities, are seriously involved in myriad professional partnerships within and beyond the regions they serve. And so it turned out to be the case that whilst the secular university may have had relatively little intellectual appetite for some of the traditional disciplines of academic theology, it had considerably less difficulty engaging with a professional training programme with church partners. The university did not particularly discriminate between the training needs of the faith communities and the training needs of local employers, Health Care Trusts, The Ministry of Defence,

or whosoever. Once again it is possible to see how the secular academy locates practical theology in comfortable frames of reference. On the whole it is probably the case that universities have little interest in practical theology for its own sake. But they are able and willing to support it in the context of the development of professional regional partnerships in which they do have an interest.

It is easy to see the benefit of partnership in the teaching of practical theology in the secularised world of higher education. Partnerships provide an articulated relationship with churches and faith based groups in the community. It is an articulated relationship that, even more effectively than the old distance learning programmes, holds religion at arm's length. Of course it does not follow from this that the universities are automatically interested in developing collaborative relationships and partnerships with churches and faith organisations. They will do so only if they can see benefit accruing to themselves and if the partnership has a sound business plan. Whatever arrangements are put in place they must generate a secure and worthwhile income stream for the university. Without this, talk of partnership will not even be brought to the starting line. This is likely to be the largest obstacle to the continued development of partnerships between the churches and higher education. The faith communities often give the impression of wanting to live in the cash free world of voluntary and volunteering organisations. Partnerships between faith communities and the universities cannot exist under these conditions.

Under the secularising conditions of modernity and the privileging of differentiated identities under post-modernity, the articulated relationship of partnership offers a natural mechanism for the churches to relate to higher education. Within such partnerships, portfolio based programmes develop the principle of articulation in a way which is mutually beneficial.

Practical Theology, the Church and the Academy

A diocesan training department is one location of major grappling with issues of practical theology. Both of the immediate previous words need some refinement. Theology had been seen as an academic university subject perhaps since the medieval development of universities.

There is certainly a fear of the word in many of the people in the diocesan training program; laypeople don't have theology; that is what professors at Oxford do. Laurie Green (1990) by contrast, locates theology at many levels: academy, denomination, parish, and Sunday school teacher. Schleiermacher has tinged practical theology with the idea that this is professional ministerial training (Farley, 1983). The rise of theological colleges in the Victorian period perhaps divided the academy from the theological college, each gradually finding a different identity. However, to reduce the term practical theology to ministerial, indeed ordained ministry training would presently be a misrepresentation of the position and work of the Diocese.

The department of Stewardship, Training, Evangelisation, and Ministry (STEM) in the Diocese of Oxford has a whole range of functions and grapples with a variety of practical theological questions:

- What is the place of children in the church? How can parishes be helped to include them as full members of the community?
- What is the perspective that young people can contribute to the church's understanding of itself and the world?
- What is the best way that the faith community can protect its young people and vulnerable adults?
- How is the church to be resourced? How are the people of this area to best use their time and talents?
- How does the church respond to an ever-changing context?
- What is the mission of the church today, and how is that most appropriately conducted?
- How is the church to develop its leaders?

There are also questions about ministry:

- What are the criteria for selecting people for ministries in the church?
- What sort of priests does the church need in the future?
- What is the place of lay ministry in the church?

There have also been large questions about: the relationship with other

churches nationally and locally, there being many Local Ecumenical Partnerships in the diocese; and the place of women in ministry, there being many women priests and priestly married couples. More recently the diocese has had a major controversy about sexuality and leadership in the diocese. If practical theology begins with concrete issues on the ground, in contrast to theoretical issues in abstract, then clearly one locus of practical theological issues is a faith community.

While the department includes a brief for ministry training, this has been mostly for lay training in the past, particularly for the office of Reader. The development of Ordained Local Ministry has led to dioceses increasingly being involved in ordination training. This has traditionally been the realm of theological colleges, of which Ripon College Cuddesdon is one of the oldest, being a project of bishop Samuel Wilberforce to train the clergy of the diocese. Theological colleges soon became national institutions. After the Second World War Non Stipendiary Ministry was developed and this led to the development of courses, not least the Oxford Ministry Course, to allow part time education for ordained ministry. This, alongside OLM and Reader ministry, led to a complexity of different strands and courses. The portfolio training scheme was the Diocese of Oxford's attempt to respond to this problem. Recently all of this has been set in a new context by the Hind Report (2002) and the emergence of Regional Training Partnerships (RTP). Reflecting the orientation of the Oxford portfolio scheme, Hind also conceived of ministerial training as being for the entire range of ministries, lay and ordained, paid and unpaid, local and national.

The teaching that the diocese engages in is multi levelled. Some is at a simple level, and some is more complex. In the course of accrediting the Portfolio scheme it became apparent that much of our previous work in teaching had been at level 1 HE. More recently the department has developed a programme for training in leadership called 'Servant Leadership'—this is now used by a number of dioceses in England and Wales. Training the leaders in the church in issues of leadership and ministry has been crucial in a context where the initial training of many of the incumbents was for a type of pastoral ministry that is rapidly ceasing to exist. The teaching and learning from this programme is being used by some learners to complete portfolios for their MA in Ministry. At present Professor Tony Berry is conducting a research

project on the programme to evaluate its effectiveness. This is indicative of another sort of partnership relationship; that beyond the issues of accreditation.

Faith Community and University Partnership

The value of a partnership with a university goes beyond accreditation. Clearly it is important to the Diocese that the training delivered is of comparable standard to a university and that this is recognised through the validation process. However, there is also a wider cultural context. The students benefit from having their work recognised in the award. Many of them have never been to university and feel that they are unable to produce material of university standard. There is a huge growth in confidence on receiving a university-accredited award. Diocesan staff also benefit from the training available both in Oxford Brookes and in organisations such as Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC). These mostly have been encouraging, confirming that the teaching is at similar levels to universities and that the problems discussed in the Diocese are shared with other subject areas. Diocesan staff have benefited from training in APL, plagiarism, reflective learning, and levels and credit issues. This cultural exchange is another benefit of partnership with a university.

There are some downsides, however, as in any partnership. One issue is the amount of investment of time in validation and ongoing accreditation. For the Foundation Degree considerable hours were spent in its production. In this process new learning was required not least about the nature of Foundation Degrees. Some dioceses would not have enough staff or the expertise to undertake such a major project. Although a church problem, the programme seems to go from one inspection process to another, so having just finished the validation of the Foundation Degree, there are now two bodies from the church inspecting different training routes (OLM and Reader). Thus it appears to the staff that they are constantly in a process of validation or inspection.

Overall the benefits to the diocese are much greater than the drawbacks. In the Regional Training Partnership there are five dioceses working with five different accrediting universities. Discussions at that level would indicate similar issues as have been raised. There is also a

varying amount of support from universities for different programmes, which is in part a function of where the validating body is geographically to the programme it has validated. There are also considerable variations in the financial arrangements with different universities. University accreditation is clearly here to stay and there will be an ongoing discussion in the church about these issues and with the universities in the various partnerships.

Portfolio and Pedagogy

There is a body of literature, describing, defending and debating the place of portfolio based assessment in learning and teaching strategies (De Rijdt, C. Tiquet, E. Dochy, & F. Devolder, M., 2006; Leggett, M & Bunker A.; 2006, Gibbs, 1995). Here it is only possible to offer some brief definitions and descriptions in order to clarify what role it has come to play in our teaching of practical theology in the partnership between Oxford Brookes University and the Diocese of Oxford.

It is sometimes assumed that when 'portfolio' is referred to in the educational context, what is being spoken of is no more or less than a mode of assessment. It is certainly true that whilst portfolio does present itself in the first instance as a mode, a moment and a form of assessment, nevertheless it contains some underlying principles which profoundly affect and drive the student learning experience. That is why we speak here and elsewhere of portfolio based pedagogy.

The significance we attach to assessment by portfolio is indicative of the application of two principles that (whilst not without their critics) are reasonably well established in contemporary educational practice. The first is that assessment can and should be used as a principle tool or driver of student learning. It follows from this that the form of assessment should be appropriate to the context of the learner. The second is that assessment should be directly related to the intended learning outcomes for the unit of work in question. The portfolio is the ordered and self-critical presentation of evidence by the student that he or she has met the learning outcomes specified for the work in hand.

Again it is reasonably easy to see how the differentiated roles of learner, faith partner and academic partner can be configured within this environment. In the first instance it is for the faith partner and

academy to agree learning outcomes. Secondly it is for the university to oversee and finally determine the assessment of the student portfolios. Thirdly, it is for the student to own and evidence his or her learning experience. Fourthly it will be for the faith partner to determine a) the training requirements of its organisation and b) the level of student support and mentoring it wishes to provide in support of its members and students. For better or worse within this economy the delivery and organisation of teaching per se is not a direct responsibility of the university and may be barely visible to it. The quality of teaching will be apparent to the university only as mediated by the evidenced quality of student learning at point of assessment.

It might be observed at this point that whilst this paper has made a case for a strongly articulated partnership between faith based organisations and higher education institutions for the purposes of delivering practical theology; this does not necessarily imply the use of portfolio based assessment. There is no reason why a strongly articulated partnership should not employ a more traditional mode of assessment. Whilst this is true, nevertheless, from our experience in this particular partnership we can identify seven points at which a portfolio based teaching, learning and assessment strategy helpfully reflects and generates a pedagogic environment conducive to the endeavour of practical theology in community contexts. The seven points are these.

1. The flexibility of portfolio assessment can and is used by the faith partner to guide and train student learners in directions appropriate to the different needs of its organisation (Cox and King, 2006). Indeed the constitution of the portfolio programme on which we are reflecting in this paper allows a double layer of flexibility. In the first instance learners will select evidence from their own area of activity in order to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes. For example someone involved in inter-faith dialogue may produce a very different set of evidence to demonstrate that they have understood Matthew's gospel from someone involved in justice and peace ministries. Secondly, since the university validated modules are sufficiently general as to be assessed by a number of different portfolios the church partner can specify which portfolios it

- requires a learner to undertake for a given module if they are to be recognised as having a certain speciality or ministry within the organisation.
2. The second point is the same as the first except seen from the perspective of the student learner rather than the training organisation. It is that portfolio presentation of evidence takes the individual learner's context seriously, allowing as much contextual variety as is the case in the real world of the learner. This is particularly valuable given the diversity of situations represented by students of practical theology.
 3. The portfolio is a critical and ordered collection of evidence taken from multiple sources of learning and practice. The opportunity to evidence such multiplicity and diversity is highly appropriate to adult professional learners in diverse situations where that multiplicity is intrinsic to their professional activity. The church or faith organisation (*qua* employer) needs to be able to assess the performance of its people in these diverse situations. Portfolios enable such assessment to take place.
 4. Portfolios provide the opportunity to evidence learning in both theory (knowledge) and practice (skills) without privileging either one over the other. Whilst it is sometimes said that portfolio is an assessment tool particularly suited to practical or skill based competencies (like baptizing babies) we have found it to be an equally suitable format for the assessment of theoretical knowledge based learning (Winograd, P. & Jones, D. L., 1992). At best we would say that it is a tool for the assessment of praxis.
 5. It is routinely acknowledged that portfolio enables the presentation of evidence gathered over time, thereby enabling representation of change, growth and development. Whilst such an assessment facility is no doubt useful in a wide variety of professional contexts, we have found it to be particularly valuable in evidencing spiritual development and facilitating the continuing professional development of our learner students.
 6. Portfolios provide a context for what is sometimes called

‘authentic assessment’, that is to say what is evidenced for assessment is what was done in real time and in real professional and contextual situations. For example a student could evidence his or her learning about baptismal theologies in part with reference to his or her work in a parish baptismal preparation class. Working in this way the assessment tool is evidently appropriate for the learning needs of the practitioner.

7. By giving learners the right to select their evidence of learning, portfolio based assessment encourages and enables the minority or religious voice to be spoken in the academy (Courts, P.L., & McInemy, K.H., 1993).

Conclusion

There are three issues that if left unattended will frustrate the teaching of practical theology in higher education. We believe that each of them is met and constructively engaged with by the framework we have described.

First and most importantly there is the issue of secularisation. Churches and faith communities want and need to speak in the public square, but are increasingly frustrated and silenced. On the other side of the same coin it would seem that the academy is increasingly embarrassed about giving a home to the religious, or a platform to the religious voice. The articulation of partnership enables the different integrities of church and university; it enables the voice of the religious learner to be heard in the academy.

Secondly there is the issue about the place of practice in the academy. It is true that this seems to be less of an issue than it once was. Nevertheless, there are still some traditional universities that have reservations about the teaching and assessment of practice based activities. Whatever debates we might have about the nature of practical theology it would be oxymoronic to claim that it had no involvement with practice, and not just any old practice, but with the practice of religion. It is widely recognised that portfolio based assessment offers a helpful and critically constructive mode of assessing evidence of practice.

Thirdly, whilst not all practical theology has to do with the organ-

isational and training needs of faith communities, some of it does. Partnerships provide an appropriately articulated relationship between the professional needs of churches and faith organisations and the sometimes different interests of higher education. Within this framework portfolio provides an opportunity for the authentic expression of the religious voice in the academy.

In summary this paper has argued that partnership between faith based organisations and institutions of higher education mediated by a portfolio based pedagogy offers a powerful framework for the potentially problematic business of teaching practical theology in higher education.

Bibliography

- 'Hind Report', *Formation for ministry within a learning church*, (London: Ministry Division, 2002).
- Boud, D. Keough, R. & Walker, D., *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*, (London: Kogan Page, 1985).
- Brookfield, S.D., *Developing Critical Thinkers*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987).
- Cole, D.J. Ryan, C.W. & Kick, F., *Portfolios across the curriculum and beyond*, (Thousand Oaks CA: Corwin Press, 1995).
- Courts, P.L., & McNemy, K.H., *Assessment in higher education: Politics, pedagogy and portfolios*, (London: Praeger 1993).
- De Rijdt, C. Tiquet, E. Dochy, F. & Devolder, M., 'Teaching Portfolios in Higher Education and their Effects: An Explorative Study' in *Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 22.8 pp.1084-1093 (2006)
- Farley, E., *Theologia: the fragmentation and unity of theological education*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).
- Ford, D., *Theology: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: OUP, 1999).
- Gibbs, G., *Assessing Student Centred Courses*, (Oxford: OCSD, 1995).
- Green, L., *Let's do Theology*, (London: Mowbray, 1990).
- Groves, M., 'Locating Theology', *JATE*, vol. 1.2, p147-158 (2004).
- Kolb, D.A., *Experiential Learning*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1984).

- Mezirow, J., *Transformative Dimensions in Adult Learning*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991).
- Leggett, M & Bunker A., 'Teaching Portfolios and University Culture' in *Journal of Further and Higher Education* vol. 30.3 pp. 269-282 (2006).
- Schon, D.A., *The Reflective Practitioner*, (Aldershot: Arena, Ashgate, 1983, 1991).
- Tovey, P., 'A Case Study in the Accreditation of Prior Learning in Ministerial Training', *British Journal of Theological Education*, vol.12.2, pp.145-153 (2002).
- Winograd, P. & Jones, D. L., 'The Use of Portfolios in Performance Assessment', in *New Directions for Educational Reform*, 1.2, pp.37-50 (1992).

The Hind Report

Theological Education and Cross Sector Partnerships

Gary Wilton

Faculty of Education and Theology
York St. John University

We hope for...a maximising of the potential of the partnership with universities and church colleges of higher education, enabling students and staff to derive full benefit from these arrangements....
(Hind Feb 2002, p.69)

Theological education in the Church of England is currently in a state of organisational flux. During 2002/2003 it was the subject of a 'fundamental review' chaired by the Bishop of Chichester John Hind. The review report recognised that there were 1360 ordinands and 1192 readers in training spread across over 80 small or very small training institutions (Hind 2003, p.14). It recommended the creation of eight

Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies,

Vol. 7, No. 1, Autumn 2007, pp. 153 - 178

© Copyright Subject Centre for PRS, 2007

Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs) and aspired to a ‘more mature and mutually beneficial partnership between the Church’s ministerial and lay training establishments and UK higher education (Hind 2003, p.136). The subsequent *Final Report on the Regions* time-tabled the launch of the new RTPs for Sept 2006. (Chelmsford 2004, p.27). This has been delayed until Easter 2007.

Hind commented that much of the Church’s provision for ministerial education is already ‘in a substantial and creative partnership with UK universities and church colleges of higher education’ (Hind Feb 2002, p. 9). Partnerships take a variety of forms. In some more historic contexts, Church training institutions are actually part of the university structures. In others, ordinands study for the university under-graduate theology degree alongside an in-house vocational programme. The most common relationship involves HE institutions validating and accrediting programmes developed by Church training institutions.

The working party observed that during the last decade (a) the traditional universities had become more open to partnerships with institutions of ministerial education, and (b) the church colleges of higher education had continued to develop expertise in vocational training. In the final edition of the report they stated most boldly:

We think every opportunity for co-operation with other churches and with the universities and Church colleges should be taken (Hind, April 2003 p.vii).

This was significant departure from the caution of earlier Sagovsky (1991) report, which pointed out that:

The difference in aim and approach between the teaching of theology in the Universities and in theological Colleges and Courses has been well documented (Sagovsky 1991, p.58).

Yet from the outset the Hind working party wished ‘to investigate if the Church can enter into further, mutually beneficial, partnership with the HE sector’ (Hind Feb. 2002, p.17). The interim report did not continue the investigation nor propose how and when it should take place. More seriously it is not entirely clear whether the investigation proposed is conceptual and theoretical or more pragmatic and

logistical. This was despite the stated intention that the review was ‘fundamental’. However the very title of the interim report—‘The structure and funding of ordination training’—is a clear indication of its pragmatic orientation. Even some significant questions were identified:

There may be further issues here in terms of evaluating which sector or sectors of HE are the most useful partners for the Church. What weight should be put on research or teaching excellence, expertise in vocational training or on the Church affiliation of partner institutions? (Hind Feb 2002, p. 17).

Late in 2004 Ballard observed:

Perhaps the weakness of ‘Hind’, however, has been that too little attention has been given to the models and appropriateness of the university connections proposed, both their strengths and weaknesses. Each location will inevitably have its own peculiar set of arrangements, administrative and academic. A deal of attention needs, however, to be given to the desired intentions in such a collaboration from partners who may have very different approaches to the theological task... (Ballard 2004 p.336).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether ‘the Church can enter into further, mutually beneficial, partnership with the HE sector by giving attention to the ‘appropriateness of the...connections proposed’ between Universities, Church Institutions of Higher Education and Church Training Institutions. To do so it deploys Kelsey’s ‘Athens’ and ‘Berlin’ models of ‘excellent’ theological education to analyse the aims and approaches of theological education offered by the three different types of institution within the Church of England context.

In the early 1980s the US Protestant theological community entered into an extensive debate about the nature of theological education. Much of the argument focused on the question ‘What is theological about theological education?’ Kelsey mapped the debate in two key works: *To Understand God Truly: What’s Theological About a Theological School?* (1992) and *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (1993) in which he fully developed his Athens/Berlin analysis.

Kelsey's distinctive contribution was to identify two distinct educational paradigms at work within U.S. theological education and to map them within the contributions of others. He argued that they are present and deeply embedded in every theological institution and that most have negotiated 'some sort of more or less implicit negotiated truce'. Kelsey¹ noted:

Christian theological education in North America is inescapably committed to two contrasting and finally irreconcilable types of models of what education at its best ought to be. They are normative models, models of 'excellent' education. For one type I shall suggest 'Athens' be the symbol, for the other 'Berlin'....

Each type of excellent education has definite implications regarding a number of features of theological education, such as the relation between teachers and students, the characteristics looked for in an excellent teacher, what the education aims to do for the student, what the movement of the course of study should be, and the sort of community the school should be (Kelsey 1993, p.6).

Within an exclusively 'Athens' community, teachers and students would normally share a similar faith commitment. Regular attendance of community worship services would be expected of teaching staff and students alike, whilst 'spiritual' growth would be an explicit aspiration for both. Academic study is likely to be valued and undertaken with energy and commitment as an expression and outworking of the shared faith meta-narrative. Some aspects of the faith meta-narrative are likely to be deemed authoritative and beyond question. Part of the role of teaching staff is to offer spiritual support and to model a mature outworking of their own faith commitment.

Within an exclusively 'Berlin' community teachers and students may or may not uphold a personal faith commitment. Attendance of any acts of worship organised within or without the department or institution would be optional, and likely to be the object of rigorous and critical study. Where a 'Berlin' community was responsible for ministerial training, public worship and other aspects of Church life would

¹ Banks R., *Reenvisioning Theological Education* Eerdmans Grand Rapids 1999: 'the fullest analysis to date comes from David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*' p.19

be the source of theory used to inform professional practice. The key task of teachers would be to develop the critical scholarship of students—all aspects of faith would be subjected to rigorous questioning. Teachers' roles would be restricted to developing research/academic knowledge and skills.

Athens

The 'Athens' paradigm is rooted in the culture of ancient Greece where Paideia was a process of 'culturing' the soul or forming of the whole person. Clement of Rome wrote to the Church in Corinth in AD 90 'Christianity's not so alien; it's a paideia like yours, aiming at the same goal, but superior in the way it does so.' (Kelsey 1993, p.11). In the 1980s Edward Farley proposed that his concept of *Theologica* 'purports to promote a Christian paideia.' (Farley 1983, p.xi). Within paideia Kelsey observed four recurrent features from Plato onwards to create 'an ahistorical construct, a type of excellent education'.

The **first** feature was the knowledge of the 'Good' itself—inquiry into a 'single, underlying principle of all virtues, their essence'.

The **second** feature was that the Good related to the highest principle of the universe—the divine. The goal of *paideia* was thus religious as well as moral.

The **third** goal was less about the transfer of information and more about knowledge of the Good through contemplation, leading to intuitive insight. Here teachers can only aid students indirectly by offering disciplines that may or may not be helpful in their expansion of insight.

The final and **fourth** feature of *paideia* involved a 'conversion', a turning around from pre-occupation with outer appearances to focus on deeper reality—the Good. Such conversion was a slow process. It required the support and nurture of belonging to a community. 'Education as *paideia* is inherently communal and not solitary' (Kelsey 1993, p.9).

The 'Athens' paradigm can be summarised as in statement 1:

Statement I

Theological education is a movement from source to personal appropriation of the source, from revealed wisdom to the appropriation of revealed wisdom in a way that is identity forming and personally transforming...To be sure study focuses on various subject matters. However this study is ordered to something more basic, the students' own personal appropriation of wisdom about God and about themselves in relation to God... The learning is in one way 'individualistic'...Yet by definition it cannot be solitary. Teachers and Learners together constitute a community sharing the common goal of personally appropriating revealed wisdom (Kelsey 1993, p.19f)

Key points:

- Theological education is about personal ownership of revealed wisdom.
- This wisdom shapes people's lives and values.
- Study covers a wide number of theological subjects.
- The main purpose of study is to feed an individual's relationship with God.
- Individual learning is supported by teachers who also seek to be shaped by the revealed wisdom.

Berlin

In contrast with the ancient pedigree of the 'Athens' paradigm, the 'Berlin' paradigm belongs to the modern era. Kelsey roots it in the controversy about the establishment of a faculty of theology within the newly founded research University of Berlin in 1810. Theology was only included in the curriculum after an extended dialogue about the nature of research. The approach to research adopted by the new institution was *Wissenschaft*—orderly, disciplined and critical. *Paideia* was also recognised to be critical, in that 'it involved testing what was studied for clarity, logical validity, and coherence'. But the approach to research within the 'Berlin' paradigm was more fundamentally critical, testing all alleged bases of authority or truth. Declarations of revelation/divine inspiration could not be beyond critical inquiry. The 'Berlin' paradigm further understood inquiry to be disciplined and self-

conscious of the methods used to establish ‘truth’. The ‘Berlin’ paradigm thus constituted a fundamental challenge to the traditional status of theology:

From the rise of the institution of the university in the Middle Ages onward, because of its base in divine revelation, theology had been the highest and dominant faculty, superior to the faculties of arts and sciences and to the faculties of law and medicine, for theology was the ‘queen of the sciences’ whom all other inquiries ultimately served (Kelsey 1993, p.15).

But ‘Berlin’ did not recognise overarching authority from any quarter including that of theology. This was embedded in a culture of academic freedom. ‘Freedom to learn’ —*Lernfreiheit*—and ‘Freedom to teach’ —*Lehrfreiheit*—were its mottos.

Schleiermacher proposed that theological education should be included in the new institution’s provision because it constituted ‘professional education’. He argued that every human society had sets of practices dealing with physical health, social order and religious needs. Such practices were vital for the health and vitality of human society. Practitioners thus required proper trained and educated leadership. It was argued that because Christian theology was historically and philosophically based it could be subject to historical research and philosophical analysis. ‘Historical theology’ and ‘philosophical theology’ constituted legitimate *Wissenschaft* forms of critical inquiry, the results of which could determine the rules and practices of professional Christian ministry or ‘practical theology’. The ‘Berlin’ paradigm can thus be summarised as in statement 2:

Statement 2

Theological education is a movement from data to theory to application of theory to practice... *Wissenschaft* for critical rigour in theorising; ‘professional’ education for rigorous study of the application of theory to practice... Critical inquiry focuses simultaneously on questions about the subject being researched and on questions about the methods of research...to discover as directly as possible the truth about the origin, effects, and essential nature of ‘Christian’ phenomena. [Teachers are appointed less for their] personal capacities to be midwife of others’ coming to an under-

standing of God and of themselves in relation to God as ... the ability to cultivate capacities for scholarly research in others (Kelsey 1993, p.22f)

Key points:

- Theological education is about critical study of the Faith phenomena.
- Where students are preparing for professional ministry it involves researching data to develop theory and application of theory to practice.
- Theological education is as much about developing the skills of rigorous scholarship as it is about the content of study.
- Teachers are appointed because of their ability to help others develop research skills.

Kelsey commented that both paradigms were present in every institution of theological education to greater or lesser extents—often with some degree of internal dissonance. I became interested in Kelsey’s work when I was Director of Studies at my previous institution. There I was concerned by the emergence of a fault line within the theological education offered, not least because different parts of the curriculum are recognised by different external bodies, e.g. church history, biblical studies, doctrine, were university validated; whereas retreats, human relations training and communication in worship were in-house units approved by the Ministry Division of the Church of England. In response, students accorded different value to different parts of the curriculum. Prior to validation in 1995 students placed most emphasis on vocational and personal development, whereas from 1995 onwards students tended to give increased attention to the credit-bearing university validated modules. Amongst my colleagues there was ongoing and unresolved discussion about the balance of resources and status accorded to learning either side of the fault line.

The Hind aspiration for ‘further, mutually beneficial, partnership with the HE sector’ catalysed this concern into a research project. Its purpose was to enquire from a theoretical perspective ‘How well founded was this aspiration for strengthened cross-sector partnerships?’ Using an interpretive/qualitative approach informed by Glaser and Strauss’s ‘Grounded Theory’, I tested how each type of institu-

tion/sector related to Kelsey's 'Athens' and 'Berlin' paradigms. This was achieved by interviewing representative members of teaching staff and students from the three different types of institution within the geography of two potential Regional Training Partnerships—one in the northern province of the Church of England and one in the south.

The interviews included the Head of Dept/Institution, a Member of Teaching Staff and a Student at each institution. The institutions included two universities, two Church institutions of higher education and two Church training institutions.

Respondents were invited to read and comment on summaries of Kelsey's 'Athens' and 'Berlin' paradigms. The summaries were unattributed and simply identified as Statements 1 and 2. Recognising that some respondents might want to discuss a combination or middle way I developed a hybrid Statement 3:

Statement 3

Theological education is constituted by two parallel and related movements. One movement is from revealed wisdom to the appropriation of revealed wisdom. The other is a movement from data to theory to application. This double movement develops an individual's skills of critical scholarship as well as being identity forming and personally transformative. Students move to and fro between self-conscious detachment and personal engagement. Knowledge about God and of God, as well as about what other people think about God, are all developed. Teaching and learning is thus both an individual and communal activity.

Key points:

- education is about developing both critical skills and personal wisdom
- It is about moving to and fro between detachment and personal ownership
- It is concerned with knowledge about God, of God and what other people think about God
- Teachers need to be able to nurture the integration of personal faith and rigorous academic study

After reading all three statements interviewees were each asked:

- How do you respond to them?
- Which statement is nearest to your own view? And why?

- How would your colleagues’ response relate to your own?

Interviewees who identified statement 3 were asked a number of supplementary questions to identify any underlying preference for Statements 1 or 2.

All interviewees engaged with the statements with considerable energy. The majority voluntarily identified their department/institution in relation to one of the statements. A small minority were more cautious and offered a more nuanced response. Here close analysis of the transcripts usually exposed some underlying affinity or preference.

Responses by Institution/Sector

	Preference for Statement 1 <i>Athens</i>	Preference for Statement 2 <i>Berlin</i>	Preference for Statement 3 <i>Athens/Berlin hybrid</i>			Other
			Underlying Preference			
			1	2	3	
Head of Department [UNH]		4P				
Member of Teaching Staff [UST]					4P	
Student [USS]		P		4		

University Department in the North [UN]

P denotes the interviewee’s anticipated preference of his/her peers

University Department in the South [US]

	Preference for Statement 1 <i>Athens</i>	Preference for Statement 2 <i>Berlin</i>	Preference for Statement 3 <i>Athens/Berlin hybrid</i>			Other
			Underlying Preference			
			1	2	3	
Head of Department [UNH]		P	4			
Member of Teaching Staff [UST]		4P				
Student [USS]		4				P

P denotes the interviewee's anticipated preference of his/her peers

Even at first sight there is a clear pattern of preference for the 'Berlin' paradigm in both departments. The Head of Department [UNH] indicated that 'nobody would see our mission as being adequately encompassed in statement 1'. 'Statement 2 [is] much more germane to what actually can or does happen in a department of Theology and Religious Studies like ours'. In the department teaching staff were appointed exclusively for their 'scholarly ability and their ability to cultivate critical understanding'.

As an individual he might have some sympathy with the more holistic approach of statement 3, but as Head of Department it was essential for him to sustain and promote statement 2: Indeed there would be 'a real resistance to being thought by the rest of the university to be operating under statement 1....'

Although the member of teaching staff chose statement 3 again statement 1 was excluded. This was confirmed by the experience of the student: ‘There’s room for the personal side of things to develop, but it wasn’t promoted or anything—I wasn’t taught in that way’. He excluded statement 1, ‘It wasn’t nurtured by the staff. I don’t think that was their job...’ In response to statement 2 he replied, ‘ I think this is probably quite close to my experience...’

It is clear that the department self-consciously works with a statement 2 or ‘Berlin’ based paradigm. Some contributions may be permitted from a statement 3 viewpoint but formally and publicly this department functions within a dominant ‘Berlin’ paradigm.

The university department in the south offered a similar profile to that of the north, in that the ‘Berlin’ paradigm expressed in statement 2 was again clearly the dominant paradigm. At the same time the interviewees offered some very significant and critical reflections on the hegemony of ‘Berlin’.

The member of teaching staff and the student both unequivocally identified statement 2 as the recognised paradigm of theological education within the department:

In terms of what I do here, it is basically statement 2... Certainly the one that seems most suitable here will be statement 2. Statement 1 seems completely inappropriate and statement 3—the problem really is revealed wisdom—the outcome of formation here is to produce well rounded arts students, not well-rounded theologians [UST].

...this department would say that it corresponds very much to statement 2 [USS].

The member of teaching staff also believed that most of his colleagues ‘would have gone with statement 2’. The Head of Department confirmed that:

...my colleagues who are dealing with Christianity would, I think probably go for statement 2, but I suspect most of my colleagues—not all—would be wary of the notion of practice ... There would be quite a strong resistance, therefore to [this] theme in all statements, certainly statement 1 would be very weird to them, statement 2 on the element of practice would be uncomfortable but

otherwise quite good [USH].

In addition to this, both the Head of Department and the student had strong personal critiques of the dominant paradigm within the department. In particular this led the Head of Department to express a preference for statement 3 and then statement 1 within statement 3, whilst at the same time still wanting to retain academic rigour writ large in statement 2:

At one level, I think we don't do any theology—with some *ad hoc* exceptions. What we do as a Department is the history of religions, the phenomenology of religions, linguistic and literary study of texts. But in terms of Theology defined as a kind of believing community being self-reflective, I don't think Theology is done.... [USH].

Although recognizing statement 2 as the dominant paradigm within the department, the representative student recognised some underlying tensions:

... although this department would say that it corresponds very much to statement 2...the teachers are (I can't speak for them all) genuinely interested in the development of the students in their own Christian lives morally and spiritually... at the same time I don't see that as incompatible with the basic need for good, critical analysis [USS].

Overall representatives of the two secular universities confirmed the 'Berlin' dominant paradigm in both institutions—formally and practically. At the same time it also emerged that some teaching staff might offer some of the elements of statement 1 included in statement 3 but usually did so informally and in addition to statement 2. The representatives clearly understood the different statements, and recognised the different models of theological education offered within them.

**Church Institution of Higher Education Department in the North
[CHEN]**

	Preference for Statement 1 <i>Athens</i>	Preference for Statement 2 <i>Berlin</i>	Preference for Statement 3 <i>Athens/Berlin hybrid</i>			Other
			Underlying Preference			
			1	2	3	
Head of Department [CHENH]		4P				
Member of Teaching Staff [CHENT]				4	P Spectrum around this	
Student [CHENS]					4P	

P denotes the interviewee's anticipated preference of his/her peers

**Church Institution of Higher Education Department in the South
[CHES]**

	Preference for Statement 1 <i>Athens</i>	Preference for Statement 2 <i>Berlin</i>	Preference for Statement 3 <i>Athens/Berlin hybrid</i>			Other
			Underlying Preference			
			1	2	3	
Head of Department [CHESH]		4P				
Member of Teaching Staff [CHEST]	P					4
Student [CHESS]			4			P

P denotes the interviewee's anticipated preference of his/her peers

Here replies to interview questions again indicated some tension between personal preference and professional responsibilities. The relationship between context, ethos and theological education was a persistent theme. The Head of Department expressed a personal preference for statement 3, but when speaking of the role of Head of department stated:

...if I am looking at the public discourse about God, which I take to be the prime purpose of this department, then I am going to be dealing with statement 2...the team requirement for this post is to engage with statement 2 [CHENH p.4].

Other contexts offered opportunities to make contributions from statement 1. The member of teaching staff also stated that most colleagues would favour statement 2. However most of ‘my colleagues engage with their students’ personal questions. Very few of them would think that they weren’t things that were proper to address in the classroom and outside of it’[CHENT p.3].

He chose statement 3 as closest to his practice. When asked the supplementary question designed to draw out whether there was an underlying preference in favour of statement 1 or 2 he responded:

I’m here to do a job and the statements drawn from statement 2 are the measurable criteria of getting a degree, and I want to live with people and for them elements of statement 1 are important. I think that a real and not entirely given purpose of education including tertiary education is to help people become fully human, as in line with statement 1 but we do it by fixing the criteria of statement 2. So, we develop the critical skills and consequently help them to examine themselves [CHENT p.3].

This was to some extent mirrored in the responses of the student interviewee, which although much less developed and less reflective, testified to statement 3 as the best fit to his own values and experience at the college. He also confirmed that amongst his student peers ‘there would also be a greater empathy with statement 3 than statement 1 or 2’.

Although each of the respondents pointed out statement 3 as their personal choice, it would seem that statement 2 represents the underlying approach to the core work of the department with different members of staff managing the tensions in different ways.

The Head of Department at the southern institution was reluctant to respond to the statements in isolation and:

...would want to know whether we are talking about theological education in a faith context or institution with an avowedly Christian faith foundation, or one without such, as I think theological education is not the same in the two [CHESH p.4].

However he then went on to reveal some key ingredients within his and his department’s approaches:

...I would be keen to have critical skills included, I think we would be a little reticent to talk too strongly about a revealed wisdom, though individuals might when speaking from their own perspective, but in curriculum statements I don't think we would very much, if at all [CHESH p.4].

Here there is the beginning of a preference for elements of statement 2. When thinking of criteria for the appointment of members of teaching staff, the Head of Department sought to amplify the statement 2 reference to 'the ability to help others develop research skills' by the addition of reason, knowledge and understanding.

The interview with the member of teaching staff struggled to locate the department's approach to theological education in relation to the three statements. He recognised that statements 1 and 2 expressed something of the tension within Christian theological education in the modern period. He reflected that:

...perhaps the essential problem for theological education is to have these two together, and obviously if one is seeking ... validation for programmes it tends to be through its formal processes that statement 2 gets focused upon and statement 1 is more troubling to the thought processes that Universities have established... [CHEST].

Despite a sympathy for both statements, it is apparent that statement 2 represents the dominant and public paradigm within the department. The research orientation of the department was confirmed by the statement 'I think that it is one of the tasks of all academics, to ask the question "How is the next generation to do research?"'. The interview also returned to the theme of context. The interviewee recognised that he would change the balance between statements 1 and 2 according to the context in which he was working.

When anticipating the views of his colleagues the member of teaching staff said, 'I think a lot of my colleagues would be much happier with 1.' If this is so, there may well be an unresolved tension between the personal values and practices of individual teachers and the public stance of the department. It may be that staff accept that the main thrust of their work is within statement 2, but also offer elements of 'added value' from statement 1. The interviewee closed by saying:

I suppose I'm struck by these statements and I want to say something very supportive in relation to statement 2, but not about its movement from data, to theory, to application...the criticality of critical theology is I think really important.... [CHEST].

Despite the individual's nuanced struggle with different statements the predominance of the 'Berlin' paradigm had again emerged. This was confirmed by the student interviewee, who believed that the department's purpose was 'not to feed the individual about his or her faith'. This was in clear contrast to his own preference.

When viewed together the departments of Theology and Religious Studies of the two Church Institutions of Higher Education both function within variants of the 'Berlin' paradigm. Within the context of maintained Higher Education the critical stance of both departments must be seen to be fulfilled. At the same time members of staff from both departments to a greater or lesser extent seek to permit or even nurture elements of the 'Athens' paradigm as expressed in statement 1, as long as they do not compromise the critical standing of the departments. In non-validated or church contexts teaching staff seem to value the opportunity to work with a different balance between 'Athens' and 'Berlin'.

Church Training Institution in the North [CTN]

	Preference for Statement 1 <i>Athens</i>	Preference for Statement 2 <i>Berlin</i>	Preference for Statement 3 <i>Athens/Berlin hybrid</i>			Other
			Underlying Preference			
			1	2	3	
Head of Department [CTNH]	4		P			
Member of Teaching Staff [CTNT]	4		P			
Student [CTNS]			4		P	

P denotes the interviewee's anticipated preference of his/her peers

Church Training Institution in the South [CTS]

	Preference for Statement 1 <i>Athens</i>	Preference for Statement 2 <i>Berlin</i>	Preference for Statement 3 <i>Athens/Berlin hybrid</i>			Other
			Underlying Preference			
			1	2	3	
Head of Department [CTSH]					4P	
Member of Teaching Staff [CTST]					4P	
Student [CTSS]			4P			

P denotes the interviewee's anticipated preference of his/her peers

Here again, even a preliminary viewing of the above results evidences a clear pattern in favour of ‘Athens’. The Head of the Church Training Institution in the north of England commented:

[I am] particularly struck by statement 1 which seems to fit my own prejudices about theological study: I was particularly struck by the terms of forming and transforming and wisdom.... [CTNH p.4].

When asked to anticipate the preferences of his colleagues he imagined ‘that there would be a general consensus about the centrality of formation’ i.e. statement 1. This was confirmed by the member of teaching staff. Running throughout was a consistent and deep commitment to personal formation of the ‘Athens’ paradigm in statement 1. He found statement 2 the ‘least attractive’ because it omitted:

what seems...to be an essential dynamic namely, what it is to live in a community of faith and therefore the reality of church as a key controlling influence in the project of learning theology... [CTNT].

The interview with the representative student followed a very similar vein to that of the teaching staff. His response to statement 1 was very sympathetic to the 'Athens' paradigm. The key words being 'wisdom', 'intuitive' and 'revealed':

The one word that sticks out for me is 'wisdom'—it seems to be a quite intuitive understanding of theological education; it seems to recognise that it is about applying revealed truths to everyday life and learning how to do that. It certainly seems to be quite an emphasis and an element of what I would call 'Christian Spirituality' in statement 1. I think it would certainly apply to a place such as this.... [CTNS p.2].

His stated preference for statement 3 enabled the student to engage with critical study without letting go of the 'Athens' paradigm in statement 1. However when asked whether he placed more emphasis on the elements in statement 3 drawn from statement 1 or statement 2 he was unequivocal:

...my initial response is to place both on statement 3 but ultimately I think statement 1 overrides it [CTNS p.3].

Emerging from the three interviews at the Church Training institution in the north is a consistent and passionate commitment to the 'Athens' paradigm as expressed in statement 1. Here there is a powerful sense of a faith community nurturing and forming individuals and community life within the wisdom of a revealed tradition. The institution does take the academic criticality and rigour of the 'Berlin' paradigm seriously but wants to negotiate with 'Berlin' from a secure base within 'Athens'.

The Head of the Church training institution in the south set the scene very clearly:

We are accompanying people on their journey of formation....The key elements are associated with the notion of formation so in the broader sense...here are people who are going to be priests and

readers and such, and what are the ways in which theology has significance for them as individuals but also as people who have formed into those ministerial [roles].... [CTSH]

This led him to state that statement 3 was where he ‘felt comfortable’ because the theological education they offered included ‘academic rigour’ and ‘belonging to a community of faith’ in a kind of balance which will enable people to grow and change.’ When questioned about whether his emphasis within statement 3 was on the elements drawn from statement 1 or statement 2 he stated that ‘statement 3 is a balance of the two’.

The responses of the member of teaching staff were consistent with those of the Head of Institution. When asked about which statement was nearest her own view the member of teaching staff confirmed her earlier response: ‘I think we would want to have equal emphasis on statements 1 and 2’. Then she added a significant nuance:

It has to be said that if we were pushed to choose between them, then in our sort of theological education, we’d be wanting to go more for the transformed life—for the practice [CTST].

Both the Head of Institution and the member of teaching staff were consistent about their choice of an equal balance of the elements of statements 1 and 2 within statement 3. However this final nuance reveals something significant about the underlying motivation of the staff concerned. They are happy to work with the balance of statement 3 but underlying this, their motivation is drawn from statement 1. This would make sense of the Head of Institution’s opening statement, ‘We are accompanying people on their journey of formation’.

Again the student’s responses appeared to follow those given by the two members of teaching staff. When discussing statement 3 she stated:

I think that this is probably the place where I would put my theological education...it is about head knowledge and heart knowledge and I think it is very about what you learn, how you apply it and how it affects you. And I think that theological education is about...formation and how we are being formed...the academic side informs that [CTSS p.3].

The student had a clear concern that theological education should

be strong on formation drawing from ‘Athens’ and strong on application, drawing on the theory to practice pole of the ‘Berlin’ paradigm more than the research/scholarship pole. When asked whether she placed more emphasis on the elements in statement 3 drawn from statement 1 or 2 she replied that she would ‘place the greater emphasis on statement 1 because for most people relationship with God is a natural everyday thing.’

When viewed together the two Church training institutions are distinctive because of their positive treatment of statement 1. The representatives of the Church training institution in the north of England were consistently and passionately committed to theological education within the ‘Athens’ paradigm. They wished to take seriously the issues of academic criticality and rigour raised by the ‘Berlin’ paradigm. But they only wished to negotiate with them from the foundational security of ‘Athens’. The representatives of the Church training institution in the south were much more concerned to work with the balance of ‘Athens’ and ‘Berlin’ paradigms in statement 3. Nonetheless they approached the balance with an underlying motivation drawn from ‘Athens’.

	Statement 1 ‘Athens’	Statement 2 ‘Berlin’	Statement 3 ‘Athens’/ ‘Berlin’ hybrid
University Departments		Dominant paradigm within institution	Individuals may make contributions outside the dominant paradigm
Church founded Institutions of Higher Education		Dominant paradigm within institution	Actively making contributions using both paradigms in a variety of contexts
Church Training Institutions	Potential dominant paradigm with some value given to insights from ‘Berlin’		Attempts to work with both paradigms, but underlying motivation comes from ‘Athens’

Concluding Comments

All eighteen interviewees engaged actively with the ‘Athens’/‘Berlin’ paradigms and voluntarily made links with their own experience of theological education. Some clear themes have emerged from the data:

- Kelsey’s ‘Athens’/‘Berlin’ paradigms are an engaging tool of analysis in an English context.
- English secular universities and Church institutions of higher education are dominated by the ‘Berlin’ paradigm
- The universities in particular are uncomfortable with the ‘Athens’ paradigm.
- Individual members of university and Church institutions of higher education teaching staff may offer contributions within the ‘Athens’ paradigm.
- Departments of Theology and Religious Studies may work with the ‘Athens’ paradigm outside of their institutions.
- Church training institutions are motivated primarily by the ‘Athens’ paradigm.
- Some Church training institutions have adopted ‘Athens’ as their dominant paradigm and negotiate with ‘Berlin’ from within that paradigm. Others seek to achieve a more equal balance between ‘Athens’ and ‘Berlin’.
- Church training institutions would be unlikely to adopt ‘Berlin’ as their dominant paradigm.

So my response, at a theoretical level, to the question ‘How well founded is the aspiration of the Hind Report for *a maximising of the potential of the partnership with universities and church colleges of higher education?*’ is somewhat nuanced.

Any aspiration for tri-partite partnerships based on ‘Athens’ territory is unlikely to be well founded. There is not sufficient shared cross-sector territory within ‘Athens’ on which to build ‘structured and effective partnerships’, although there is potential for individual higher education staff and for departments of Theology & Religious Studies in Church institutions of higher education to enter into ‘Athens’ based projects away

from normal 'Berlin' based higher education validation processes.

Where partnerships have the most potential to develop is in the common research/critical scholarship areas of the 'Berlin' paradigm, which underpins both types of H.E institution, and which to a greater or lesser extent contributes to the self-understanding of the Church training Institutions. To date there is much anecdotal and empirical evidence that such partnerships have increased and developed considerably during the last ten years. This paper confirms that such partnerships have not been incompatible theoretically. Indeed awareness of a shared theoretical basis may provide the foundation for new and existing partnerships to develop yet further.

Bibliography

- ACCM Occasional Paper No 22 - *Education for the Church's Ministry: The Report of the Working Party on Assessment* (London: CHP, 1987).
- Ballard P., 'Reflections on Professional Theological Education Today', *Theology* Sept/Oct 2004.
- Banks R., *Reenvisioning Theological Education - Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999)
- Clarke P., Linzey A. & Moses J. (Eds), *Theology, the University and the Modern World ~ Robert Runcie* (London: Lester Crook, 1988).
- Gladwin J. [chair], 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church: The Final Report on the Regions', *GS Misc 745* (London: Church House Publishing, May 2004).
- Groves M., 'Locating Theology', *Journal of Adult Theological Education*, Vol 1.2, Dec 2004 pp.147-159.
- Heywood D., 'A New Paradigm for Theological Education?' *Anvil* Volume 17 No 1, 2000.
- Hind J. [chair] *The Structure and Funding of Ordination Training - The Interim Report*, (London: Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council, Feb 2002)
- Hind J. [chair] *Formation for Ministry Within a Learning Church - The draft final report of the working party on the structure and funding of ordination training*, (London: Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council, Nov 2002)

- Hind J. [chair] 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church'
The Structure and Funding of Ordination Training GS1496,
(London: Church House Publishing, April 2003).
- Kelsey D.H., *Between Athens & Berlin - The Theological Education
Debate*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1993)
- Kirk J.A., *The Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission* (Valley
Forge: Trinity 1997)
- Khun T.S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions 3rd
edition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press [1st edition
1962] 1996).
- Lindbeck G.A. 'Spiritual Formation and Theological Education'
Theological Education, 24, supplement 1, 1988 pp.10-32.
- McCarthy J., 'Deepening Connections between the Church and the
Theological School: Implications for Theological
Education', *Journal of Adult Theological Education*, Vol 1.2
Dec 2004, pp.175-183.
- Pears A., 'The Study of Christian Theology in the British Academy:
From Truth Giving to Critical Engagement', *Journal of Adult
Theological Education*, Vol 1.2, Dec 2004 pp.159-174.
- Sagovsky N. [chair] *Integration and Assessment – An interim
Evaluation of College and Course Responses to ACCM
Paper 22*, (London: ABM, 1991).
- Ward K., 'Why Theology should be taught at Secular Universities',
*Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and
Religious Studies*, Vol. 4, No.1, Autumn 2004, pp22-37.

Minding the gap:

Employing Formative Assessment Techniques
to Assist Undergraduate Students with the
Transition to Higher Education.

James Nelson

Teacher Education (Post Primary) Department
Stranmillis University College, Belfast

Introduction

As lecturers and tutors we assume our higher education students are eager and ready to learn, and we feel we know what we mean when we say we want students to learn, but in many cases we do not make our expectations explicit and so students are unsure about what we want them to do. Indeed, on entering higher education students are met with a range of challenges, not least of which is to adapt to the

Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies,

Vol. 7, No. 1, Autumn 2007, pp. 179 - 190

© Copyright Subject Centre for PRS, 2007

culture of learning within the higher education institution and to understand what lecturers require them to do in order to learn. The higher education learning culture is likely to be quite different to that which they experienced at school and so it requires some re-orientation on the part of the learner. This process of transition is regarded by Ballinger (2003, p. 99) as a ‘potentially disorientating period at the start of their degree studies’ but a lecturer’s response, as Railton and Watson note, is often inadequate:

What we often end up doing is expecting students to adapt their practices to fit ours as if by osmosis: we expect students to ‘speak the same language’ as us and intuitively understand the adjustments in their learning practice that higher education demands. (Railton and Watson 2005, p. 183).

Obviously, what is required is an acknowledgement of the gap between students and tutors and the development of teaching and learning processes and techniques which can help students make an effective transition to higher education.

Through observing year 1 students during my six years of teaching in higher education I have come to see evidence of this gap for myself. I have seen the real concerns and lack of confidence that some students have in carrying out the basics of study—reading, note-taking and, of course, assignment writing—and so in the academic year 2005-06 I decided to look at ways to address the learning culture gap experienced by my students. Faced with an assessment regime in which ‘everything counts’ I was nervous about making changes to, or experimenting with, the teaching and assessment processes of modules for fear of getting things ‘wrong’ and so disadvantaging students. But it was this very observation that alerted me to part of the problem; in most modules I was teaching students had little opportunity to really engage with learning processes (such as reading critically, presenting arguments or writing for an academic audience) until they were required to do so for a written assignment, by which stage there was much at stake if they were to get things wrong. Inspired by Phil Race’s (2001) observation that formative assessment in higher education can provide opportunities for learners to learn from their own mistakes, I set about devising suitable formative assessment strategies which would give the students an opportunity to practice or test their writing

and study skills and which would allow me to provide feedback on how they might improve. It was hoped that this exchange would assist with their enculturation into higher education without weakening the formal assessment process. As a result of reading I decided to use a combination of formative assessment techniques including peer evaluation, the 'one-minute paper' (Stead 2005) and the 'briefing paper' (MacMillan and McLean 2005). This blended approach also allowed me the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness and suitability of the various techniques for my purposes. As a result of introducing formative assessment it was hoped that students would:

- have opportunities to reflect on their learning, to ask questions about their learning and be challenged to improve upon their skills and knowledge
- develop skills in academic writing within a higher education context
- improve their confidence in preparing and writing assignments
- have an opportunity for their learning needs to be addressed individually by a tutor
- understand the expectations of their tutors/lecturers within higher education
- understand the importance of working collaboratively with their peers as well as the value of giving and receiving feedback from peers.
- develop the habit of self-evaluation and critical reflection on their learning

I chose one particular level 1 module in which to introduce these changes. My teaching is in the area of initial teacher education and my main duties involve the preparation of student teachers of religious education for the post-primary school sector. The particular module which I chose as my focus was an introductory module in which students receive a basic orientation to issues related to the teaching of religious education and, in light of the contentious nature of the subject, are encouraged to develop an educational rationale for its teaching in public schools. A second major focus of the module is to engage with pedagogical issues and so come to a beginning competency in the

teaching of RE in schools.

Assessment for the module consists of two assignments: a 1,500 word essay and a subject application assignment. For this reason the first part of the module tends to focus on more theoretical aspects, in preparation for the essay, while the second part focuses on subject application aspects, in preparation for the subject application assignment.

I introduced formative assessment to my teaching of this module in semester one of the academic year 2005-06. The group consisted of 23 BEd Religious Education Post Primary students. The class was taught in a seminar room with basic resources (chalkboard and overhead projector) in ten 2 hour slots over twelve weeks (during weeks 7 and 8 students were on school placement).

Methods

In order to pursue the intended learning outcomes set out above, the three main formative assessment tools (one-minute papers; briefing papers; peer evaluation) were introduced into the module as shown below. Also shown below are four methods whereby the success of these methods was evaluated: the first assignment (reflective essay), the second assignment (subject application), a student evaluation of the formative assessment (by questionnaire) and a module review questionnaire. There were also ongoing informal conversations and emails with students relating to their progress with the various assessments.

One-minute Papers

The one-minute paper (OMP) described by Stead (2005) is an exercise usually used at the end of a class which requires students to write down answers to two questions:

- 1) What was the most important thing you learned in class today?
- 2) What question remains unanswered?

Week	Formative Assessment tool	Evaluative method
1	One Minute Paper	
2		
3	One Minute Paper	
4	Briefing Paper (500 words)	
5	One Minute Paper	
6		
7		
8		
9		Submission of reflective essay
10	Peer review of an introduction to a lesson One Minute Paper	
11	Peer review of lesson plans	
12		Student Evaluation Submission of lesson plans Module review

The responses are written anonymously and collected by the lecturer at the end of the class. The lecturer is then in a position to review the responses in preparation for the next class and this helps in two obvious ways—it clarifies whether the key intended learning outcomes have been met and feeds into the preparation for the next class. It allows the lecturer to provide specific feedback on common questions or areas of concern. The benefits of this technique also include the fact that students are being asked to generate questions, a higher order skill, and that students who might be shy about asking questions in a lecture environment are provided the opportunity to do so on paper.

In the course of this module I used the OMP four times. This seemed a reasonable frequency taking into account that Stead (2005) has noted that the impact of the technique can be diluted through overuse.

Feedback from the questionnaire indicated that students valued this exercise. Ninety-four percent said that the OMP was ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’ in giving an opportunity to ask questions and in getting helpful feedback although fewer (sixty-nine percent) felt that it helped them to understand what was being taught. In the evaluation questionnaire some students indicated that the week-long interval between asking the questions and receiving feedback was too long and therefore did not aid their learning sufficiently. For others, the feedback did not provide enough detail. One student commented, ‘The one minute papers were a good idea in order to ask questions. Because questions were not answered individually sometimes the answer was not clear. A good idea though.’ And another noted, ‘I thought this method was ok... I prefer a more detailed task to ensure that I understand.’ Saying that, other comments about the process were very positive:

It provided me with an opportunity to ask questions that I would have been uncomfortable asking in class. My questions were always answered during feedback.

Very useful as it gave us a chance to reflect on what we had learned so far.

I felt this was very helpful as it helped conclude a topic with issues or topics that I still wanted addressed.

Clearly the OMP did go some way in achieving the first of the learning objectives set out above by providing opportunities for students to reflect upon their learning, to ask questions about their learning and be challenged to improve upon their skills and knowledge.

Briefing Papers

While OMPs provide a certain level of feedback for both the lecturer and the students they do not provide structured individual feedback of a high level—the kind of feedback which would encourage students into deep reflection on their arguments and opinions and their ability to express these. On reading MacMillan and McLean's (2005) paper on 'Making First Year Tutorials Count' I was impressed by their use of a briefing paper and the deep learning they believed resulted from it. In this context the briefing paper is a 500 word paper designed to express a considered position on a key issue. MacMillan and McLean (2005, p97) express their intention in using this method to 'motivate students not only to read about and research a topic, but also to *think* about it and, indeed, to produce an academically credible, well-supported, reasoned and coherent stance on a particular question.' But, as I shall explain, it also provided an opportunity for students to receive feedback on a piece of written work from their tutor and their peers. In MacMillan and McLean's work the briefing paper was submitted five days prior to the class and on the day of the class the students were placed in groups to deliver their briefing papers and to question each other on the stance each had taken. While this was happening the tutor discussed each student's own work individually for about five minutes. I followed this pattern as closely as possible in my practice too. I set aside the full teaching time in week 4 to allow for the briefing paper session to take place. Students submitted their papers to me electronically several days prior to the class. My main intention in marking them was to give feedback primarily on writing style and referencing, rather than comment on the argument which would be dealt with in the group work. No mark was awarded, simply annotation and oral feedback given. On the day I gave some brief guidance to the students about the kind of questions they should be asking of one another and then the students were given plenty of time to present their papers to each other and engage in discussion of key issues. This gave

me time to circulate and give feedback to students on their writing.

As a follow-up to the exercise students were to submit a redrafted version of the paper, but this time as the first part of their first assignment for the module. The assignment was in two parts:

- a) Provide a statement justifying the teaching of Religious Education in Post-Primary schools. (500 words)
- b) Comment on how you came to hold the opinions in your statement. You should reflect on discussions in class, your school visits and your reading for this module. (1,000 – 1,500 words)

In other words the formative assessment fed directly into the summative assessment and so students could see the direct benefit of the feedback they were receiving, indeed in the student evaluation questionnaire eighty-seven percent of students rated its usefulness in giving helpful feedback as 5 on a five point scale, where 5 indicated ‘very useful’.

The fact that students rated this activity very highly was also reflected in the comments made on the evaluation questionnaire:

Excellent, really helped me to structure my assignment properly.

This was excellent as I had no idea what was expected of me in terms of how to write a university level essay.

I found it very useful to write something mid-semester. Writing it made me clarify my viewpoint which meant that my view could be challenged by work later in class.

I thought the briefing papers were an excellent idea as it allowed us to actually collate all our ideas and form opinions. It also gave us the chance to practice our writing, referencing and essay skills which was invaluable for the assignment later.

In looking at these comments alongside the learning outcomes set out above it is clear to see that as a result of this activity students were helped to develop skills in academic writing within a higher education context and to improve their confidence in preparing and writing

assignments. They also had an opportunity for their learning needs to be addressed individually by a tutor and begin to understand the expectations of their tutor. In turn this provided valuable mid-term feedback which allowed me to tailor my teaching more effectively to the needs of the students in terms of their writing skills and knowledge. The value of such feedback has been acknowledged as significant in improving learning and teaching (Diamond, 2004).

Peer Evaluation

The value of peer assessment has recently been questioned by Ryan *et al* (2007) but they argue that peer evaluation or review as a formative assessment tool can still be helpful and meaningful to students. I used peer evaluation in this module in two ways. One was through the briefing paper discussion described above and the other was as part of the subject application element of the course. An important aspect of preparing students for their first experience of teaching in schools is to help them with preparing a lesson and knowing how a plan for a lesson translates into practice, so in weeks ten and eleven students were not only given guidance on how to plan a suitable lesson for Religious Education but they were given an opportunity to, firstly, present a lesson plan for scrutiny by their peers and, secondly, to present part of the lesson and receive peer and tutor feedback. These exercises provided enormous opportunities for discussion and reflection. After each presentation members of the class were encouraged to identify positive aspects about the presentation in relation to content, concepts, skills and activities using positive language such as ‘The best lesson plans...’, ‘Those which were most effective in teaching concepts...’, ‘It was obvious skills were being developed when...’ and ‘some of the most interesting activities were...’. This peer feedback was then collated by the tutor to provide a resource of good advice for beginning teaching.

In the student evaluation questionnaire students indicated their appreciation of the peer evaluation through their responses:

Excellent! I had been worried about what was expected of me and it was great to have this opportunity to make a presentation in an atmosphere where everyone felt they were learning something and

getting good feedback without being looked down upon.

It was good to have the opportunity to practice lesson planning – having done so shows you how detailed and clear your lesson plan should be. This was very beneficial.'

I really enjoyed these workshops – they were fun, but at the same time I learnt a lot.

I felt this was very useful. I really enjoyed doing these and watching others make presentations really helped me learn. It gave us the chance to pick up the good things and leave the bad and get the tutor's helpful opinion.

In terms of the learning outcomes for this project the peer assessment exercises certainly helped students to achieve an understanding of the importance of working collaboratively with their peers and the value of giving and receiving feedback from peers as well as developing the habit of self-evaluation and critical reflection on their learning.

Measurements of Success

As indicated already the success of this project was measured in a number of ways. Feedback from the student evaluation questionnaires has already been mentioned above but it is worth indicating the results of the other evaluation procedures:

Module Results (*reflective essay and subject application assignment*)

All students passed this module with marks ranging from forty-five to seventy-five percent. The class average was sixty-one percent. Unfortunately as this was the first time of teaching this particular module no comparison with previous results was possible, however these results compared favorably with those in other modules taken by the same group in the same semester.

Module Review Questionnaire

On a scale of 1-5, where 1 indicates 'very poor' and 5 indicates 'excellent', the overall module rating mean response was 4.38. And in response to being asked to rate how challenging and stimulating the module had been the mean response on the same scale was 4.68.

Taken as a whole the student evaluation questionnaire results, the module results and the responses to the module review would seem to suggest that the learning outcomes were met.

Conclusion

In a recent extensive literature review on 'the first year experience' Harvey, Drew and Smith (2006, p. 5) noted among their findings that first year students 'may accept the principle of autonomous learning but need help in becoming autonomous learners'. I feel the formative assessment techniques employed in the teaching of this module were extremely valuable for the learners in building their confidence, helping them to understand expectations in higher education and facilitating their transition from school and as a consequence helped them towards the goal of becoming autonomous learners. For myself, I learned that formative assessment can actually make a difference. Offering support for students in this way is certainly not a 'dumbing down' of higher education but an important educational tool which makes use of the natural process of learning through practice, asking questions and being able to make mistakes. It certainly confirms the views of Phil Race (2001) regarding the usefulness of formative assessment in allowing students to 'test the water' in relation to what they are being asked to do. In my own work I feel the briefing paper exercise was particularly helpful in this regard.

References

- Ballinger, G, 'Bridging the Gap Between A Level and Degree: Some Observations of Managing the Transitional Stage in the Study of English Literature', *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* Vol. 2, No.1, 2003, pp. 99-110.
- Diamond, Miriam Rosalyn 'The Usefulness of Structured Mid-term Feedback as a Catalyst for Change in Higher Education Classes', *Active Learning in Higher Education*, Vol. 11, No. 5, 2004, pp. 217-231.
- Harvey, L., Drew, S. and Smith, M., 'The First-year Experience: a Review of Literature for the Higher Education Academy: Executive Summary' http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/research/Harvey_Drew_Smith_SUMMARY.pdf (2006).
- MacMillan, John and McLean, Monica, 'Making First-Year Tutorials Count: Operationalizing the Assessment-Learning Connection', *Active Learning in Higher Education* Vol. 6, No. 2, 2005, pp. 94-105.
- Race, Phil, *The Lecturer's Toolkit*, (2nd Ed) (London: Kogan Page, 2001).
- Railton, Diane and Watson, Paul "“Reading Groups” and the Development of Autonomous Learning Practices', *Active Learning in Higher Education* Vol. 6, No. 3, 2005, pp. 182-193.
- Ryan, Gina J., Marshall, Leisa L. and Porter, Kalen, 'Peer, Professor and Self-evaluation of Class Participation', *Active Learning in Higher Education* Vol. 8, No. 1, 2007, pp. 49-61.
- Stead, David, 'A Review of the One-Minute Paper', *Active Learning in Higher Education* Vol. 6, No. 2, 2005, pp. 118-131.

About Discourse

Subscriptions: *Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies* is freely available to all individuals working in higher education in the UK and is freely distributed to all those registered as interested parties in our subject areas. You may register at <http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk>

For institutions and overseas individuals the rates are as listed below:

- UK individuals in HE—no charge
- Individual subscribers outside the UK—£20 p.a.
- Library subscriptions—£35 p.a.

Submissions to the journal can be sent via our website or by post or email to the address below. Please see <http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/publications/style.html> for style guide and notes. We reserve the right to publish articles submitted for publication in both printed and digital forms unless a prior agreement is made otherwise. Articles should be no more than 8000 words and should comply with the Notes for Authors guidelines, above.

Advertising rates are:

- Full page—£250
- Half page—£150

Other rates negotiable, contact the editor

Copyright: All published articles, discussion pieces and reviews are the copyright of the Subject Centre for PRS, unless otherwise indicated. It is a condition of publication either in the printed *Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies* or in digital form on the Subject Centre for PRS website that authors assign copyright to the Subject Centre for PRS. Despite assigning copyright, authors retain their moral right to be identified as the author(s) of any published materials, and are free to republish elsewhere provided that the Subject Centre copyright and original publication details are acknowledged.

Discourse

Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies
Department of Theology and Religious Studies
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT
United Kingdom
Tel: +44(0)113 343 6745
david@prs.heacademy.ac.uk

Published by the Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies of the
Higher Education Academy

Printed in Southampton by Hobbs the Printers

© Copyright the Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies, the
Higher Education Academy, 2007