

REVIEW ESSAYS

This essay, after briefly outlining Hirst's influential theory of the forms of knowledge in relation to the curriculum, assesses responses to it. White identifies weak points in the theory and argues that certain fields (such as pure mathematics) are to be taught because they must be experienced to be understood. Barrow takes a utilitarian approach, individually justifying all of his curricular items (which prove to include all of Hirst's forms). Brent's study is the most recent of those covered and perhaps also the least satisfactory. He focusses on justifying the forms, claiming that "the whole framework" depends on the religious form.

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Recent Philosophical Books on the Curriculum:

The expression 'forms of knowledge' has become a commonplace of discussion in curriculum theory. Hirst's celebrated article "Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge", first published in 1965, is included together with other papers on the forms of knowledge, in *Knowledge and the Curriculum*. The other books listed above are all, to a greater or lesser degree, responses to Hirst's theory, which will therefore be the main theme of this essay.

Hirst's thesis is that the range of knowledge can be regarded as distinct disciplines or forms each irreducible to the others. Their distinctiveness has four aspects: 1) Each form has some central concepts peculiar to it. 2) These central concepts and others constitute a network which serves to enable understanding of experience, and which is by its logical structure unlike the network of other forms. 3) The distinctive expressions of each form are testable against experience by criteria peculiar to the form. 4) Each form has developed its own techniques and skills which have been responsible for the advancement of knowledge. The forms themselves are mathematics, physical sciences, history, religion, literature and the fine arts, philosophy and moral knowledge. The conclusion is drawn that a liberal education is to consist of initiation into each of the forms. This initiation is to be available to all and prior to any specialised or vocational education, with which it contrasts.

There are two related ways in which the pursuit of the forms of knowledge is justified. The first concerns their objectivity; the second is a transcendental deduction. The objectivity claimed of the forms by Hirst can be termed linguistic inter-

*Hirst, Paul H. *Knowledge and the Curriculum*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974. 194pp.

*White, J. P. *Towards a Compulsory Curriculum*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973. 112pp.

*Barrow, Robin. *Common Sense and the Curriculum*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976. 169pp.

*Brent, Allen. *Philosophical Foundations for the Curriculum*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978. 233pp.

subjectivity (pp. 92ff). We, as individuals, are all language-users. But we do not each have our own ideolect. The sense and serviceability of language lies in its being public, and the objective validity of knowledge-claims is established by there being public criteria for distinguishing true from false propositions. A lesson learnt from Wittgenstein is that for language to succeed in communicating anything, there must be some public agreement in judgment as well as in the definition of terms. Now the wealth of material that the respective disciplines have generated over the ages is all expressible in language - that is ordinary language supplemented by symbolic systems. So the forms of knowledge partake of the same objectivity that language has. This linguistic intersubjectivity is objectivity of a sort that is free of any metaphysical realism, such as Plato's.

The transcendental deduction is an argument which seeks to avoid answering a question by showing its redundancy (p.42). In this case the question is "Why pursue the forms of knowledge?" The answer is avoided by declining to give intrinsic or extrinsic reasons for their pursuit. The redundancy is shown by pointing out that the forms of knowledge embrace all the data and skills that you could ever need for the answering of why-questions, and that therefore by asking a question which shows you are curious to know something, you have thereby shown a commitment to the value of the forms whose value you are apparently questioning. More succinctly, the forms of knowledge are what are pursued in the development of the rational mind. To ask 'Why be rational?' is self-defeating because once you have asked why, you have already staked an interest in being rational.

The distinctness or autonomy of the forms lies in their consisting of different and irreducible types of proposition, a difference which itself amounts to a difference in truth criteria for testing propositions (pp.87ff). While some *concepts* are found in more than one form - mathematical ones are used in science, for instance - any proposition found in these areas will be uniquely mathematical or scientific. Another point to bear in mind is that it is being suggested that art appreciation and religion are propositional. I say 'suggested' because Hirst admits that this is highly problematical and asks only that it be taken as a serious possibility that experience in these areas lies in grasping true propositions (p.88).

This summary of Hirst's position is brief, but further illumination of the forms theory can best be given by considering the work that it has stimulated.

White acknowledges a substantial debt to Hirst, but presents a view which diverges from the form theory. In the key third chapter of his book, White divides what we should have acquaintance with into activities and ways of life. The activities are in turn split into two categories. Category I includes those activities which it is logically impossible to understand without first engaging in them. Five things are specified as being thoroughly mysterious to us until we have tried them: communication in general, pure mathematics, physical sciences, art appreciation and philosophising. Category II activities are those of which we can have some understanding without experience. Examples are speaking a foreign language, games, cookery and painting. The understanding spoken of is of course not a complete understanding; it is merely the ability to distinguish a given activity from other things, with or without the use of words.

White goes on to state that not only is it desirable for a person to engage in category I activities, but also that some engagement should be compulsory. Using a point developed in an earlier chapter (p.6), that compulsion is justified if harm would otherwise be incurred, the argument is that a person's choices in life should be maximised, and since a person cannot make a rational choice to do or not do a

category I activity until gaining some experience in it, he would be harmed with restricted freedom if lacking initiation in any of the five category I activities (p.35).

The category I activities are not, however, proposed as the sole ingredients of a compulsory curriculum. The choices available to a properly free person include the choice of a way of life after school as well as selection of what to study. Some of the ways of life listed are a life devoted to science, to the acquisition of goods, to public affairs, Stoicism and hedonism. An education is not complete without some familiarity with the various ways of life. This familiarity is to be gained through study of history, biography, religion and literature, which are therefore to be part of the compulsory curriculum although they are category II matters. A further desideratum in White is that the individual should achieve some degree of integration of two sorts: integration of the elements of his own life, and integration of himself into the wider social community. This points to further subjects for a core curriculum - psychological and socio-economic studies. It is then boldly claimed that the humanities occupy a position superior to the sciences in a hierarchy of disciplines because the humanities and not the sciences contribute to integration (pp.43ff).

White's discussion of Hirst's theory of forms aims not to reject it but to identify the weak points and overcome them. Concerning the theory's original formulation one weakness is in the use of the term 'knowledge' for each of the areas. Since morality aims at right action, not just at correct belief, and similarly art concerns itself with the beautiful rather than the true, it seems that the term 'knowledge' is too restricted. (pp.73f). This point does not need to be laboured since supporters of the forms have latterly loosened the terminology by speaking of 'forms of understanding' and 'modes of experience and knowledge'. A second drawback is that it is quite proper to talk of a man's being liberally educated while knowing nothing of one of the forms - say science. This is true, but not to the point. The issue is what to include in the curriculum, not what makes a liberal education.

A serious problem is discovered, however, when White points out that the forms of knowledge theory fails to entail the study of specifically academic material, the very thing one would most expect of it. The concepts in the science books are not radically different from those used in describing everyday objects, such as 'hot', 'fast', 'heavy'. One is therefore already initiated into the realm of empirical knowledge by learning one's native language in its day to day application. Study of science is not required. The forms theory cannot draw a sharp dividing line between mundane knowledge and book-learning (pp.76f). White claims to overcome this difficulty with his classification because category I activities include both simple communication and academic areas identified by the feature of requiring some introduction for the novice, presumably by an initiate.

As for the justification of the theory of forms, White pinpoints the failure of Hirst's transcendental deduction. In asking the question 'Why pursue the forms?' what one is already committed to is wanting to know the answer to the question, and nothing more. One is not committed to the pursuit of knowledge. It is curious that such a point needs making, since it is a well-known fact that people can be interested in knowing the value of something and still do nothing to pursue it. And those who acknowledge that learning is worthwhile may opt against it in favour of activities they would admit are not worthwhile. This is the case with the man who spends every evening drinking and gambling while at the same time sincerely encouraging his children's studies. It is clear that something bolder is required to justify the curriculum than the alleged self-defeating nature of the question one

asks when asking why we should pursue the forms.

It is as well to say a few things about transcendental arguments. The criticism in White of Hirst's formulation of such an argument shows that it seems like a trick device, or even just a verbal quirk. The argument, after all, amounts to saying that man who asks "Why pursue the forms of knowledge?" has trapped himself, merely by what he says, into deserving no answer. To respond, 'You have asked for reasons why. This shows you are already respectful of the pursuit of knowledge,' is to suggest he has pulled the rug from under his own feet. This is, at best, a disappointment and in that it stands as an alternative to an answer seeking to justify the forms by showing them to be intrinsically or extrinsically good, it carries the unfortunate suggestion that we just are committed to the forms whether we like it or not and whether they are worthwhile or not.

It should be remembered that the original transcendental arguments in Kant are offered to support judgments that resist demonstration from the evidence of particular items in experience because they concern the limits of experience in general. Thus a question such as, "How do I know that no objects change size with change of location?" might be answered by a transcendentalist: "You don't know, but you have no choice but to believe it of the objects you experience because they can be grasped by your mind only as conforming to the principle that location does not effect size." This again is like saying you will believe it like it or not. However, such an answer is appropriate because the subject-matter is a central feature of experience in general, unlike the more circumscribed school disciplines. Indeed, it has been found that a person can be driven insane by being presented with visual experience which appears to show objects changing size as they move. Here, rationality really is at stake, and in a way differing dramatically from any way in which rationality demands pursuing the forms. The untutored are not certifiable. The use of a special argument, the transcendental argument, is warranted when the subject of discussion concerns the conceptual limits of experience in general. A particular aspect of life requires for justification considerations specific to itself.

Consider the use of a transcendental argument in the service of dealing with a question about particular sorts of experience in an area other than education. Suppose the question were, "Why is pain not to be needlessly inflicted?" An answer of the sort that tries to show the question to be self-defeating would be, "Because pain impedes the answering of why-questions." This answer states a truth. When I am in pain it is difficult to talk moral philosophy, and if someone else nearby is screaming in agony my auditor may not hear my words. But surely even if we admit that pain is an impediment to rational inquiry in general, or to inquiry into the ethics of pain in particular, we should still balk at saying that this is precisely why cruelty is wrong. The proscription of pain infliction should be based on the nature of pain, not on the conditions for talking about it. Similarly the prescription of a curriculum should be based on its nature and not on the conditions for theorising over it.

This is the main reason why White's book is an advance on Hirst's work. The problem mentioned above about the forms of knowledge embracing too wide a range of known things is part of the reason why the too general transcendental argument is usable, and why not enough is proved by its use. White's proposal that certain things are to be taught because no understanding of them is possible without a sampling is one which, while sharing the neatness of the transcendental deduction, achieves the specificity of justifying schoolwork by presupposing a con-

trast between those who have and those who have not had some initiation into an area of knowledge (teachers and learners). There is not then the difficulty of delineating science proper from simple empirical knowledge such as the ability to recognize a house or a tree.

White's book, although short, is by no means solely a contribution to the theoretical questions so far discussed. Some other interesting points occur which deserve mention. It is suggested that knowledge of the different ways of life be acquired through the study of history, religion, literature (including biography), and philosophy, and that this entails spending substantial amounts of time just reading. This I am sure strikes a chord with many people who on leaving school have a feeling of being largely ignorant of their own heritage after working through innumerable assignments, drills and exercises. A call for more time to be spent in plain reading, which requires minimum supervision and direction strikes deep at the current preoccupation with pedagogical methodology and mechanical teaching aids. Also, White is to be commended for raising the question of how *much* compulsory classroom attendance is justified. "It seems to have been taken as read since state education began a century ago that children should . . . spend the whole of the school day, morning and afternoon, in compulsory activities (including options within a compulsory framework). But what are the grounds for this? I know of none" (p.71). Perhaps it would be possible for the obligatory schoolwork to occupy two or three hours a day, leaving the whole afternoon for voluntary activities. Since it is *prima facie* unjustified to interfere with freedom, compulsion, if not entirely absent, should be minimised. White provides a recipe for legitimising enforcement, but points out that the particular quantity required is a matter that has not yet properly been faced.

Barrow's book has similarities with that of White, and owes something to Hirst. His position is that the theoretical nature of the forms of knowledge does not compel their inclusion in the curriculum, but they find themselves there anyway. The nature of the forms is criticised in ways met with before. Suffice it to say that in Barrow's view there are only two forms of knowledge - empirical and philosophical, but that this 'will not give us much help in constructing a curriculum' (p.52). We are told therefore only at the very end of the book that each of Hirst's forms are found in his curriculum, a curriculum which introduces children to the two forms of knowledge, the two interpretative attitudes (scientific and religious) and the four basic kinds of awareness (scientific, religious, moral and aesthetic). These classifications play no part in arguing for the various curricular items, which are taken piecemeal and justified individually. This gives the book its distinctiveness.

Barrow's proposed curriculum falls into four stages. "The primary stage involves health training, moral training and the development of literacy. The secondary stage involves initiation into the natural sciences, mathematics, the fine arts, history, literature and religion. The tertiary stage involves the continued study of history and literature and the introduction of vocational studies and social studies - all as compulsory elements. In addition it is at this stage that a wide variety of options, such as classics, cookery, carpentry, modern languages and the continued study of such things as mathematics, the fine arts, and the natural sciences are made available. The quaternary stage adds philosophy as a compulsory study to the continuing programme of the tertiary stage" (p.107). The stages are not precisely defined in terms of children's ages.

In contrast to White's use of freedom and autonomy as the moral basis of the curriculum, Barrow espouses utilitarianism; the only positive value is happiness or

pleasure, and no one's pleasure is more important than another's. Thus the inclusion of physical exercise is for the good health of the child, not for the development of self-knowledge or anything else high-flown. Natural science is justified as follows (pp.116ff): science is useful in making our lives more comfortable, and we need professional scientists; everybody should learn some science so that any who choose a scientific career understand what sort of activity it is. School is then (among other things) a sorting-station, but respect for the individual is maintained, because a good scientist or doctor is one who has freely and informedly chosen his career. The need for professionals with knowledge of the subject also serves to justify mathematics. Religion and history are given an entirely different rationale: they are included because their study is likely to increase understanding of others and lead to a more peaceful and pleasurable world. Literature finds a place for the same reason, and also for the fact that it improves clarity and articulateness, which is useful in a world where one is called upon to make complex decisions (p.146). In the tertiary stage vocational and social studies are added because they bring about understanding of the world about us and of what it offers to new adults.

The working out of the details of the curriculum by Barrow is reasonable enough, and the most striking fact about the book is how closely those details correspond to those of White whose principle of justification is (apparently) so different. Barrow's disagreement with White is over the latter's definition of 'worthwhile activity' which says that an activity is worthwhile if it is what a person would *on reflection* want for its own sake (cited by Barrow, p.80). This entails that if a person wants on reflection just to comb his hair all day, then it is a worthwhile way of life, which causes Barrow to part company. But it is questionable whether an educational theory is damaged by having such an implication, because if the man freely chooses on reflection, and with proper consideration to alternative projects, then the work of *education* has been done: he is acting autonomously and knowledgeably. A more serious point is that the reader has good reason to ask what difference it makes to adopt Barrow's utilitarianism in preference to White's autonomy and freedom. For apart from the similarities in curricular proposals already mentioned, we find Barrow saying, to justify obligatory physics and optional economics: "To explain what physics is to somebody who has no experience of the natural sciences at all would be extremely difficult. But to explain what economics is to someone who is familiar with science and mathematics ... would be relatively easy" (p.153). This echoes White's first and second categories. And if, as Barrow says, "The utilitarian is most concerned that differences between people shall be the outcome of their choice, so far as possible, and not the outcome of limited opportunities" (ps.136-7), his concerns are strikingly similar to those of the believer in autonomy. This is not the place to make a judgment as to whether Barrow really is a utilitarian. It is the place, however, to say that as a piece of curricular prescription the book is reasonable but entirely dispensible, and that as a piece of philosophy it is contentious in its neutrality.

The newest and longest book dealt with in this essay is that of Brent. There is no single theme in this book. It begins with a chapter on Plato in which the original Form theory is discussed and rejected on account of the unacceptable price at which the objectivity of knowledge is purchased: the existence of a transphenomenal world. Chapter two has the two purposes of dismissing the theories of Newman, Barnes and Friere, and of alerting us to the presence of veiled and unwitting disciples of Plato in modern curriculum theory. There is then a massive sixty-page chapter on Hirst's Forms theory aiming to show that it too fails to pro-

vide proper objectivity for knowledge. Finally, there is a brand new transcendental deduction of the indispensibility of the forms of knowledge. I shall discuss Brent's work as a contribution to the forms of knowledge theory of the curriculum.

Brent provides us with a useful exposition of the structure of the forms of knowledge in terms of their categorical concepts, which determine the nature of the form, and their substantive ones, which can be revised or jettisoned without changing the form's nature. Thus there is the empirical form, whose categorical concepts include space, time and cause, and substantive concepts atom and electron. The form has good, right and ought as categorical, and theft, pride and humility as substantive. And so on with the other forms, which are mathematical, religious, aesthetic, historical/sociological and philosophical (pp.101 ff). If a categorical concept is changed, the whole form changes, including all its substantive concepts, according to Brent. As to be expected, the empirical and mathematical forms are easiest to define. Indeed, after specifying samples of their categorical and substantive concepts he says, "Regarding the remaining forms our conclusions must be more tentative" (p.103). Nevertheless, after noting the classic cases of form-revision in the empirical domain (Einstein's theory) and the mathematical (non-Euclidean geometry), Brent goes on to offer examples of categorical changes in the other forms. In religion, when a man converts from Hinduism to Christianity his categorical concept of redemption will change, and with it his substantive concepts of ritual and prayer. This, however only shows that the two religions have incompatible conceptual schemes; surely we wish the religious form to include both. The form as such is not changed. Indeed there are currently several different concepts of 'God' within the field of religion. As for the aesthetic form, Brent remarks that this form is noted for its fluidity of concepts, and that to change a central concept can be what makes an artist creative. This point, however, is not used to suggest that the aesthetic form has no categorical concepts, but to make the curious claim that the recent categorical changes in empirical and mathematical inquiry make the latter areas more like aesthetics than they were earlier thought to be (p.114).

There follows a section on the autonomy and irreducibility of the forms (pp.115ff). This too is useful as exposition. A series of reductionist manoeuvres are outlined, and their limitations exposed. Thus, we learn of the 'naturalistic fallacy' which claims that moral goodness is really empirical, of Braithwaite's famous attempt to reduce religious propositions to ethical ones, of the Marxist interpretation of history as purely empirical, and several other reductionist positions. Notwithstanding the instructiveness of this round-up of reductionism in illuminating what it means to say that the forms are autonomous, it is philosophically very sketchy, and sometimes inaccurate. The reader is, for instance, left to believe that 'ought' cannot be derived from 'is'. This ignores the work of Prior and Geach on the question. There is also mention of a Freudian who claims that sadism explains why a man chose to become a surgeon. This explanation is then dismissed on the grounds that sadism is a necessary but not sufficient reason for his choice of career (p.127). This is simplistic, and by appearing to refute so much with so little, is the kind of philosophical move apt to put off readers new to the subject.

Brent sees no problem in the formulation of the forms of knowledge but only in its justification. The linguistic intersubjectivity Hirst claims of the forms is the opinion of Brent vulnerable to criticisms from radicals and sociologists of knowledge that the theory is just a legitimation of the status quo and that any other organisa-

tion of knowledge could lay claim to succeed it. Public agreement in language shows only that we, here and now, use the forms of knowledge; it does not show that we ought to or that we always will. Brent seeks to mend this deficiency by demonstrating that there is something truly objective underlying all cross-cultural differences and that the forms are indispensable.

There is a long and laborious account of how Hirst came to have erroneous views about objectivity through a confused understanding of Wittgenstein. The details of this account need not concern us. But at the end, one wonders whether the whole enterprise of detailing the genesis and failings of linguistic intersubjectivity was worthwhile. For the conclusion of it all (p.158) is that although there can be changes in the concept of space, not just anything could do for this concept and it is indispensable to have *some* concept of space. Now is objectivity mattered in the way Brent takes it to matter, namely in its being placed in jeopardy by the famous abrupt category changes (such as that by Einstein), it would follow that empirical science and mathematics have least claim to be objective: the other forms have had no such sudden upheavals. But this of course makes a mockery of the term 'objectivity' since it is in those two fields that it finds its paradigms. Further, who would suppose that the public agreement in language that serves in Hirst as the basis for truth assertion entails that in any concepts at all, let alone central ones like space and time, latitude and even licence could ensue?

The cure for the disease Brent has diagnosed in the forms of knowledge theory is a transcendental argument for the indispensability of each of the forms. When, say, facing a mountain, our ways of understanding enable us to inquire in ways corresponding to the forms of knowledge. What causes the coloration? (empirical question) How do we express its dimensions? (mathematical) How do we evaluate its beauty? (aesthetic) How ought we to benefit from its resources? (ethical) What settlements have there been under its shadow and why? (historical/sociological) Why, ultimately, is the awesome mountain there? (religious) These questions illustrate the primitive differentiations of consciousness, each requiring different sorts of consideration (pp.200f). Brent then sets out to show that if just one of these forms is lacking, we can no longer properly avail ourselves of the others in understanding reality. He attempts this by showing the indispensability of the most questionable form, religion. "I am very contentiously going to suggest that the exclusion of the religious form from our overall framework of judgment would precipitate the conceptual collapse of the whole framework. Therefore, in demonstrating the unalterability of the forms of knowledge requiring the inclusion of the religious form, I shall have demonstrated *a fortiori* the unalterability of the list regarding the rest of the forms" (p.202).

We are then offered two stories, each of which is alleged to be unintelligible to any who lack the religious form of knowledge. The first concerns an atheist doctor. His work involves empirical, mathematical and moral dimensions, but he would not ascribe any religious significance to what he does. But even in denying anything religious, he is according to Brent implicitly acknowledging a religious dimension to his consciousness. Otherwise, there would be no *empirical* clarity in what he did; empirical and religious meanings would be entangled. "Our atheist doctor can therefore practise empirical science, and not alchemy or astrology, only because he can make this distinction" (p.205). This claim bodes ill for future generations of Albanians, whose scientists, reared without acquaintance with religion, run the risk of empirical confusion. No, surely a race of people uncognizant of religion are the least likely to fall into such error. And if we could make

robots with capacities to calculate and to acquire empirical data of the world, these capacities would certainly not be limited by lack of religious awareness. In the second story, we are told of a priest who performs the requisite duties to his flock with perfect competence and propriety, but lacks any religious conviction. He is, in short, a perfect hypocrite. His only sin is insincerity, and the duty of sincerity is, in the story of the successful and consistent hypocrite, a duty to oneself, not to others. But such a duty is unintelligible without a religious perspective, according to Brent. This is because the matter of duties to oneself takes one away from the question "What ought I to *do*?" and into the question, "What kind of person ought I to *be*?" "Yet a non-believer who accepted this conclusion would not be able to abandon such virtues as sincerity and truthfulness with the religious dimension of human consciousness that makes them intelligible and still be able to practise morality, in view of their centrality to moral practice" (p.206). I see no reason to accept that only a religious form of knowledge can make intelligible the question of what sort of person a man should be.

Thus Brent's delivery of a transcendental argument for the forms is unsuccessful. More unfortunate, in my judgment, is that the question should have been set up as it was in the first place. For if Brent is right, there are only three options: 1) to subscribe to a transphenomenal world of Platonic Forms, 2) to accept that the religious form of knowledge is a *sine qua non* of even empirical perspicuity, 3) to allow that anarchy reign in the curriculum. If I am right in what I said above, the question was wrongly set up and we can abide the rejection of 2) without espousing 1) or 3). Brent's book is in two ways an unhelpful contribution to philosophical curriculum theory.

The back cover of Brent's book tells us that, "The book is aimed primarily at the undergraduate and postgraduate certificate student who is concentrating on the philosophy of education or curriculum theory. Unlike most books at this level it progresses from its 'introductory' first chapters and takes the student deeper as the text unfolds." It is certainly laborious to read, and may not be worth the effort. A student would do better to use other sources for gaining an understanding of Plato, and the book as a whole is involved in a way which begins to exhibit the law of diminishing returns. After a philosophical tour which includes the five slabs of Wittgenstein, Plato's Ideal Bed, Moore's hands, Hume's fork, and the versatile Venus which is both one planet and two stars, a student is unlikely to be more enlightened than before except by the help of a teacher whose supplementary exegesis of Brent's use of other philosophers' work is exceeded only by his refutations of Brent's own views. It should be noted that the scholarly labours of Brent—there are almost four hundred footnotes—show one remarkable omission: there is no mention of White's book.

Résumé

Après avoir résumé brièvement l'importante théorie de Hirst sur les catégories de connaissances en rapport avec le programme, nous passons en revue les réactions qu'elle a suscitées. White relève les faiblesses de la théorie et affirme que certaines matières (comme les mathématiques pures) doivent être enseignées parce qu'elles doivent être expérimentées pour être comprises. Barrow adopte un point de vue utilitaire et justifie, une par une, toutes les matières qu'il inclut dans le programme (qui contient d'ailleurs toutes les catégories de Hirst). L'étude de Brent est la plus récente et la moins satisfaisante. Elle s'attache à justifier les catégories et prétend que "tout le cadre" dépend de la catégorie religieuse.